



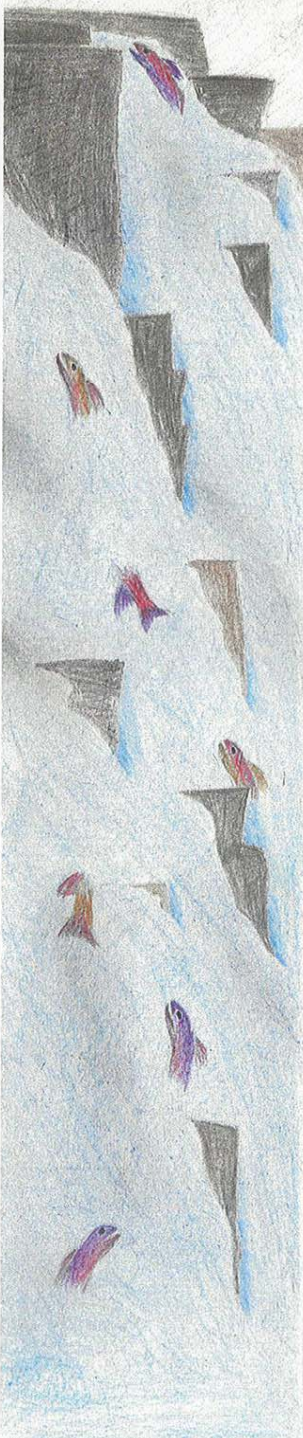
Children of Fire

Tel: +27 11 726 6529 email: firechildren@icon.co.za



Drakensberg Adventure

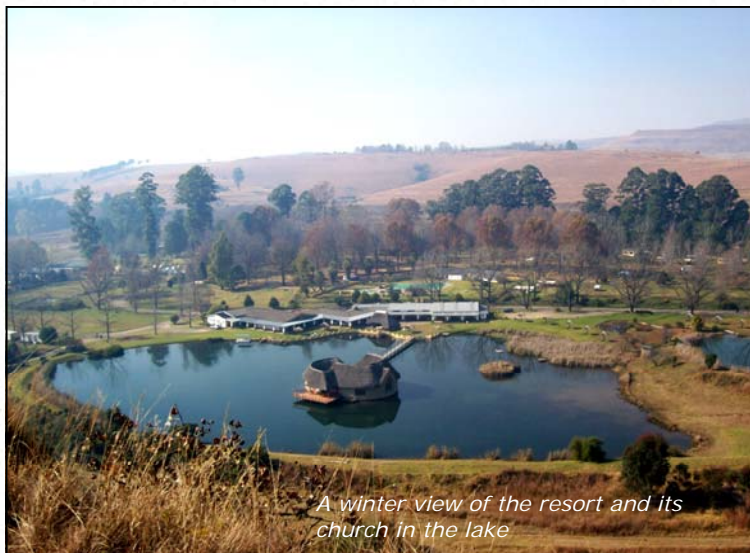
A team of 19 teenage burn survivors and fire fighters journey to the heart of the Drakensberg in mid-Winter 2008



Every year, Children of Fire brings together badly burned teens from across Africa to share their experiences over an action-packed adventure in the mountains. In mid winter this year, 19 burn survivors, fire fighters, and ChiFi volunteers bounded into the picturesque Dragon Peaks Mountain Resort in the Drakensberg ready for a lesson in understanding. They were awed by the beauty of the resort set deep in the valley beneath Champagne Castle. The wonderful facilities at the Dragon Peaks Mountain Base caused a stir among the spirited youngsters. Right away, they

turned on a trendy music channel and made themselves at home in their comfortable dormitories. Then they confidently challenged the firemen to games of pool. As the sun set on their first of six days in the mountains, they played soccer in the field outside the Dragon Peaks Base and became acquainted over a delicious braai [barbeque]. From that moment, the spirit of the group was indomitable. The teenagers surpassed their expectations of what they thought they could achieve.

Michelle Daniels, Psychologist



A winter view of the resort and its church in the lake

For more information Tel: +27 36 468 1031
Dragon Peaks Mountain Resort, P.O. Box Winterton 3340, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa

Msunduzi Firemen

Fearless firemen travelled from Msunduzi (Pietermaritzburg) to the Drakensberg this winter. KwaZulu Natal's new capital city and 'the city of choice', Msunduzi, hosts many famous sporting events such as the Duzi Canoe Marathon and the Comrades. The city's economy is also growing at an incredible rate. Msunduzi's excellent Emergency Services has helped Children of Fire over several years but this was their first joint outreach programme. Fire fighters with more than 30 years experience had their eyes opened, for the first time, to the difficulties faced by those they save. Four compassionate firemen from this esteemed brigade, were brave enough to join us on an exploration of tolerance and esteem. Neil Beyers (40), a calm and caring senior fireman, is a seasoned hiker, qualified snake handler, volunteer for the SWAT team of the SAPS, a paramedic, and a lifesaver. His contribution to the success of our journey was immeasurable. He recruited fire fighters for the trip and arranged their transport to the mountains and back. A gentle giant, he also coolly kept some of the more boisterous teens in check. Vusi Shabalala (29), an energetic and funny



