

Touring scouts complete renovations to local crèche

A group of 21 Explorer Scouts from Rotherham in South Yorkshire who've been holidaying in Mossel Bay have used their vacation time to renovate a local crèche.

Organiser Richard Mellors said that the Scouts - aged between 14 and 18 - have worked incredibly hard to refurbish the existing building at Evelyn's Crèche in the previously disadvantaged township of KwaNonqaba.

"They've done the painting and tiling of the main building, the electrical work has been redone, and they've built a perimeter wall to provide a safe, contained area for the children to play in," he said.

"They've also built a new ablution block which has a shower heated by a solar unit, and two toilets for the children - and they're now hand-painting bright pictures on the interior walls."

Before coming to South Africa, the group raised R60 000 to finance their project.

"We've also had incredible support from

the local business community," said Mr Mellors.

He said that ACE Waste sponsored the supply and transport of rubbish skips, Rudman Visagie Building Consultants provided the building plans, JDM Projects Building Contractors provided advice as well as materials and additional labour at cost, and Solar Tech Mossel Bay donated the solar panel and geyser.

The UK contingent's Scout master, David Tingle, said that the group would spend a total of three weeks in the town, and that they've worked on the project on almost every weekday while they've been here.

The group has been staying in the Municipal Cottages at De Bakke, and their weekends have been spent in the company of the local troop, with visits to various nature reserves and other attractions in the Garden Route and Klein Karoo.

"They've had a fantastic time, and worked a lot faster and harder than I expected," said Mr Tingle. "By day four we'd got to the

point I expected we'd be at on day eight or nine."

Each day, he said, he's reviewed the progress of the project and the tour by asking three simple questions: (1) What was the best part of the day? (2) What was the worst part of the day? And (3) rate the day on a scale of 1 to 10.

"After the first day, they said the worst part was getting up early in the morning, and the best part was seeing Evelyn, and the joy on her face and those of her children when they realised the project was finally going to happen.

"As we've got into the work, the scouts said that they really enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing brick going on to brick.

"And as far as daily ratings are concerned, they've varied from nine- to twelve-out-of-ten. The day they spent feeding the elephants and on safari at Botlierskop definitely scored a twelve, while the shark experience with Oceans Aware and the trip to Seal Island also went down really

well."

He said that the accommodation was a hit, too.

"One of the kids said he'd like to stay in the chalets for a whole year!"

Pat Farnham, Scout Master of the local troop, said that his group will be erecting a jungle gym at Evelyn's Crèche sometime after the English scouts departure.

"The interaction and new friendships formed between the boys and girls from the UK and our own Mossel Bay scouts has been a wonderful experience for all," he said.

Mossel Bay Tourism's Marcia Holm said that the town was honoured to have hosted the Rotherham troop.

"The fact that these teenagers were prepared to put their backs into a project of this sort says a lot for the quality of their characters, and we're deeply grateful for their contribution - and, of course, we're delighted that they've enjoyed their time here, too."

