



From the Editor



Micaela Jordaan
Rustenburg
Alumnae
Co-ordinator

Ring in the New Year, where joyful memories meet sparkling beginnings, 2026 began with a resounding sense of excitement and purpose. Sweet farewells and cherished moments with old friends made way for fresh faces and new connections as I stepped into my new role as Alumnae Relations Officer. Thank you all so much for the warm welcomes!

We celebrate not only outstanding NSC results and the welcome of E'25 into our alumnae network, but also the joyful reunions of classes 1956, 1966 and 1976. We are immensely grateful to the alumnae who joined us for the Junior School Founders' Day on 30 January and for the 132nd High School Birthday celebrations on 6 February.

In this edition (see clickable contents below), we shine the spotlight on a few remarkable alumnae who are taking—or have taken—the world by storm, proving that the world is truly your oyster: Fiona Chisholm E55, Marian Roberts E61, Margie Cook (née McKenzie) E67, Balu Nivison E76, Allison Mackenzie (née McDonald) E87, Daniella Melville E94, Kerusha Makan (née Padayachee) E06, Mila Guerrini E19, & Taura Benning E21.

We are deeply grateful to all the alumnae who have contributed to our bursary fund, with special thanks to Marian Roberts for her generous donation in remembrance of her mother, Jean Bernadt. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and that these stories move and inspire you as much as they have inspired us.

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Welcome Matric class of 2025!

Together we grow and thrive

A BIG welcome to the class of E25 to the alumnae network! As our timeless moto goes “once a RustyBug, always a RustyBug!” — the very reason our alumnae community exists. And now, you are officially part of it. How exciting!

We warmly congratulate you on the outstanding NSC results, with special mention to Yasmeen Mohamed (7th overall in the district) and Aaliyah Sablay (10th overall in the district).

As new members of the alumnae community, we wish you every success and happiness as you embrace these exciting new chapters ahead.



Yasmeen Mohamed



RGHS Birthday Assembly and Alumnae Bursary Awards

From Celebration to Opportunity: Alumnae Bursaries 2026



Sara Wepener & Janel Broster-Masureik

On the 6th of February, RGHS welcomed alumnae guests to the School's 132nd Birthday Assembly, a joyous event which is reported here in detail by the E56 Reunion group.

If you were unable to attend, you can still share in this heartwarming occasion by watching the video and headmaster's address on YouTube with a link under RGHS .
([see what E56 had to say here](#)).



Caitlin Anstey, Yasmeen Mohamed & Kate Ferguson

The RA Committee proudly presented the Diamond Jubilee Awards to top National Senior Certificate achievers: **Caitlin Anstey (E23)**, **Kate Ferguson (E24)** and **Yasmeen Mohammed (E25)**.

RA Tertiary Education Bursaries were awarded to fellow alumnae: **Amani Hoosen (E20)** MBChB, **Caitlyn Benjamin (E22)** MBChB, **Sara Wepener (E22)** B.Music, and **Janel Broster-Masureik (E23)** BSc.Occupational Therapy, as generous contributions toward their studies.

RA Bursaries were also awarded to current learners, who accepted the offers with big smiles and long hugs that sealed the promise of support for their futures.

Further more, the prestigious Palmam Meruit Award was presented by RGHS to **Khadeeja Bassier (E04)** – chief Operating Officer at Ninety One – who most comprehensively embodies the spirit, intent and criteria of the distinction. Read more about Khadeeja Bassier [here](#).



Khadeeja Bassier

Alumnae AGM Report on 2025

“2025 has been a year of lively alumnae reunions, of trying to extend our bursary offering to more alumnae and to learners at both schools and of keeping alumnae informed with our quarterly newsletter and social media posts.

We bade farewell to Asonle Kotu as our Alumnae Relations Coordinator in September and welcomed Micaela Jordaan to the position. It is a great pleasure to have such a reliable and calm presence as part of the team. Micaela will be able to assist you in organising your year reunions and school tours.

In fostering the association of past pupils with each other, we have hosted an increased number of reunions this year, a record 10, and reported them in previous newsletters: E 2010, E 1975, E 1995, E 1970, London and Oxford Reunions, Sleep-over at Erinville Hostel, E 2015, E 1976 & E 1966.

The Shift Mentorship Program, inaugurated in 2023, continues. It allows alumnae to engage with learners and vice versa. Please volunteer to share your experience with the next generation [here](#).

Our quarterly Newsletter strives to include content from all decades of alumnae. We would love to hear your stories, news of gatherings and projects great or small so please contact us. RA is active on Social Media and would like to grow our presence. Links to Instagram, Linked-In and Facebook are on the website and at the end of the newsletter. Updating the Alumnae database will always be a work in progress so we encourage you to update your details on the Alumnet database or contact Micaela for guidance [Click here to update your profile](#).