Fireman Jakes Marais joins in on the activities to encourage the teens

junior fire fighter with Msunduzi for four years, was once a professional basketball player. He now coaches the leading under 15 women's basketball team for the Natal Midlands. Vusi's humour kept the spirit of the group alive on arduous hikes up the steep slopes of the Drakensberg. Jakes Marais (46), a senior officer in the Msunduzi brigade is from the Drakensberg and has two children of his own. His uplifting words and constant support helped the youngsters to believe that they could manage even the most challenging of activities.

Musa Mkhize (32) is in the secondary services of the Msunduzi fire brigade. He works with the fire fighters to service fire hydrants and maintain the community's fire safety standards. Musa made firm friends with many of the burned teenagers. He also helped ChiFi volunteers keep everyone, especially unintentionally rowdy paraffin stove burn survivor Xavier (12), in check.

These men bonded with a wonderful group of teenagers who have not only survived the pain of being burned but also that of being teased and pushed aside because of their scars. These are youngsters who, despite all this, remain loving, caring, determined and, as Vusi learned, "we as their community are missing out on their joy, sportsmanship, and intellect."



Msunduzi fire fighter, Vusi Shabalala, quad biking with Salome Aphane (13)

Spending the night in Stable Cave

One of the most challenging aspects of this year's adventure was our hike up to Stable Cave over the uKhahlamba (Zulu for 'barrier of spears'). We awoke early, kitted ourselves out with sleeping bags, mats, water bottles, torches, and food and set off on the seven hour trek up into the mountains. Msunduzi firemen, Vusi and Musa kept spirits alive by leading us in song. We marched over the grassy hilltops to 'Nkosi Sikelela' and 'Shosholozla'. The badly burned teens strode on bravely. Each fire fighter carried extra backpacks for teens that needed help bearing the weight and lent a hand to those who were struggling up the steeper slopes. There was so much camaraderie among the group that no one was ever left behind. Fire-fighter Jakes was our



Gontise (16), Marno (16), and Franklin (15) in the 'Penthouse suite' of Stable Cave

voice of fatherly wisdom. He rallied us into action when we felt we were too tired to carry on and took charge as team spokesman. When, half way to the summit, homemade floor polish burn survivor Gloria (16) and shack fire survivor Salome (13) were not fit enough to keep up and needed return to the Dragon Peaks Base, Jakes and Neil



The view from Stable Cave at sunrise

unselfishly volunteered to go back with them. The rest of us eventually made it to Stable Cave. This magnificent overhang, standing at 2100 metres above sea level, gave us unspoilt views of Cathedral Peak and once the sun had set, a breathtakingly clear panorama of stars. The teens quickly chose their sleeping spots and made themselves comfortable.

Teenagers Xavier (12), petrol fire survivor Gontise (16), Marno (16), and gel stove explosion survivor Franklin (15) settled into a cosy little alcove in the highest point of the cave- from then on, The Penthouse. The others spread out around the cave and got some much deserved rest.

The others spread out around the cave and got some much deserved rest. Nsizwazonke Vilakazi (16), lost his right ear and hand when he was burned as a baby when a candle fell over near his crib. He said that the hike was his biggest challenge but that he was glad he made it to the cave. "I am very proud of myself," he said, "I now know I am brave enough to take a risk."

If you want to hike to a cave in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park contact: Len Hodson +27 (0)82 657 4344

Our survivor's stories

Xavier Engelbrecht

Xavier (12) is from Factoryton in the Western Cape. He was burned at five months when a paraffin stove used in his home fell over and burned the family home to the ground. He suffered extensive burns to his hands and face. In February 2008, he received surgery at Groote Schuur Hospital where skin from a tissue expander in his chest was used for a graft to his face. He can use his right hand well but has poor use of his left hand. Xavier may have an attention deficit or mild autistic disorder. His peers and their adult chaperones understood and accepted Xavier's eccentric behaviour. He is an extremely energetic boy. He provided us with more than a few laughs in the mountains with his politically incorrect nicknames and mischievous pranks.



