

OzCots - one woman's dream comes true

IN SEPTEMBER 2003, Despina Voudouris of Canberra, Australia, visited South Africa for a holiday and during her stay, took on three days of volunteer work at Cotlands, one of South Africa's oldest and most prominent children's charities, caring for vulnerable children throughout South Africa.

Despina says she was so impressed by the work of the professionally trained and dedicated Cotlands team and what they manage to achieve with limited resources.

"I was incredibly moved by my experiences at Cotlands and when I returned to Australia I

founded OzCots, a project that aims to assist Cotlands by raising funds and collecting items needed for the organisation, and by raising awareness of the plight of the children Cotlands cares for," she says.

Despina has lived most of her life in Canberra and in Darwin, Australia. She has worked in various State and Commonwealth Government Departments in the fields of social policy and programme management. Her commitment to OzCots and to the welfare of the Cotlands children is total, and this has prompted her to take a few months off work to dedicate her time and

energy into making the OzCots project an overwhelming success.

In taking on this task, Despina knew that she needed to seek

the support of an always generous Canberra community.

"I talked to many people about my experiences in South Africa and this helped to generate the momentum for this project," she says.

"The generosity and support of people I have been in contact with in regard to this project is phenomenal, humbling and inspiring and I am confident that we will be able to achieve our goals."

Fundraising activities in Canberra have so far included the unveiling of a set of Nelson Mandela Lithographs and the launch of the OzCot Community Drive in September and a fundraising dinner and auction in October this year.

Money generated from these fundraisers will go towards sponsoring Cotlands projects.

As a result of OzCots' activities, two container loads of goods for Cotlands are currently on the waters heading to South Africa.

Southern Courier 8 Dec. 04 Jhb