RA is tasked with administering Bursaries that are held in Trust. We also award bursaries to alumnae & scholars from the bursary fund which relies on donations from alumnae. [See 2026 bursaries here](#)

Thank you to the alumnae who helped make a difference to our Rustenburg Community by supporting our donations to a Bursary Fund campaign last year. This collection campaign via a sign up to Karri (see page 4) proved successful and should be repeated. We are initiating a plan to support the Bursary Fund via a monthly stop-order of as little as R25 per month, or a direct deposit to RA. [Find Bank Details here](#).

Our RA Committee is represented by members of different age groups and diverse opinions. I thank them for generously sharing their talents and expertise in support of the RA committee endeavours. Thank you also to Nuria Jakoet (E10) for drawing up our Annual Financial Statements.

At the recent AGM, Farheen Mahmood (E15) resigned from the committee and we thank her for her calm perspective as a representative of young executive alumnae. We are grateful to welcome a new Treasurer, Kerusha Makan (Padayachee) (E06) to the committee. [See our committee members here](#).

I would like to thank the Alumnae who supported the AGM and RA Lunch, especially the reunion groups from E56, E64, E66, E82, E91, E96 & E06. Please engage with us as we rely on you all for news input and can help you connect with fellow Rustybugs.”



RA President
June Watson
(Tribelhorn) E71

Rustenburg Alumnae Lunch Report

An event is never quite complete without a delicious meal shared among friends. After the AGM, alumnae and special guests enjoyed lunch in the Thompson Hall at RGHS.

Alumnae gathered at beautifully decorated tables, the hall buzzed with conversation and the school's small music ensemble provided a lively backdrop for the event. Many matric groups including E56, E64, E66, E82, E91, E96 & E06 reunited. Following lunch, alumnae were invited on a guided tour of the school with the opportunity to see the many upgrades and changes made over the years.



Thank you to those who attended:

Caitlin Anstey, Shelley Brown (Arnold), Helen Arnett, Diane Berry, Janel Broster-Masureik, Ncumisa Bam, Lona Bam, Deborah Gaitskell (Bates), Jill Burns, Norma Bridgman, Sarah Brooke, Sue Watermeyer (Boehmke), Patricia Breyer (Cooper), Patricia Aitken (Crouse), Ronelle Crouse, Pam Palmer (Crapentin), Sheila Engelbrecht (Duckit), Flo Vernon (Duncan), Margi Dinan, Zaida Dawood, Helen Hendrick (Davies), Margaret Walsh (Dall), Denise Eaton (Davidson), Linda McLagan (Ellis), Adie de Groot (Fish), Meg Henderson (Finlay), Jen Ferguson, Kate Ferguson, Renee Fourie, Marlisa Harris (Groenewald), Warda Gertse, Micheal Gates, Felicity Swanson (Holmes), Jane Hofmeyer, Patricia Hepburn, Hilary Cloete (Hester), Naomi Hill, Ruth Leppan (Isaacson), Colleen De Villiers (Jacobson), Linda Keevy (Jefferey), Lauren Knight, Belinda Levine, Barbara J Lee, Margie Johnston (Morel), Elizabeth Jean De Jager (Mitchell), Marry van der Merwe (Mitchell), Marry Debrick (Muller), Pam Marten, Charmian Plummer (Marais), Yasmeen Mohamed, Janine Myers, Kerusha Makan (Padayachee), Joan Parker, Jackie Pollet, Jane Lamb (Russell), Brenda Morrow (Stupart), Diana Liddle (Sleep), Ruth Knight (Stephenson), Jean Dunn (Tyler), Min Berrisford (Trainor), Debby Brooke-Summer(Toy), Mary van Blerk, Caitlin Van dyk, Zephne van der Spuy, Doreen Malan (Visser), Rosalind Watermeyer, Catherine Mitchell (Winter), Kellie Smitheman (Weston), June Watson, Sara Wepener.

ALUMNAE IN UK?

Calling all Rustybugs in the UK! We are excited to explore the formation of an RA Branch for our alumnae living abroad. This would be a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with fellow Rustybugs, host gatherings, and share memories and experiences. If you are based in the UK and would like to help bring this branch to life, we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch!

Email: smithemans@btinternet.com OR
jordaanm@rghs.org.za

E56 Reunion

Lunch, Laughter, and Lifelong Memories at Bridgewater Manor

The 1956 Matriculants are a special group of Rustybugs. Motivated by head-girl, Charmian Plummer, and by Merrilee Berrisford, they have given back to Rustenburg and supported Alumnae activities for decades: The class of 1956 instituted the RGHS Ubuntu Award (presented each year to a learner who shows awareness and concern for the plight of others and reacts compassionately to those needs.)

