

Camphill Farm Community in 2008

In the thirty years of its existence, Camphill Farm Community has done well in terms of the care provided to hundreds of people with intellectual disabilities and the infrastructure it established, with eight resident houses, workshops and community facilities such as Mercury Hall and the Phila Therapy Centre. On top of this, Camphill Farm Community is in a reasonably stable financial position (at least short term) with no debts. A big thank you has to go to the many generations of dedicated co-workers who have made this possible.

Camphill Communities worldwide are going through a challenging transition phase as many of the old, established ways of doing things 'the Camphill way' do not seem to work so well any longer. Camphill Farm Community is no exception to this. We have also entered an exciting transformation journey. There is a worldwide push towards more empowerment, inclusion and choice for all people with disabilities. The South African government is also pursuing this thrust with new policies such as 'Minimum Standards for Residential Facilities for People with Disabilities'. Here in South Africa we are heading for a situation that first world standards are being demanded at third world funding levels.

The three Camphill Centres in South Africa (Camphill School Hermanus, Camphill Village West Coast, and Camphill Farm Community Hermanus) together with the three Camphill Centres near Gaborone in Botswana, recently decided to cooperate closely under the umbrella of the recently formed 'Camphill Africa' entity. One of the aims of this promising new development is to partner with government so that our competence and leadership in creating inclusive, diverse communities of respect, opportunity and development for people with disabilities and complex needs can influence policy and benefit African society.

Part of the transformation journey is also to revamp our workshops, or enterprises, as we now call them. The original idea of early Camphill communities was to have workshops as a means of generating surplus funds for the centers, in balance with providing meaningful employment for the residents. In order for Camphill Farm Community to stay financially viable in the medium and long term, there needs to be a renewed emphasis on the economic performance of the enterprises, without jeopardizing the unique Camphill quality of meaningful employment.

Another major stepping stone in the transformation journey is to review the present volunteer/co-worker arrangements. Like many of the other hundred plus Camphills worldwide, Camphill Farm Community has been struggling to attract sufficient numbers of competent volunteer co-workers, who are prepared to stay for a few years at least under the present conditions. In particular the thirty/forty year old generation of volunteer co-workers are urgently needed. The traditional Camphill approach is to have volunteers who carry the organization. In return they have their basic needs met in terms of free board and lodging, basic medical

needs, children's education. They are given a very modest personal allowance to cover clothing, phone, transport, entertainment, holidays and hobbies. To date we have made no provision for superannuation and only a minimal resettlement allowance is given when volunteers leave. The world wide trend is towards attracting people who are qualified to meet the more and more complex and increasingly specialized needs of the community and expectations of government. It is also our aim to incorporate more local people.

We are going to great lengths to ensure that the unique Camphill ethos, which so many visitors to Camphill Farm Community comment on, does not get lost altogether for the sake of organizational efficiency and compliance with government expectations. We are re-familiarizing ourselves with the spiritual roots of Camphill and are searching for ways to enliven the spiritual foundation of Camphill Farm Community and to adapt it to the needs of South Africa in the early 21st century. I am personally totally committed towards upholding the timeless values of Camphill as expressed by Karl Koenig, the founder of Camphill and Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy.

Siegfried Gutbrod
Executive Director
Camphill Farm Community