Nsizwazonke Vilakazi

Nsizwa (16) is from Piet Retief in Mpumalanga. He was burned in a shack fire as a small child. His sustained burns on his face, upper body, and arms and lost his right ear and right hand. Children of Fire has helped Nsizwa for many years. As a child although expressing the wish to be 'normal' he coped well at school and in sheltered social situations. Unfortunately, as a teenager, Nsizwa has become withdrawn and shy. He seems very aware of his physical appearance. On the outreach programme in the Drakensberg, he was at first reluctant to socialise with the other youngsters but became increasingly confident with every taxing activity he was able to complete. Nsizwa is kind and caring and has a wonderful sense of humour. He benefitted from the psychological and esteem-building purposes of our mountain expedition.



Salome Aphane

Salome (13) is from Hammanskraal in the NW Province. She was burned in a shack fire at age 11. A candle fell over as she and her family slept, setting the curtains in the shack alight. The fire quickly spread to other furnishings in the home. Salome was badly burned on her head, hands, one arm, and slightly on her legs. Two infants also in the home that night perished in the blaze. Salome now has no hair on her scalp and both ears are severely damaged. In an attempt to hide her baldness from taunting peers and teachers, Salome used to wear a wig. She needs occupational therapy. Unfortunately, the Jubilee Hospital near to her home will not assist. On the Drakensberg Adventure, Salome faced many of her fears and made some good friends along the way. Although a quiet girl, by the end of the trip she was joking, laughing and lighting up the mountains with her beautiful smile.



Bongani Madlala

Bongani is a boisterous 15 year old from Howick, KZN. He was burned as an infant when a candle fell over onto his bedding, setting it alight. He sustained severe burns losing his left ear and half of his left arm. Bongani joined the outreach programme at the last minute when another teen from KZN, Andile, was unexpectedly unable to attend. Bongani has a great sense of humour. Bongani's exuberance verges on rowdy because his hearing loss means he does not realise how noisy he is. He was not afraid to try any of the exciting activities on offer. He was jokingly named 'Mugabe' on our adventure when he took control of the television remote at the Dragon Peaks Mountain Base. Although energetic to the point of being rowdy at times, Bongani is a sensitive teen who understands how others' view his disfigurement. Fortunately, for the most part, he does not let others' intolerance stop him from accomplishing anything.



Sameh Chiboub

Sameh, which means tolerance in Arabic, is 19 and was burned in November 2005 when she and her brother were trying to light up a brazero to make a hot drink. Her brother was standing on one side with a can of kerosene, pouring it on to the charcoal in the brazero and Sameh was standing opposite when she caught alight. She suffered burns to her arms and chest. Sameh lives in a small town two hours from Tunis. Before travelling to South Africa for the Drakensberg Outreach Programme, Sameh had never travelled outside of Tunisia. Although she speaks Arabic and French and only a small amount of English, she was able to communicate well with the other teens, firemen, and volunteers. Her English also improved a great deal during her journey to the mountains. She was always eager to help and was extremely brave when it came to trying new activities such as abseiling and zip lining. Her determination on the longer hikes was admirable. She also enjoyed joking around with the volunteers- showing us her mischievous streak.



Gontise Mogotsi

Gontise is a quiet and considerate 16 year old from Johannesburg who enjoys watching television and playing soccer. He was two burned years ago when he was 14 when he and his friends were foolishly playing with a can of petrol around a fire. They poured petrol onto the fire to see the flames flare up. Unfortunately, Gontise got too close to the blaze and was burned severely on his face and left forearm. He received a skin graft at George Mukhari Hospital and is currently wearing pressure garments and receiving occupational therapy there. Gontise bravely attempted all the activities in the Drakensberg with enthusiasm. He is a very mature teen who was also helpful and cooperative.



Marno Karelse

Marno (16) is from just outside Durbanville in the Western Cape. He was burned in July 2007 when he and his friends and family were sitting around a fire outside his small home, a converted barn, as it has limited access to electricity. One of the boys with him at the time attempted to make the fire hotter by pouring a mixture of paraffin onto it. As he did so, the flames leapt towards him, he got a fright and threw the tin into the fire. The contents of the tin set alight and spilled onto Marno. Marno suffered burns on his neck and both of his hands and legs. He was treated at Tygerberg Hospital Burns Unit where he received a skin graft and was discharged in August 2007. Marno's suffering was heightened when, a month later, his father died from tuberculosis (TB). His grandfather also died from this contagious lung infection shortly after. Marno is cheerful and witty. He got on well with teens, firemen, and volunteers alike.



Gloria Mapokane

Gloria is a friendly 15 year old from Soshanguve who loves to read and watch television. Gloria sustained burns on her hands when she was preparing home-made floor polish by melting candle wax in a pot and mixing it with paraffin. She put the mixture on the stove and left the kitchen. She had not realised that once all of the wax had melted it would catch light. When she returned a few minutes later, the fire had started to spread through the kitchen. She tried to remove the wax and paraffin mixture from the stove and burned her hands. Gloria was very eager to share her experiences with fellow burn survivors in the Drakensberg. The journey was her first away from her home and family. At first she was rather shy and was afraid of trying many of the activities. She left cheerful and bubbly and much more self-assured than when she arrived.