[See some of their projects here](#)

They attended the RGHS Birthday Assembly and Lunch as usual with their enthusiastic spirit, where they “put place names on [their] reserved tables, sweets on the side plates, serviettes (blue, of course), in the glasses and specially-written speeches on the places (written by Charmian Marais, Head Girl of the School; Debby Toy, Head Girl of the Boarding House; and E56 Committee members: Merrilee Trainor, Joan Parker, Peggy Duffett, Debby Toy.)

Charmian Plummer reports, “we then congregated in a lounge in the Boarding House which ended up being Thommy’s old lounge where she used to chat to us or read stories to some of the senior boarders!”

With 60 years of camaraderie, they reunited again on 7 February for a Lunch at Bridgewater Manor in Somerset West. “On 7 February, 15 people came to Bridgewater Manor in Somerset West for Lunch: 14 Alumnae and 1 Carer.

Right at the start, we drank a toast to honour special memories: To Thommy; our devoted teachers; those true friends who were not there that day; and to our renowned school: Rustenburg Girls’ High School. Charmian brought red wine, Joan brought white wine and Merrilee bought an enormous bottle of rose wine, so we were well stocked! We said Grace and could start our meal!

By 16.00 we had departed and the Reunion was over! BUT we know that, although we shall NOT have another LARGE Reunion, we SHALL definitely meet for Tea or Lunch, in various Homes, in towns all over South Africa and in different Countries. The Spirit of RGHS will live on as long as WE live!”



Thank you to those who attended: **Pat Thompson (Ball), Helen Arnett (Calder), Janette Buckland (Deacon), Adie Groot (Fish), Ruth Leppan (Isaacson), Norma Bridgman (Law), Charmian Plummer (Marais), Joan Parker, Bosky Andrews (Roberts), Wendy van Rensburg (Thompson), Debby Brooke-Summer (Toy), Merrilee Berrisford (Trainor), Barbara Allen (von Imhoff), Marie Elder (van Oudtshoorn).**

E76 Reunion

Fifty Years, One Rustybug Family: Highlights by Linda Oakman

“The Class of ‘76 marked a wonderful milestone on 24 January 2026, hosting our 50th reunion lunch in the Thomson Hall at RGHS. The gathering was attended by 30 classmates as well as online guests who were unable to attend.

The morning began with a relaxed meet-and-greet over tea and snacks, followed by a tour of the school. Walking those familiar corridors was a nostalgic journey down memory lane, made even more meaningful by witnessing the many positive changes and growth that have taken place over the past five decades.



Principal, Michael Gates, extended a warm welcome, speaking passionately about education and transformation in a continually evolving South Africa. We were especially honoured to welcome Judith Gordon (Stuart-Watson), who taught many of us English in the 70’s. Her heartfelt address reflected on the power of memories, the value of relationships and the importance of celebrating life with compassion for ourselves and others.

Our keynote speaker, classmate Alison Barrett, took us on an evocative journey back to the 70’s – revisiting the highs and lows, the funky fashions, weird trends and influential moments that shaped our formative years. Those were distinctive times and, whether challenging or joyful, they played a significant role in shaping who we are today.

A special moment was when we sang the old school anthem, followed by a performance of the new school song by a representative group from the school choir – a modern and inclusive reflection of Rustenburg’s transformational journey. Classmates, some of whom had travelled from USA, UK and across SA to attend, were able to reconnect and reminisce over lunch.

The following day, we gathered once more for brunch at a restaurant in Noordhoek before saying our farewells – grateful for shared memories and the enduring thread that binds us together as Rustybugs. We are already discussing our next reunion in 2031 which will mark our 55th anniversary, and we hope that those who were unable to attend this time will be able to join us for the next celebration.”

Thank you to those who attended:

Cathi Albertyn, Cheryl Baker, Alison Barrett, Ailsa Dalton (Bisset), Gulian Boag, Gill Bray, Marelize Herholdt (Briers-Louw), Lesley-Anne Craddock, Lyndall du Toit, Alethea Duncan-Brown, Deborah Hall (Fish) Judith Stuart-Waston (Gordon), Glenda Rodrigues (Higgins), Linda Kuiper(Oakman), Cheryl Lancellas, Joanne Mather, Sheila Winter (Mathew), Fiona Powrie, Margaret Hulme (Ramsay), Elizabeth Ann Morton (Rowley), Carol Rand, Anne Guinevere Nortje (Ralph), Morton (Rowley), Yolanda van Wyk, Mimi Rupp, Balu Nivison (Searll), Penny Rider (Selby), Jill Smith, Ingrid Bianca Byerly (van der Spuy), Alison Weihe.

