



a dedication to healing...

The Global Natural Healthcare Trust (GNHCT) is a small charity doing a big job in South Africa! They provide herbal formulas to those with the HIV/AIDS virus free of charge. Sharon Henshall learns more.

Set up in 2001 by Annette Montague Thomas, GNHCT can be found on the Orange Farm Settlement, just outside Johannesburg. Thousands of people live here in extremely impoverished circumstances, many of whom are also afflicted with the HIV/AIDS virus. GNHCT Healthcare Workers treat several thousand HIV/AIDS patients at their holistic treatment centre, using herbal formulas. Treatment is given free of charge. There are now several thousand patients who, without their help, would have lost their lives.

And, their good work goes beyond the treatment centre. Annette recognised early on that mothers with HIV needed care provision for their children. What started with 7 orphans has grown to a whole Foster Care System now being in place. It offers a home, a family, schooling and piece of mind for the sick mothers.

GNHCT aren't the only clinic on the settlement but they are the only one offering home visits. "Imagine a settlement with over 5 million people living in abject poverty and many afflicted with HIV/AIDS," says Annette. Not everyone can make it into the clinics and so GNHCT will travel out to peoples' homes where necessary. "In South Africa over 1,000 still die every day without food and medicines."



Annette is the beating heart of GNHCT and has spent over 30 years of her life in medicine. She began training as a pharmacist but soon realised that she wanted to know the patients she would help to heal. "When I trained in Herbal Medicine, for me it was like waking up in love every morning and going to sleep in love every night," recalls Annette. "Being a medical herbalist is a responsibility. Each medical herb has different therapeutic qualities and each part of the plant has different healing powers. You need to know how to compile these plants to make a prescription to help heal the bodily systems."

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Annette spent 10 years in Kenya, firstly managing a health resort and then with UNICEF. It was here that she believes she began to understand the needs of the African people. She has undertaken a huge task and has made many personal sacrifices along the way. Funds initially were raised through remortgaging her home, selling her grandmother's diamond ring, and maxing out several credit cards. She has been 100% committed to the work she does from day one. When in the UK, she'll be up at 5 a.m. to answer e-mails and search the web for fundraising ideas. "It's the fundraising that is beginning to take its toll," says Annette. "That's

where I urgently need help." Every three weeks, she flies to Africa to see 400-600 HIV/AIDS patients in various healing crises, check-in orphans and rush around to see patients that are deemed bedridden. This is where her energies need to lie. There is now a £5 a month scheme to help fundraise. It's just finding the time to highlight this to potential givers that is the challenge!

The Cuddle Centre, their latest project will be completed in December to open for World Aids Week 2009. One side of this unit will have space for 30 babies and 30 toddlers. The other side will be a holistic hospital for 25 adults - a place to heal for 6-8 weeks before returning home. "Many just need to be built up with good nutrition and be in hygienic surroundings," says Annette.

GNHCT have formulas that are working. They have been offering these treatments since 2001 and now have formulas they can trust. "We have worked with horrendous cases that had no hope," recounts Annette. "We haven't saved everyone and many have died in my arms, but we do help many." They also offer huge support to those who have lost loved ones to the HIV/AIDS virus. Sibonge lost his wife earlier in the year and now his child has also died. He told us how through visiting the GNHCT centre he feels part of a family again - all part of his healing process.

I asked Annette how she copes with the challenges her work brings. "We are not saints, but good souls prepared to try our best in life," she responded. 🙏

You can find out more about the work of GNHCT and the £5 a month scheme at www.gnhct.org