Yassine Ben Ali

Yassine is a sweet, soft-spoken 16 year old from Tunisia. He suffered severe burns to his upper body when he was electrocuted in June 2007. Like many boys his age, he is crazy about soccer and could not wait to have the experience of playing with South African youngsters on the Drakensberg Adventure. The only thing he knew about South Africa before travelling here was that the national soccer team played the Tunisian national side in the finals of the African Cup of Nations in the late nineties. When we first met Yassine, he was slightly shy and seemed to find it difficult to communicate with the other teens and the volunteers as his English was poor. During our voyage to the mountains, however, he picked up a great deal of English and really came out of his shell. He was playful and optimistic and seemed to enjoy all of the new and entertaining experiences.



Franklin Machadibane

Franklin (15) is from Johannesburg. He was burned two years ago while boiling water using a gel stove one morning. He filled the gel stove he was using with gel and then tried to light it. As he did so, it exploded setting his clothes and the kitchen curtains alight. He was burned on his face and right hand. His left cheek and jaw line are particularly badly scarred. Franklin is a sweet and sensitive teenager. In the Drakensberg, he was determined to try all of the activities on offer and did so with enthusiasm. When asked about how his scars effect him he says that he is just glad "to be alive and like any other child".



Shirley Seqhobane

Shirley (17) is from Vanderbijlpark in Johannesburg. She was burned when hot cooking oil from a frying pan was spilt accidentally onto her head when she was an infant. She is self-conscious about the scarring on her head that has left her hairline uneven and her head bald in places. She suffers teasing from peers at school as a result. Despite this, however, she seems optimistic about her bright future and shows great interest in her school work. In the Drakensberg she helped volunteers to cook and clean wherever possible, supported fellow teens who were not as bold and gregarious as she is, and made many firm friends.



Spanning Africa



Sameh from Bizert Ghazela, Tunisia



Yassine from Tunis, Tunisia



Gloria from Soshanguve, Gauteng



Salome from Hammanskraal, North West Province



Franklin from Johannesburg, Gauteng



Shirley from Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng



Gontise from Johannesburg, Gauteng



Xavier from Factoryton, Western Cape



Nsizwa from Piet Retief, Mpumalanga



Marno from Durbanville, Western Cape



Bongani from Howick, KwaZulu Natal





What some of this year's participants thought of their adventure

"Read what I have to say about this place called 'Drakensberg': It's quite interesting and fun. It's one of the most important places in our country. I found the people there are so kind and nice - they like to help other people too. When we went to the mountain, it was fun but I got tired along the way but I knew that I had to carry on walking so I could reach the high point. I was so happy that I made it for the first time ever in my life but I was very tired when I reached the finishing line. I had a lot of fun riding the zip line. I've never experienced that before and it was a dream of mine that has now been fulfilled. The four wheel motor bike was fun. I enjoyed myself a lot. It's quite an amazing ride, I can assure you. I saw the bees. I never knew that there was a queen bee but now if I see bees in the trees at home, I'll know." - Nsizwa

"In the Drakensberg I enjoyed looking at the beautiful mountains, trees, bushes, dams [lakes], and fish. I didn't enjoy walking up the higher mountains. I enjoyed riding the four wheel motorbikes and shooting paint at the trees with paintball guns. I learned that the mountains are higher than the houses and every mountain has its own animals. In the Drakensberg I experienced that the San people first lived there and danced for their ancestors and now the San people are not there anymore. I think that people should have respect, acceptance, happiness, and a good attitude and to try to love others like you love yourself." - Gloria

"I learned so much in the Drakensberg in six days. Before, I never knew that I could climb a mountain but now I know I can. I had never slept in a cave before, it was scary but we managed. I never knew too much about the San people but now I assure you I know as much as needs to be known and about Xhosa people and their rituals. The best of them all is that I know how more about bees. I know that the queen bee produces the eggs and when it stings a human it dies and how they don't like noise and cell phones. Take care when you are opening your mouth because it can fly into it and you will get stung." - Franklin

"The cave we slept in was very nice. I loved it so much because it is a place for dreaming- it's romantic. Thank you Children of Fire!" - Sameh

"My experiences in the Berg have been many. For starters, I now know what it is like to experience winter like never before and that the mountains can never be taken for granted. The Drakensberg is cold and icy, you need to wear the warmest clothes possible. I found out how easy it is to make new friends who understand one another. I think that the most important thing that we learned is to work with each other as a group and to appreciate each others' problems and fears." - Gontise