E66 Cocktail Reunion

Rooted in Friendship: Sixty Years Later, reported by Doreen Malan

“A long time in the planning, our 1966 Matric’s 60th school reunion was celebrated over three days. Our group of 29 had three E66’s joining us from the UK, one from the US and a few from other parts of S.A.

At a “Meet and Greet” Cocktail Party on Thursday, 5th February in Charlie’s Hope, a welcome address by Felicity Swanson (Holmes), our Deputy Head Girl, preceded the E66 Tree-planting Ceremony.



Thanks to Mr Gates who joined us briefly for a few words of welcome, a group photo and for doing the “spade work” in the planting of our White Pear Tree, *Apodytes Dimidiata* - thanks to the generous donations made by our E66's!

Over some bubbly and delicious canapés, we enjoyed reuniting with those we had not seen for a long time - in some cases the entire sixty years - and catching up with what we had done in the intervening years. The name tags were a great help in providing names to familiar faces. Our memorabilia table brought back many memories of our years at Rustenburg and highlighted the changes within the school with many new facilities, updated classrooms and upgraded learning spaces and labs.

The next morning 25 of us were back at the school for morning tea. The birthday assembly was a beautiful way for us to learn more of the recent achievements of our Alma Mater as well as the new school houses, the updated school badge and the revised school song, which was beautifully sung by all. Most impressive was the “Birthday CHEER” in the Quad, with the entire school participating!

After lunch in the Thomson Hall, where our E66 place mats recorded the new houses, motto, badge and school song (thank you Colleen de Villiers nee Jacobson), some joined a school and boarding house tour, to see for themselves all the many changes that had taken place over the past 60 years.

We finally ended our Reunion celebration with 18 of us attending a Farewell Brunch at the Kelvin Grove Poolside Cafe on Saturday. It was a very sad moment when we had to say goodbye to those who had come from afar, but those amongst us who are fortunate enough to live in the Cape are already making plans to get together soon!”

[See video and Article on attendees' interviews at tree planting ceremony](#)

Thank you to those who attended:

Shelley Brown (Arnold), Deborah Gaitskell (Bates), Sue Watermeyer (Boehmke), Patricia Breyer (Cooper), Patricia Aitken (Crouse), Ronelle Crouse, Margaret Walsh (Dall), Denise Eaton (Davidson), Janette Hartley (de Villiers), Sheila Engelbrecht (Duckit), Flo Vernon (Duncan), Linda McLagan (Ellis), Stella Henderson (Finlay), Pam Palmer (Grapentin), Aletta Robertson (Groenewald), Moiragh Girdwood (Hoets), Felicity Swanson (Holmes), Rosemary Salt (Horn), Colleen De Villiers (Jacobson), Linda Keevy (Jefferey), Mary Krone (Ledingham), Barbara J Lee, Elizabeth Jean De Jager (Mitchell), Margie Johnston (Morel), Dot Mackenzie (Oberlander), Jane Lamb (Russell), Ruth Knight (Stephenson), Jean Dunn (Tyler), Doreen Malan (Visser).

Remembering Fiona Chisholm E55

A Life Rich in Love, Laughter, and Leadership: From an obituary by Margot Roebert



Fiona Chisholm, a remarkable journalist and spirited individual, was born in 1939 in Glasgow amidst the challenges of World War II. She was the cherished youngest of three siblings. Fiona attended Rustenburg School from Sub A and matriculated in 1955. She played netball and served as a prefect.

After matriculating, Fiona spent a gap year in Edinburgh with her father, Erik Chisholm, and completed short courses in typing and shorthand. These skills launched her reporting career as a cub reporter at the Cape Times. Fiona earned her BA at UCT while working full-time. Her career in journalism quickly advanced to the roles of columnist and sub-editor and to arts editor at the Cape Times. Renowned for her exceptional writing and journalistic integrity, she inspired countless writers, nurtured talent and filled her department with laughter.



Beyond her professional achievements, Fiona was a beloved family member who embraced life with vigour, humour and generosity. Her love for nature was reflected in the gardens at her home in West Lake and Tokai, filled with blooming aloes and fuchsias. Whether she was running marathons, hiking in the hills, or dancing to Bob Marley with her great-grandchild, her zest for life was undeniable. Fiona's adventurous spirit was contagious and her generosity extended beyond her immediate family to friends.

Her spirited determination earned her numerous accolades in her journalism and running careers. For example, Fiona received the Fleur-Du Cap Theatre Award in 2002 for her long career as a trend-setting theatre critic. She completed seven Two Oceans Half-Marathons and earned gold and silver medals in her age group, reflecting her refusal to back down from a challenge.

After her beloved husband, Brian Lello, passed on, Fiona found unconditional love again with her second husband, David Pryce. They embraced new adventures and strengthened family bonds.

