



Issue 1: December 2008

It is my wish that this issue of the Connexion inspires and encourages you to share and connect with each other so it is indeed our Connexion.

Nell



REFLECTING ON 2008

When I think back over this year I think the greatest thing that happened to our franchise is that it got Jane Williams as a secretary. She was the Xmas angel that arrived in May. And it's been Xmas ever since! I think we can all agree on that. Jane got stuck in from day one. With her zest to get us all to tow the line she has worked miracles. Her Weekly Reports reflect a franchise that by all accounts is working as well as it should. We can be proud to have her as our front person.



Another great thing that happened was that you finally had the revised edition of the AQUATOTS Swim Program Instructor Manual that seemed to defy completion until the very last minute. Remember, it was delivered from the printer just in time to be handed out on the Saturday morning of our previous AFAM (2007) as planned despite it being a year late to the day. The Practical Manual I've been working on however is still in the pipeline. If all continues to go as hassle free with AQUATOTS as it is going now, it should be printed and ready to be handed out at our next AFAM.



One of the other great things that you may have noticed is that our instructor training team finally took shape this year. Did you notice that there were always two of us at the one-on-ones? Being able to compare notes was a great three-way learning and confidence building experience.



We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Our gift to you this Xmas is the Connexion. Yes, the Connexion is back and it is here to stay. All too often have I heard one of you say that we need a newsletter? It has bothered me no end that we didn't have one. That there were always more important AQUATOTS issues on my agenda was good enough reason for us not having one. But now that we have a secretary that is a thing of the past. Not that our 'Magical Jane' is taking on the Connexion as well. Oh no! I bagged that as my job long ago. I have wanted to keep the Connexion going ever since the first issue even before the franchise years. Now that I am back to my normal workload, the Connexion is high on the list and receiving priority status. I bet a lot of you are happy to hear this. But remember, this is not only my newsletter. It is yours as much as it is mine. We want to hear from each other. I will appoint myself the editor but you must bring on the news, views and stories.



Then there was the initiative by a group of franchisees at the AFAM for a video work-shop that turned out to be a highlight of the year. It set a precedent for all future work-shops. Now that almost everyone either has a family member or knows a friend who owns a digital movie camera, instructor training will become much more effective with the use of visuals of their teaching as reference. It adds a whole new dimension to instructor training especially for out of the way franchises like Nelspruit, Lichtenburg not to mention Gaborone and Harare. My e-instructor training will take a leap too.



And not to forget about the rush around for the filming of the Franchise Promotion video. John Salt of Satellite Projects which is based in Cape Town and AQUATOTS go back a long way. To 1991 in fact before digital cameras and the internet! Email wasn't even heard of. I desperately needed someone to help me make a video. I found John and he was prepared to help with the making of "Swimming Skills from Birth". He has filmed AQUATOTS sessions for close on 17 years. If you put him in the water I think he could do a better job at teaching than all of us put together! AQUATOTS Swim Program CC was one of John's first customers.



When you come to add up all these great happenings there is no doubt that we move along with developments and keep abreast of time. That means we do not become complacent so we do not stagnate. We do not fall by the way or get left behind so that others can take our place. We are always right up front and intent on staying there.



FRANCHISE UPDATE

Two new franchisees joined the AQUATOTS family this franchise year (June 2007-June 2009) Nerina Knott, owner of AQUATOTS Kempton Park, was introduced to you at the AFAM. But meeting Samantha Rawlins, the owner of AQUATOTS East London, may have to wait until next AFAM. Nerina was keeping a close watch on the builders when we visited her in

May, driving them to have her pool ready for summer. Samantha was a little ahead. When we visited her in April she had already started teaching. Introducing new franchisees is always a cause for celebration and bringing out the balloons.



Some join and others leave. Astrid Williams of AQUATOTS Winston Park (Dbn) is emigrating to Australia. She has sold her franchise to Karen Fisher. We wish them both well.

Nerina and Samantha are both practicing kineticists One third of AQUATOTS franchisees are now owned and operated by medical professionals.



MEMORABLE ONE-ON-ONES

This year's one-on-ones doubled up as training sessions for instructor trainers as well. Either Cathy, who is chief assistant trainer to me (Nell), or Andrea, who is technical assistant trainer to both Cathy and Nell, accompanied me on the one-on-ones. Because there were always two of us, the trips seemed to be more like holiday outings than serious training sessions especially the ones in Durban where Tonilee Humphries from Zimbabwe had joined us. That turned out to be quite a social occasion for everyone down there. It was rather special for Cathy and me to have some social time together away from base camp.

Port Elizabeth and East London were visited with Vincent. Though he had met Samantha Rawlins, owner of AQUATOTS East London, he had not seen her pool.