"I really enjoyed it in the bushveld [grassland]. We saw lots of different types of trees in the Drakensberg and found out that the mountains there are very high. When we were walking to Stable Cave, there were many rocks in the path. If you took your eyes off it for a second you'd fall. I liked it in the veld [grassland] because it was quiet. I also liked having to fill up my water bottle in the streams we passed on our hike." - Marno

"My experience in the Drakensberg was very nice. I had lots of fun going there and seeing different things and learning lots of stuff about the Drakensberg area. I liked the mountain base where I lived together with the other burned children. I had a good time making friends with them. I learned that we as people are meant to love each other and take care of each other." - Bongani

The spirit of the Eland

Thirty-five percent of South Africa's San Rock Art sites are in the Drakensberg. At the Didima Rock Art Centre at Cathedral Peak, we spent an afternoon learning about the culture of the San people. The centre houses ancient San artefacts and educates visitors on the intriguing history of this nation. The burned teens were ushered into a cool, reconstructed cave auditorium to watch a video on the San people. There they learned of the spirit of the Eland, an animal that the San revered for its spiritual powers. These hunter-gatherers lived in the Drakensberg 8 000 years ago. Their beautiful artwork adorns the walls of many rock faces in the Drakensberg mountains. The Eland is frequently depicted in San cave paintings. This majestic creature was a symbol of power and potency for the San. The Eland's

ability to guide them to an otherworldly plain was of great importance to their religious practice. As European settlers appropriated the land from its native inhabitants, the San population, dwindled. The last sighting of the San in the Drakensberg was in the 1880s. The San people do still inhabit other parts of Southern Africa including the Eastern Cape. The youngsters were fascinated to hear of this facet of South African heritage. Burned teen, Gloria (15) was particularly intrigued. She recognised an item of San jewellery in the display. She remembered that her family had a piece similar to it. She said that "it's sad that the San who danced for their ancestors are not here anymore, but knowing that they were makes you feel how important this place is".

*Didima Rock Art Centre:
+27 (0)36 488 8025*

Champagne Castle Adventure Centre

At Champagne Castle Adventure Centre, we enjoyed a fun-filled morning



Marno (16) having a go at archery

abseiling and playing creative games. First we took a terrifying descent into a deep gorge. We trekked up the mountainside overlooking Dragon Peaks nestled in the valley below. At the top, we were briefed on safety measures,

strapped into harnesses, and told to walk off the cliff face backwards! Initially,

many teens and volunteers alike were afraid of taking the plunge. With the guidance of both the Msunduzi firemen and Champagne Castle staff, however, we all abseiled safely into the lush, green basin. Afterwards, we competed in unusual sports including archery and blow darts. We had to work in teams to make it around a slalom course manoeuvring planks of wood. Then we got tough in a spirited game of tug-of-war. We had to play several rounds because no one could agree on which group had won. In the end, it didn't matter anyway. We just relished the laughter and camaraderie.

*Contact: +27 (0)36 468 1031
info@champagnecastleadventure.co.za*

Seeing Falcons Soar

One sunny morning, we headed out to Falcon Ridge- Bird of Prey Centre to see some of these magnificent birds in flight. Falcons are exceptional hunters. Their wings taper into a sickle shape enabling them to fly at very high speeds and to do so with absolute precision. One species of falcon- the Peregrine Falcon is the fastest creature on earth! A falcon's vision is 2.6 times that of a human's. This means that they are able to spot their prey from kilometres away. They glide high above the terrain in currents of rising hot air to

conserve their energy until they find their prey- usually rodents. They are also one of the world's most intelligent birds. On our visit to Falcon Ridge we learned this first hand. One smart falcon, trained to catch dummy prey on demand to please the audience, decided that she would rather relax on a nearby tree. She had reasoned that she be fed later anyway. She knew she was the star of the show!



Salome (13) with a Falcon

Falcon Ridge: +27(0)82 774 6398

Horse riding and honey brittle at Scrumpy Jack's

Did you know that there is only one bee in a hive of about 80 000 that can lay fertile eggs? Or that a worker bee who converts nectar to honey will on average only make one-twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in its lifetime? If you didn't, don't worry, neither did we. On our exploration of the Drakensberg, we stopped at Scrumpy Jack's to see the largest glass bee hive in South Africa. We were astounded to learn these and other extraordinary facts about honey bees. We got to taste Deon's delicious peanut brittle made from honey produced by the bees at Scrumpy Jack's. All the teens were fascinated to learn more about these insects that they live with. The Msunduzi firemen picked up some great tips on how to safely lure dangerous snakes out of bee hives or to remove the hives completely. They found this advice helpful, as they are

often called out to assist with such matters. As we were led away from the bees in their majestic glass hive, mouths closed for fear of swallowing one, we wandered past several beautiful horses stabled at Scrumpy Jack's. Initially, horse riding had not been on our schedule for this year's journey to the Drakensberg. True outdoorsman, Len Hodson, who had also kindly guided us up to Stable Cave, offered us an hour or two of riding at Scrumpy Jack's. This was exciting for all of us. So we got to spend an afternoon on a gentle out-ride through lush, green pine plantations. The teenagers are mostly from impoverished backgrounds. As such, many of them had never ridden a horse before and they enjoyed it enormously.



