



Defence Reserves' Provincial Office Western Cape proudly supports *Vaatjie Moravian Primary School*

– By: Ms Regine Lord

– Photographs: Ms R. Lord, Maj D. Coetzee and Sgt J. Jacobs

There is a strong tradition of social engagement in the military, underscored by the willingness to work together to achieve a common goal. This is particularly true of the Defence Reserve's Provincial Office Western Cape

These Reservists take pride in giving back to their country by actively using the skills they have acquired through their military training to make a positive difference in their own communities. The truth of the slogan of the Defence Reserves' Provincial Office Western Cape (DRPOWC) "We make it happen" was clearly demonstrated when, in the spirit of voluntarism and active support, it was decided to reach out to a small primary school near Atlantis.

Major Dalene Coetzee, the Second in Command (2IC) of Cape Field Artillery (CFA) and a senior

teacher at Tafelberg High School in Bothasig realised that some of the furniture and equipment would become available when Tafelberg School, a school for learners with special needs, was relocated to Bothasig. Major Coetzee, also responsible for the promotion of the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2010, brought this matter to the attention of Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Johan Conradie, DRPOWC, as some of the equipment could be used for the Tattoo.

After assessing the situation, Lt Col Conradie saw this as an opportunity that could benefit not only the Tattoo but also other needy organisations. After negotiations, he managed to secure some of the equipment for the Tattoo store and the SA Sea Cadets.

Realising that some of the furniture and books were ideally suitable for a needy school, an





outreach programme was promptly initiated, which was enthusiastically supported by Lt Col Uys van der Westhuijzen, the Chairman of the Reserve Force Council Western Cape (RFCWC) and Captain (SAN) Trunell Morom, the Senior Staff Officer (SSO) at the DRPOWC. Contact was made with Mr Neil September, the headmaster of a small farm school in the rural area near Atlantis on the West Coast.

The school, known as Vaatjie Moravian Primary, was founded in 1967 to accommodate the children of the surrounding farming communities. It is a government school, which currently employs 6 teachers and has 190 learners from Grade R to Grade 7. The learners come from the surrounding farms and from informal settlements nearby; their parents are farm workers, domestic workers or unemployed. In view of the poverty of the learners and their families, the school is always grateful for donations and assistance.

It was thus arranged to deliver a truckload of much needed school desks and books to this school, and to celebrate this with a special event, which would include the erection of a flagpole on the school premises and the ceremonial hoisting of the South African national flag.

Mr Willem van der Merwe, a farmer from Porterville, generously agreed to supply the flagpole. Mr Van der Merwe and Mr Barend

Kellerman, a farmer from the same area, and four of their farm labourers, took a day off from their busy farming schedules and used their large truck to collect the desks and books from Sea Point. These were delivered to Vaatjie Moravian Primary School, which is situated along the old Mamre to Darling Road, between Atlantis and Melkbosstrand.

AMS Engineering of Ottery prepared and provided channel iron free of charge to allow the flagpole to be securely anchored in the ground.

On Wednesday, 11 August 2010, there was a buzz of excitement at the school, as the furniture and new books were delivered and unloaded in front of the school buildings. A hole was dug for the flagpole, and the channel iron was attached to its base, before the new flagpole was raised into position. The tables were all neatly set out by Ms Elsette Musso. The meal was provided by the DRPOWC and prepared by the Mess at the Castle of Good Hope.

Lt Col Conradie gave a brief speech, thanking all the individuals and units who had given so generously of their time and resources to make this event happen. He handed Mr Neil September, the headmaster, a South African national flag, a storm flag, and a certificate of friendship, a symbol of the commitment of the Defence Reserves.

