

## THEMBA AND MANUNGE AND THEIR STORY OF HOW THEY STARTED ENHANCING THE LIVES OF OTHERS AT OCEANVIEW SCHOOL - A SCHOOL FOR KIDS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

How does one start a story with no ending? It is very surprising, that when Themba was a puppy she grew up in our loving home with tall, huge teenagers and 2 adults and when she went to training school there were also only adults that she encountered – therefore when a friend of mine popped round with her 2 small kids of 3 and 5 years old, Themba had never met or come across “little people” so she barked and barked at the kids from sheer fear as she just did not know what these little creatures were. I therefore had to introduce her to more small children and socialise her with kids at schools and churches so that she realised she need not be fearful of them. She soon adapted and even on the beach she came to realise actually kids were quite fun and would not harm her. From these beginnings I find it amazing she has put her total trust in me and she just loves and enjoys her work at Oceanview school so much. I think she finds it as rewarding as I do !!! – she gets all the pats and attention and adoration from the kids and she seems to sense they need to touch her for some food for their souls. Perhaps it teaches the kids kindness, sensitivity, caring, gentleness, and in return they get a wet kiss, a wag of the tail, a soft touch and a loving look. Perhaps its just a break for the kids from their normal routine and it gives them an opportunity to walk in the fresh air, in control of a furry friend and to interact with us who give them total unconditional love.

The kids at Oceanview know when it is a Wednesday when we visit them and similarly Themba and Manunge know when it is a Wednesday as their vocabulary is soooooo vast and I wake them up to say that they are off to work and put their yellow “Pets as Therapy” scarves around their necks and I pack their water bottle, brush and biscuit treats as the children at Oceanview give the dogs a walk, a brush and a biscuit treat. A few of the kids are in wheel chairs , so Manunge the little wire haired daschund is a perfect candidate to sit on their laps and he feels their need to hold him close and for most of the kids it is a rare happening to come into such close contact with a loving well behaved, happy dog. Some of the children have had to overcome their fear of dogs as we have encouraged them to get to know the dogs that visit them and we try to teach the kids that the dogs will not harm them and that they love the attention from the children.

To say that the both Themba and Manunge come home totally exhausted is an under statement – they find a quiet spot in the house and sleep for the rest of the day until they sense it is time for their afternoon leisure walk!