"Fiona Chisholm was a force of nature, a compassionate mentor, and an unwavering friend. She taught us to stand up for our beliefs and to embrace every moment. Her spirit will live on in the hearts of all who knew her, a reminder of the profound impact one person can have on many lives. A leaving a legacy of warmth, inspiration, and strong principles." - Margot Roebert



Spotlight on Marian Roberts E61 :

Honouring her mothers Legacy through Compassion

Marian Roberts graduated from UCT in 1964 and moved to London in 1965 where she completed her postgraduate Diploma in Social Studies. There she met and married her loving (late) husband, Simon Roberts , a young Law lecturer at the time. Six weeks after the birth of their first child, Adam, in 1982, Marian and her small family set off to Botswana where she volunteered as a night school teacher and contributed to her husbands research in interviewing women on their experiences under Customary Law.

Two years later Marian and her small family settled in Blackheath, South London, where they welcomed the arrival of their second child, Sara. The family remained in Blackheath, making sure to visit family and friends in the Cape and attend the occasional ROGU Reunions.

Today Marian is a qualified Barrister and Social Worker and has been in continuous practice as a family mediator at the SE London Family Mediation Bureau since 1982. As a Professional Practice Consultant, she has also been involved in the reuniting and the mediation of child abduction cases. She is a certified member of the European Network of Cross Border Mediators and has published extensively on family mediation. Her career reflects compassion, and the peaceful resolution of family disputes, while continuing to make a meaningful impact across borders.

With the warm heart and kind soul of a true RustyBug, Marian Roberts has also graciously donated to the bursary fund that assisted a current Grade 11 learner (Sinovuyo Mbobo) with her educational journey. The donation was made in remembrance of Marian's mother, Jean Bernadt, a compassionate and loving woman.

Jean was an active member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), the Congress of Democrats, the Federation of South African Women, and the Black Sash, among many other institutions. She was also a committed anti-apartheid activist opposed racism. In 2008 she was awarded the Order of Luthuli (in Silver) in recognition of her excellent contribution to the struggle against gender oppression.

Through this donation, Jean Bernadt's legacy of compassion and commitment to justice continues to live on through her family and the opportunities now being created for future generations.

[Read more from Marian Roberts and her mother here](#)



Marian Roberts with her mother in Cape Town, 1955

Donations to Bursaries: *Please Support*



Click the Karri image to donate on their website.

Donations added together will help us reach more alumnae.

The Karri platform is an ideal way to assist us build a legacy that uplifts, educates and empowers future generation of Rustybugs.

E67 Margie Cook (McKenzie)

Hands on Houses: Building Hope, One Home at a Time



When Margie Cook matriculated and entered university, she felt that “life was opening up.” She thought she would “graduate with [her] degree and travel round Europe with a girlfriend! Well, that did not happen!” she later wrote with humor. Instead, a young man entered her life, and two weeks after her university graduation she was married.

Two years later, the newlyweds travelled to England by ship up the west coast of Africa. They established a home on the Atlantic seaboard and began raising their family, intending to spend their lives there — “involved in local community, local church, friends and family.” As she simply put it, “Life was sweet and [they] were content!”



But in 1997, “life changed dramatically,” she wrote, when they were invited to live and work in Hawaii. They settled into a hundred-year-old plantation house where they spent the next ten years.

In July 2007, an opportunity in Southeast India arose. They left not knowing where they would live, carrying only the certainty that they were “to build small secure homes for widows, the disabled and the very poor out in the villages with a local pastor.” That step of faith marked the birth of *Hands on Houses*, a non-profit organization focused on building homes through community collaboration and volunteer efforts.



From the shack above to the house below!



Over the next seventeen years, the work grew beyond anything they might have imagined. Today, *Hands on Houses* has built 500 homes for widows and the very poor across India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Zambia, Argentina, El Salvador and the Philippines.

Now at 76, with her husband Don at 79, Margie lives in Florida, USA. Together they travel, speaking in churches, homes and school assemblies, promoting the work of Hands on Houses. They tell their eight grandchildren, “we will never retire!”

Looking back, she describes her life simply as “an adventure”, and she is grateful that “when a door has opened, [they] have had the courage to walk through it,” trusting that they serve a God who walks with them all the way and every day.

E76 Balu Nivison (Searll)

A Life in Motion: The Heart and Vision of Balu

Balu Nivison's journey has always been shaped by both intellect and intuition. She is a qualified social worker and honours graduate of UCT and Rhodes University. After winning the final-year dance award at Rhodes, her passion carried her to complete the community dance course at the Laban School, Goldsmiths College in London. Even in those early years of accomplishment, her calling was about healing.

She returned to South Africa at the height of apartheid with a dream to create an integrated dance troupe that could help mend a nation. In 1986, she became a leading force behind the groundbreaking production *Abamanyani* (Unity), a work that shifted the socio-cultural landscape of dance in South Africa and embodied hope during a time of deep division.