Where we stopped for a fish lunch along the way

Having flown to East London and seen Samantha's practice with its spanking new pool, and enjoyed the hospitality of her supportive parents and brother, we decided to rent a car and drive to P.E. and stop along the way for a fish lunch at, oh my goodness I've forgotten the name of the place. Perhaps you can recognize it from the pic. (I shouldn't be thinking of phoning someone in South Africa who would be able to tell me. I could Google it but I've set myself a deadline to finish and send this Connexion to you in a couple of hours. As it is, the time zone here in Canada is 10 hours behind South Africa. So I'll be a day late anyway. I'd like you to have the Connexion before you close for Xmas. You're parents may find it interesting so put it up on your notice board.)



Pizza and champagne in the pool on a kick board

The lights were dimmed and kids invited. Wow! What a party place for them one day. Hope to be invited to their 21sts.



Vincent, Shuan and René Lloyd AQUATOTS P.E.

Talking about 'Notice Boards' AQUATOTS P.E. has the best. I think the next best was AQUATOTS Norwood. Both franchises have interesting and current information neatly displayed in an organized manner. Well done! Bring out the balloons!



The one-on-one at P.E. is always a family occasion. I look forward to it very much like I look forward to visiting my own family. I feel like 'Grandma' to René's and Shuan's kids, Bryce and Kyra. I've known René since before the franchise days. She did her course in 1998 in Cape Town bringing Bryce, a toddler at the time, and her mother to Cape Town with her to look after him. It was one of those occasions when I felt I had met my reflection. When I saw René teach a couple of years later I could see myself. She took AQUATOTS to heart and has kept it there ever since. She never missed an annual workshop. And as you know, she and Shaun, who joined AQUATOTS later, have never missed an AFAM. René first taught in a rented pool in Doctor's rooms until she and Shaun built their own pool. (You can check their web page if you want to know more.) We had a braai on the spot where the pool was going to be. The next year I was treated to Champagne and Pizza on a kick-a-board on the same spot but this time I was in the pool.



Lights dimmed and kids invited

The one-on-ones at the Durbell Franchise are also always most memorable occasions. The owner trio of staunch AQUATOTS supporters date back to when Anne-Marie Odendaal ran the Frankie Frog Swim School at the Pretoria H&RC, and later at the Durbanville H&RC in the Cape. Tess Dittrich joined AQUATOTS soon after with Annelize de Wet following. The three, all from pre-franchise years, co-own Durbell Franchise which has three unique outlets that uniquely complement each other. We go back to the time when AQUATOTS emerged into the public eye through H&RC and revolutionized infant swimming in the country. They were stalwart supporters of the franchise idea and together with AQUATOTS Kenilworth-Lansdowne are the bastion of AQUATOTS in the Cape.

I believe I have always had a special place in their hearts but it took them some years before I had the honour to be welcomed as one of them "agter die boerewors gordyn". Since then every one-on-one and every workshop turns into a party. This year the one-on-one was at Anne-lize's outdoor pool in Amanda Glen. It doubled up as Annual Work-shop No 4 with Lerine van Wijk of AQUATOTS Stellenbosch joining us. Dinner with wine served by

Anne-lize's husband followed. As a sleep over at Anne-Marie's was arranged for me, I was spared the anxiety of a long drive home at night. So plenty of wine was consumed and camaraderie reached its usual merry peak.



Nell, Tess, Anne-Marie, Lerine and Anne-lize

Mentioning the annual work-shop at Durbell Franchise has me thinking that we've had some very classy ones in the past. Caron Delpeche's work-shop in October 2006 was one of them. Held at AQUATOTS Ruimsig at her estate-like home where ponies wondered freely about it smacked of quality and style. A carefully organized work-shop with detail befitting of AQUATOTS the elitist infant aquatic education programme I envisage AQUATOTS to be.



Caron's work-shop October 2006

The first time I got this sense of living up to AQUATOTS was the previous year when Marinda Linde had her work-shop at AQUATOTS Alberton. I remember us all somewhat stunned when we saw what she had laid on for us. None of us had expected quite such a level of professionalism.

There is an important message here. It's not that we want to outshine each other. It's about accepting a standard and living up to it. The higher we raise the bar the higher the standard we can expect from others. The bar is raised higher for AQUATOTS than for any other infant swim teaching method that I know.

Those who clear the jump (live up to its high standard) receive the accolades. They rise above the others. They are acknowledged for nothing less than the heights to which they aspire. We are not just plain swim teachers. We are professional infant aquatic educators. We should live up to this in everything that has to do with our profession.



FRANCHISE WEB PAGES

Out of the 24 franchises only 10 have their page up!! If your page is not up please check the website and see how good those pages look that are up.

I receive on average 2 emails a day from people who have visited our website. Your blank pages do not do the website any credit.



Once again, wishing you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**CONNEXION
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