Shack fire survivor, Nsizwa (16), who even with one arm, can ride a horse

Scrumpy Jack's: +27 (0)36 468 1308

Four wheels and 'foofie' slides

On our first full day in the Drakensberg, we were in for an adrenalin rush at Four River's Rafting and Adventures. Exhausted after a long hike on the Hlatikhulu (Zulu for 'tall trees') Forest trail earlier, we were eager to give our aching feet a break. So we headed straight to the zip line. Screaming down the mountainside while hanging metres from the ground certainly rests your limbs but not your heart rate! The zip line or 'foofie slide', as most South Africans call it, at Four Rivers is extremely safe. You are harnessed and secured to a woven steel cable running down from a starting point approximately 45 metres above the ground. It is 300m long but you whiz down within a matter of seconds. Many of the teens were reluctant to try this terrifying contraption at first. Home-made floor polish burn survivor, Gloria (15) was particularly afraid. Fortunately, with some gentle persuasion from ChiFi volunteers and Msunduzi fire-fighters, everyone had a go. The youngsters ended up thoroughly enjoying the excitement. Gloria said that she was very pleased with herself for not giving up. The next activity scheduled for these thrill-seekers was quad biking. The dirt racetrack at Four Rivers winds sharply among Acacia trees and tall grass. Each



Tunisian burn survivor, Sameh (19), speeding down the hillside on a zip line

teen, volunteer, and fireman had a turn to reel around the course at full speed. The smaller of the youngsters such as paraffin-stove burn survivor, Xavier (12), rode in tandem with either a fire fighter or one of Four Rivers' daredevil staff. After this, it was to paintball target practice. We were each handed a gun with ten small paint balls inside and given several boards to aim for. Most of us were not particularly good at hitting the bull's-eye but it was the novelty of it that was fun. With that, our afternoon at Four River's Rafting and Adventures came to an end. The badly burned teens returned to Dragon Peaks for the evening, proud of their extraordinary achievements that day.

Four River's: +27 (0)83 785 1693
info@fourriversadventures.co.za

The little known danger of gel stoves

One of the youngsters who braved the Drakensberg this year, Franklin Machadibang (15), was burned while using an ethanol gel stove. This fuel is praised as a safer alternative to paraffin as it is allegedly non-toxic when swallowed, bio-degradable, and is less easily spilled.



Alarmingly, however, no official testing has been done to confirm these claims. In addition, burners of the gel emit high quantities of carbon monoxide, which is poisonous. Gel stove burn survivors like Franklin are, unfortunately, proof that these appliances are in dire need of investigation.

Amangwane royalty

Prior to the 1800s Southern Nguniland, now KwaZulu Natal, was home to several indigenous tribes including the Amangwane nation. During the time of King Shaka's reign in this territory from 1818 to 1828, his Zulu Kingdom flourished. It sustained European invasions of the area and had a centralised government. According to prominent historians, this is why the South African government recognises it as the overarching kingdom in the area. It does not, however, mean that other kingdoms such as the Amangwane do not exist. Today, the king of the Zulus receives financial support from the government to sustain his kingdom. In contrast, the Amangwane nation does not receive any

assistance as it is not recognised in law as a tribe different from the Zulus. King M. Alfred Hlongwane, is trying to rectify this. He has lodged a complaint with the Commission on Traditional Leadership Claims and Disputes and the Supreme Court. The Amangwane is a nation of 4.8 million people who have been marginalised for years. The King argues that he and his people have a claim to the territory as they have been in Natal since the 1100s whereas the Zulus only occupied

the area 700 years later in the 1800s. Also, the Amangwane Royal Family is a traceable lineage with the title of king being passed down through the generations. Many Amangwane people swear their allegiance to the King and would like him to govern them in the hopes that their poor economic state and inadequate living conditions will be improved. King Alfred kindly allowed us to visit his home near Bergville. We wanted the teenagers to hear his fascinating story and to learn of yet



After a conversation with the King at his home in Emmaus

another facet of South African history. We were warmly welcomed and invited to sit with the King and to ask him questions. We discussed the matter with King Alfred as he sat regally under his Amangwane colours and the South African flag. Everyone was intrigued. The firemen, in particular, suggested many ways in which he could get his message across to government and to help his constituents.