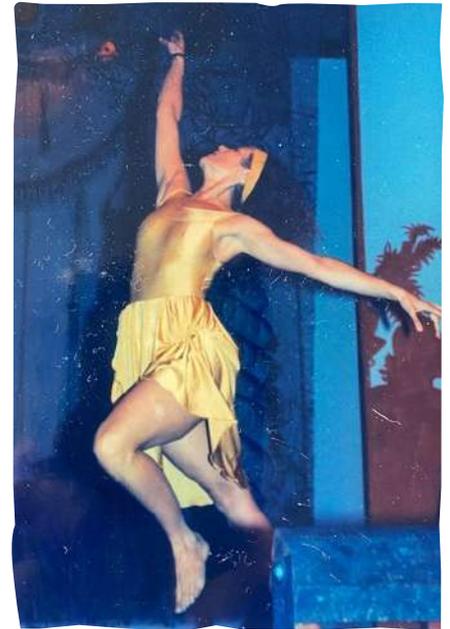
Her involvement in powerful “struggle” productions followed, including acclaimed performances at the annual National Arts Festival and theatres across the country. Her choreography for *Wild Honey* earned a *Vita Award* nomination in 1991 and was selected for that year's national Dance Umbrella — a moment of national recognition for work rooted deeply in purpose.

Her signature offerings, *MovingArt* (for young individuals) and *Soulful Rhythms* (for older individuals), weave together contemporary dance techniques, free movement, spiritual wisdom and embodied practice into what can only be described as a mind-body-soul experience.

In January 2015, Balu launched Indoni, an academy that offers a three-year post-school professional training programme for dance and integrated arts, including music, drama, and visual arts. Her aim was to establish a post-matric academy to nurture the pool of talent in a country so rich in culture like ours, that was not being celebrated sufficiently.

Today, as Managing Director/Fundraiser and facilitator of *Baba Yaya Wellness Programme* - with her eldest son Benjamin as co-director - her mission remains “dedicated to the upliftment, growth and development of township youth.” She works tirelessly to address the injustices of unemployment and under-resourced youth and is committed to the effective employment of collaborative creative leadership in addressing the social ills of our country.

[Read the full Article on Balu Nivison here](#)



RA Lanyards? 🙄🙄

The Alumnae committee is considering producing RA Lanyards featuring the classic Old School Badge and the RA logo.

If you'd be interested in getting one, please email jordaanm@rghs.org.za. Your response will help us decide whether to move forward.

E'95 Danielle Melville :

Potential is Greater than Circumstances



“High school is more than a place you attend for a few years. For me, it was preparation. It was possibility. It shaped my thinking, my discipline, my confidence and ultimately my legacy. It taught me to analyse, question, solve problems and to show up consistently even when it was hard.

I grew up with a single mother who worked three jobs to make sure I had a proper and comprehensive education. Through my schooling and their investment in me, I was afforded opportunities that opened doors. That lesson alone can change the trajectory of your life. RGHS is what allowed me to grow beyond what my circumstances may have predicted.

A strong education creates options and freedom to choose your future rather than have it chosen for you. School builds character. Deadlines teach discipline. Teamwork teaches collaboration. Leadership teaches responsibility. You learn that perseverance, integrity, and consistency often matter more than talent. Today, as a communications, brand and outreach specialist with over 23 years of experience across the public, private and civil sectors, my work remains rooted in those early lessons.

With a BA LLB from UCT, my career has focused on social justice, development, multi-stakeholder engagement and creating environments where entities can deliver meaningful social sustainable impact and growth. This includes my roles as Communications and Project Manager at Future4Baby.org, Head of Public Programming at Constitution Hill, Head of Communications and Outreach at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, and Operations and Communications Manager at the Association for Alcohol Responsibility and Education.

We are living in a time of great flux in our country especially within our education system and the provision of development pathways. Real transformation happens when we invest in people.

Re-joining the RGHS community as the Communications and Fundraising Manager is deeply meaningful to me because legacy is when your success becomes someone else's starting point. My hope is that my journey reminds every learner – past, current and future that your potential is greater than your circumstances.

E'21 Taura Benning:

Once a Matriculant, Always a Rustybug

“On the thirteenth of January, I found myself walking the same corridors and halls I had left behind five years ago as a matriculant. I believed my Rustenburg journey had come to a bitter sweet end. However, I am officially back - as a house mom at Erinville.

I completed my BSc in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and recently graduated with an honours degree in Plant Biotechnology from Stellenbosch University.

In my absence from RGHS, a stand out difference is the growth of technological opportunities, with the use of ipads and introduction of coding. Some things just don't change, like Mr Gates' colourful shirts and ties, Mnr Biermann's perfectly quaffed hair, our rivalry with Herschel and the continuous demand for our renowned tuckshop brownies. High school was in fact a wonderful time in our lives, although we thought that *that* maths test was the end of our existence! As an end off, I hope that both current students and alumni fondly remember their RGHS memories.



E'06 Kerusha Makan (nee Padayachee):

Building Partnerships, Delivering Impact



The RA Committee is very excited to welcome Kerusha Makan as our new Treasurer. Kerusha has over 13 years' experience in the banking and financial services industry and is a Principal of Transactional Sales at Nedbank in Cape Town.

She holds a B.Com in Economics and Finance from UCT and an MBA from the Gordon Institute of Business Science. She has worked in the Consumer, Telecommunications and Financial Institutions, earning a strong reputation for partnering closely with clients to deliver practical, value-driven transactional and liquidity solutions. Prior to joining Nedbank, Kerusha held senior roles at Standard Bank, where she led the South African Cash Non-Bank Financial Institutions sector as a specialist in Working Capital and Liquidity Management.

Kerusha's professional journey is shaped by her education. A culture of excellence, discipline and leadership at RGHS laid a critical foundation for her success in the corporate world where she navigates and thrives in demanding professional environments. Kerusha is a strong advocate for education and mentorship, believing that access to strong role models and supportive networks is essential to unlocking potential — particularly for young women entering the corporate space.

Beyond the boardroom, Kerusha is a devoted mother who enjoys spending time outdoors with her two daughters and exploring the world with her husband, Rashay, and family.

E'87 Allison MacKenzie (McDonald)

Nearly 40 Years Later: Reflections from an Unlikely Place

“Life is interesting. Who would have thought that almost 40 years after leaving school I would be writing this update from a war zone in Doha!

My path from Rondebosch has been interesting and varied. Although I was only officially a Rusty Bug for two years, the friendships I made during those years remain strong. I went to Stellenbosch after school. It was through some of my Rusty Bugs that I met my husband who was traveling through Africa. We married in 1997, settled in New Zealand and had a son. There I started working in schools volunteering so often they offered me a job!

I worked in different areas of the administration but it was in Admissions that I found my place. In 2011, a job offer came from Perth, Australia so we took the plunge! We found an amazing school for our son and I found a job at his sister school in Admissions.

During the pandemic another job offer materialized we found ourselves in the Middle East! Again I was luckily to secure a role in a school. This time as the inaugural Parent Relations Executive in the Canadian International School. Just when we thought we were settled for a while an offer too good to refuse came up in Doha, Qatar. We are not people to turn down an adventure, so again we packed our bags and towards the end of 2024 we headed to Doha. [...]



[Read the full Article on Allison MacKenzie here](#)

E'19 Mila Guerrini:

From Determination to Distinction: A Journey of Excellence and Resilience



Mila Guerrini matriculated from Rustenburg Girls' High School in 2019 and went on to study Medicine at Stellenbosch University. Albeit challenging, she reflects, "six years of med school flew by at an unimaginable pace." Her days were full and demanding with "early mornings spent in the lab, afternoons navigating the complex corridors of Tygerberg Hospital and late nights studying in the library, often into the early hours of the morning."

Mila had the opportunity to present her thesis research at the World Society of Paediatric Infectious Diseases (WSPID) Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, a remarkable milestone for a medical student. She also spent two months in London completing an elective rotation in Paediatric Respiriology at Royal Brompton Hospital.

Upon graduating in December 2025, Mila was awarded the academic medal as the overall top academic achiever across all six years of study, a Rector's Award for academic excellence and the Dean's Award for top achievement in Internal Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Ophthalmology, and Pharmacology. It was, as she describes, "a very rewarding end to six years of studying." With deep gratitude, she acknowledges her teachers and mentors at RGHS, the encouraging learning environment and the values and lessons learned there.

Now working as a new intern at Groote Schuur Hospital, Mila feels fulfilled and is experiencing "long hours, a lot of responsibility, plenty of laughs, and without a doubt, the occasional cry." She is "continually learning from those more senior as well as from mistakes made."

Outside the hospital walls, she is intentional about balance. She enjoys "keeping active — hiking, playing padell with friends or family". She has also come to appreciate the value of downtime, through journalling or practising gratitude.

RGHS Invites Alumnae as Talent Judges



On Friday, 30 January, RGHS proudly welcomed **Sarah Pengilly (E22)**, **Lauren Heiberg (E20)** and **Zoe Dennis (E20)** to be judges at the schools long-anticipated inter-house talent show.

Sarah Pengilly, E'22 reports - "Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of returning to my alma mater to judge the annual talent show. When I reflect upon my high school years, some of my fondest memories include watching and performing at the talent show. The enthusiasm, passion and support from the audience and fellow performers were always intoxicating; I'm glad to say that nothing has changed."