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From Tip to Toe of a continent



On November 8, 2007, Children of Fire's Africa Outreach Manager travelled to Tunisia to begin setting up Children of Fire North Africa. This branch of the organisation helps young burn survivors from north Africa closer to their homes.

This is logistically much more effective than transporting them to South Africa for medical care. Another way the charity is of service in Tunisia is in improving the quality of life for burned children

through esteem-building initiatives. Two Tunisian teens, Yassine Ben Ali (16) and Sameh Chiboub (19), joined us on our confidence-boosting adventure to the Drakensberg this year. They taught us a lot about Tunisia and its culture. We did not know much about their way of life beforehand. It was rewarding for our South African youngsters to share their experiences with peers from a foreign country. Sameh is from Bizert Ghazela, about two hours from the capital, Tunis. French and Arabic are widely spoken in Tunisia. Although Sameh can speak both of those languages fluently, her English is weak. In the Drakensberg it soon improved considerably. Sameh was burned while trying to light a brazero. This is a stone pot filled with hot coals that is widely used in lower income homes in Tunisia for making warm drinks and heating food. Burn injuries in Tunisia are largely caused

by fires resulting from gas leaks, the misuse of brazeros, and pressure stoves. Hot liquid burns are also common. Our other youngster from Tunis, Yassine, was electrocuted by about 30000 volts at 15. He was trying

to repair an electrical fault when it happened. Yassine is from the Tunisian capital, Tunis and speaks primarily Arabic. He is studying as an apprentice electrician. Yassine said that he was interested to explore "the mountainous landscape

because it is different from that in [his] country". He did, however, comment that "the food here did not interest me because it is not what we eat in Tunisia". In Yassine's country cous-cous, a traditional Tunisian food made from wheat, is a staple. Both Yassine and Sameh made an effort to understand the South African way of life and have returned home with plenty of interesting anecdotes to tell.



The brazero

A celebratory meal at Mamma's Shebeen

On our return from subzero temperatures in the Drakensberg, we were warmly welcomed at Mamma's Shebeen in Greenside. Mamma's Shebeen is a South African themed



Gloria (15) and Shirley (17) with 'Samuel'

restaurant (not a tavern!) where you can enjoy traditional fare such as 'Ajax Pap and Wors' and 'Kaizer's Lamb Stew'.

The teens gladly tucked into their delicious 'Buthelezi Burgers'. Local celebrity, Thabiso Mokhehi who plays 'Samuel Khumalo', Ntombi's brother on the hit SABC soapie, 'Generations',

Andile Nthetwa

A 16 year old girl, Andile Nthetwa from Nongoma, KwaZulu Natal was scheduled to join us on the Drakensberg Outreach Programme this year. Andile was burned when she was 15. She, like Franklin from Johannesburg who did attend, was burned while using a gel stove. She was using the stove to cook a meal for her family when some of the gel spilt onto the fire causing the stove to explode. Andile sustained severe burns to her stomach, arms, shoulders, and ears. She has since had some reconstructive surgery at Albert Luthuli Hospital but is embarrassed by the way the surgery turned out. She and her mother both believe that the surgery has made her injuries look worse. Andile comes from a very traditional Zulu family. Her mother warned us that Andile is not normally



Miss Soweto, Bokang Montjane, congratulates our brave survivors on their achievements

joined us to congratulate the brave teens. This year's Miss Soweto, the beautiful Bokang Montjane, handed out certificates of achievement to the burn survivors for their courage to overcome intolerance of disfigurement.

Mamma's Shebeen: +27(0)11 646 7453

allowed to wear trousers. She implored us to make sure that Andile was not photographed in trousers at any time during the trip. This was in case her father saw that she was defying him by wearing them. Andile was grateful for being given the opportunity to spend time with fellow burn survivors in the Drakensberg. Her mother was also thrilled about the trip. Unfortunately, at the last minute, Andile's family got scared. They decided against allowing her to travel alone. Our outreach programme would have empowered Andile. She had been given the chance to explore other cultures and experience novel activities. It is regrettable that she was unable to free herself from the constraints of her traditionalist family. With luck, she will be able to participate in next year's adventure.

Thank You:

Glenn Tungay and his family for providing us with accommodation in the heart of the Drakensberg at the breath-taking Dragon Peaks Mountain Resort (+27(0)36 468 1031, email: dpp@futurenet.co.za).

KZN Parks Board and Monk's Cowl for making possible our 3 hour hike on the Hlatikhulu Forest Trail in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park and our daring journey up 'Jacob 's ladder' to camp overnight inside Stable Cave (+27(0)36 468 1103, email: howella@kznwildlife.co.za).

Mr Price, Mr Price Cresta, and the Red Cap Foundation for our soft and cosy new Reflex hooded jerseys, jogging trousers, warm and fluffy socks, and comfortable jerseys.

Edcon for making it possible for our survivors, volunteers, and fire-fighters to brave freezing temperatures in the Drakensburg by providing durable, padded, and snug Edgars' Pro-Active Performance Hardware tracksuits.

The Nest for providing a delicious, cooked meal for our night out in Stable Cave.

Egypt Air halving the costs for our two Tunisian participants to fly to South Africa so that they could experience the Drakensberg Adventure and exchange ideas and experiences with burn survivors from South Africa (+27(0)11 880 4126).

Greyhound for providing the comfortable and safe transportation of our two participants from the Western Cape to meet their peers in Johannesburg on their luxury bus line (+27(0)11 611 8000).

Imperial Car Hire for lending us a brand new VW Kombi and a Toyota Quantum for our trip so the team travelled in style (+27(0)86 113 1000).

Anthony Courtenay and Safari and Tourism Insurance Brokers (SATIB) for insuring our vehicles (+27(0)31 562 1880).

Meg Fitchett for providing the artwork for this newsletter.

Msunduzi Fire Chief, Billy Paton for his help and continued kindness towards the charity.

The Msunduzi Municipality for allowing four Msunduzi firemen leave for this adventure and for contributing to their transport by providing petrol for their vehicle.

Four Rivers Adventures for giving our survivors the opportunity to experience the exciting activities -quad biking, paintball target shooting, and zip lining (+27(0)36 468 1693, email: info@fourriversadventures.co.za).

Champagne Castle Adventure Centre where our survivors abseiled, played creative games including archery and blow darts, and took part in a spirited game of tug-of-war -all exhilarating and team-building activities (+27(0)36 468 1031, email: info@champagnecastleadventure.co.za).

Falcon Ridge- Bird of Prey Centre where an interesting and educational morning was spent watching these magnificent birds in flight (+27(0)82 774 6398).

Scrumpy Jack's- where our survivors were taught about the fascinating lives of honey bees, watched a beekeeper at work, and went on a gentle horse ride through lush, green pine plantations (+27(0)36 468 1308).

Len Hodson from Scrumpy Jack's for kindly guiding us up to Stable Cave in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park where we spent the night .

The Didima Rock Art Centre where we learned of our country's great San heritage (+27(0)36 488 8025).

Mamma's Shebeen (18 Gleneagles Road, Greenside, JHB, +27(0)11 646 7453) for hosting our celebratory meal and award ceremony on our return from the Drakensberg.

Children of Fire volunteers, Pete Jones, Chris Wilson, Tristan Jones, and Michelle Daniels who arranged this adventure and accompanied the teenagers and fire-fighters to the Drakensberg.

The adventure continues: Mount Kenya 2010!

The Children of Fire Outreach Programme is an annual event. Next year, we travel back to the Drakensberg for another confidence-boosting expedition. There burned teens will train to conquer even greater heights to reach the summit of Mount Kenya in 2010. In 2007, our survivors climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa. Mt. Kenya is the highest mountain in Kenya, second only to Kilimanjaro. Mt. Kenya is an extinct volcano formed between 2 and 3 million years ago. This majestic summit is 180kms from Nairobi and boasts permanent glaciers which is rare near the equator. Many of Kenya's rivers are filled by the melting of

these glaciers. Participants will hike to Lenana Peak at 4985m above sea level. There are two other major summits to the mountain, Batian at 5199m and Nelion at 5288m, but they are only accessible to technical mountaineers. We are in the process of recruiting young burn survivors from different parts of the world to join us on this seven day expedition. If you know of any spirited burned teens who would benefit from this thrilling exploration, please introduce them to us. Survivors wanting to attend must be between 12 and 18, have both legs, and no major chest or neck burns affecting breathing.

Children of Fire is entirely funded by public donations. It will cost approximately R30 000 for each burn survivor to climb Mt. Kenya. If you would like to sponsor a teenager, or help our work to continue, donations may be paid to:

Children of Fire
Account number: 614 920 23919
Sort code: 25-65-05
First National Bank
Melville, Gauteng
South Africa

Children of Fire
Account number: 901 033 30
Sort code: 20-17-92
Barclays Bank
Canterbury (East Kent branches)
United Kingdom

Children of Fire contact details:

Tel.: +27 11 726 6529

Email: firechildren@icon.co.za

Postal Address: PO Box 1048, Auckland Park 2006,
South Africa