"The talent this year was overwhelming and there was a great variety. It was clear to me that each performer had dedicated a lot of time and effort to their performance. I truly admire the courage of each performer to come forward and present their talents to a massive audience, as this is usually the most terrifying aspect for a performer. I absolutely loved their performances."



From the RGHS Principal
Mr Michael Gates

It has been a wonderfully full and exciting start to 2026 at Rustenburg, and I was delighted to share so much of it with our Representative Alumnae at our recent meeting. We began the year celebrating exceptional NSC results. Our Matric Class of 2025 achieved a 99.4% pass rate, with 98.1% earning Bachelor passes and an extraordinary 570 subject distinctions. We were named the province's top girls' school (in fact, the top single-sex school) and ranked third overall in the Western Cape. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our learners, the commitment of our staff, and the steadfast support of our families.

This term has also been rich in celebration and connection. We were proud to host the GET and FET Celebration of Excellence, honouring the achievements of our learners across academics, sport and co-curricular life. Our Grade 8 Orientation once again reminded us of the warmth and spirit that welcome each new Rustenburg girl. Should you wish to see our weekly newsletter, please follow [the High School Newsletter here](#).

A particular highlight was Rustenburg's 132nd Birthday Celebration, where we gathered with Alumnae, past staff and special guests to honour our shared story. Congratulations once again to Khadeeja Bassier, recipient of the Palmam Meruit Award. It was a fun afternoon of reconnection, laughter and proud tradition. To all who joined us, thank you. Your presence and ongoing support mean a great deal to us and to the learners who walk these corridors today. If you were unable to attend, you can still share in the occasion by watching the following [YouTube video here](#).

We are also deeply grateful for the generous donations received from past learners to support those in need in our Rustenburg community. Your quiet kindness makes a very real difference in the lives of our girls. A special word of thanks to the Classes of 1956 and 1966, Marian Roberts, and Jean Scott for their thoughtful and meaningful contributions. This spirit of care and solidarity across generations is something we value enormously and never take for granted.

Rustenburg continues to thrive because of the strength of its community, past and present. We are sincerely grateful for the enduring connection of our Alumnae and look forward to many more opportunities to celebrate together.





From the RGJS Principal
Ms Belinda Petersen

The year began with exciting growth and renewal. A new Head of Culture role has been established to further enrich school life, while the isiXhosa department has expanded to three full-time teachers, strengthening our commitment to language learning. A number of focused committees — Health & Wellness, Safeguarding, Neurodiversity, Culture and Staff Connections — have been introduced to deepen collaboration and care across the school.

Learners have embraced a vibrant programme beyond the classroom, participating in educational outings and celebrating World Read Aloud Day. Sport and music continue to thrive, with more than 300 learners involved in the music programme. Music ensemble offerings have expanded to create even more opportunities for participation.

Our second five-year strategic plan places wellbeing, quality education, co-curricular excellence, sustainability, safety and community engagement at its centre. Together, these initiatives reflect a school community committed to growth, care and excellence in every sphere of school life.

[See Junior School Newsletter here](#)

Alumnae Return for RGJS's 132nd Founders Day



Alumnae are always welcome the RGJS Founders' Day Assembly and on Friday, 30 January, alumnae shared in the anniversary celebrations.

Guest speaker, **Amy Joy Davids E07**, carried the Birthday Candle into the hall — a symbolic moment honouring the school's rich legacy - and shared cherished memories of her time at RGJS, recalling light-hearted games and the powerful encouragement she received from her teachers. She inspired the Rustybugs to believe in themselves and to persevere through challenges as obstacles help strengthen and build character.

Alumnae were then treated to tea and a guided tour of the school, revisiting former classrooms and fondly reminiscing about their days at RGJS. Some even joked about donning Swap Shop school dresses and reliving their school years!



Thank you to those who attended:
Sandra Lefevre (Behrmann), Colleen De Villiers (Jacobson), Ah Kee, Deborah Walker (Lloyd), Stacy Low, Margie Johnston (Morel), Ali Bodill (McInnes), Kea Nchodu, Dima Nchodu, Camilla Shadwell, Unathi Stofile, Halima Shaik, June Watson (Tribelhorn), Mary van Blerk, Gabi Wighard.

Are you an alumna interested in giving an inspirational or educational talk to Rustenburg learners? We're looking for speakers who can motivate and guide young people on topics like business, careers, life skills, and personal growth.



SHIFT Mentorship Programme

We are looking for Alumnae Mentors/Hosts for our SHIFT Mentorship talks

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We would appreciate any news of alumnae, updates and interesting stories, please send them to jordaanm@rghs.org.za for inclusion in future newsletters.

Find the High School Newsletters at
<https://www.rghs.org.za/latest-news/bulletin-archive/>

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