

Volmoed Youth Leadership Training Program Report August 2025



VOLMOED YOUTH
LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

It continues to be a very exciting year for everyone in the Volmoed Youth Leadership Training Program (VYLTP), as there have been many inspiring events in the last few months.

Two of the 2024 cohort are artists who made a beautiful gift to thank one of our volunteers from the Netherlands. He had engaged deeply with many of the cohort and did a weekly session on 'Leaders are Readers' to introduce them to a love of reading. Their beautiful framed and mounted artwork used fabric and textures to make a picture of their weekly group session with him, and it was easy to see who was who in the picture!



16 June is National Youth Day in South Africa. Our VYLTP group travelled to Lavender Hill in Cape Town for a Youth Day event, exhibited the drums they made, and held a drumming session. They even encouraged the Western Cape official to bring the event to Hermanus next year, who liked the idea and encouraged them to speak with the organising team.

On July 18, which is international Mandela Day, VYLTP invited the local Hermanus communities to join them in drumming for 67 minutes, to represent the 67 years that Nelson Mandela dedicated to public service, fighting for social justice and human rights.



The event was held in the Overstrand Boxing Club, as Mandela enjoyed boxing and was a skilled boxer. Many people of all ages joined them in this event that brought people from diverse races and cultures in the Hermanus area together to celebrate Nelson Mandela. They made it into the local newspaper with a lovely article written about VYLTP and the drummers.

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Drumming up a storm for Madiba



During the recent Grahamstown Arts Festival, the Volmoed drummers gave electrifying performances both inside and outside the Cathedral of St Michael and St George in Makhanda. PHOTO: Supplied

ELAINE DAVIE

The sounds are more evocative than that of the African drum, especially for those who grew up with it, as Madiba must have done. What could be more appropriate than celebrating his life with 67 minutes of drumming!

That is what the Volmoed Youth Leadership Drumming Group will be doing this Friday at 12:00 at the Hermanus Boxing Club next to the Waldorf School in Sandbaai. And the best part of it, you can join in. If you don't have a drum of your own, you can rent one there for R50. Within minutes, you'll be drumming out the rhythm with the best of them. Please arrive by 11:30 so that you can get settled before the celebration begins.

This group of unemployed young people are making a name for themselves. Towards the end of last year, they participated in a whirlwind knock-out tour of the American Midwest and have just returned from giving performances in George and at the Grahamstown (Makhanda) Arts Festival.

Rev Edwin Aronson of the Volmoed Retreat Centre in the Hermet-en-Aarde Valley is passionate about the Youth Leadership Project, of which he is director, and which encompasses far more than drumming performances. An offshoot of the initiative, though, is the beautifully decorated handmade drums they produce, not only for their own use, but also to sell.

Edwin describes the symbolism behind drum-making: 'Each drum incorporates the spirit of the tree, the spirit of the goat and the spirit of the human being: together they ensure that African drumming becomes a profound spiritual experience.'

Another of the Volmoed Youth Leadership Programme's initiatives is to send two or three members of the group to the small town of Tazet in France each year for three months of volunteering.

The Tazet spiritual community was established at the end of WWII by a French priest, Brother Roger, and a group of eight other men, as a centre of reconciliation and unity. While residents of

the town had been responsible for hiding Jews during the war, Brother Roger started to visit German prisoners-of-war, with a message of reconciliation.

A strong link exists between members of the Volmoed community and Tazet, based on the relationship between the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Brother Roger. It is now a worldwide spiritual centre, with a focus on youth, and renowned for its unique musical tradition. According to Edwin, there could be 5 000 young people staying there in any given week.

In October this year, two more members of the VYLTP will be joining a third who is there for a second stint. In addition to gaining an insight into the spirit of reconciliation and unity it embodies, our young people are given the rare opportunity to interact with counterparts from around the world.

If you would like to know more about the VYLTP, you can contact Elaine at edwin@volmoedyouth.org.za.



Every year in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape, there is a National Arts Festival. It was a dream for the new 2025 VYLTP group to go on a mini-tour to attend some of the festival. Thanks to a very generous donation by a major donor, and many other donations, the dream became a reality. They are quite new to drumming, but had been working hard every Thursday at

Volmoed with Themba Lonzi, the drum master, to prepare. It was a fantastic tour, where they were hosted by various groups and families in the area. They were not a part of the official festival program as this was a learning experience for them. They did get to perform in the beautiful historic Cathedral which has great acoustics for music and hosts several festival events. They were able to perform both inside and then outside the cathedral. What a memorable experience this was! And a good way for the young people to develop character, new skills, confidence, and to see who the emerging new leaders are.



We are very excited that one of our 2024 cohort was accepted to return to the Taizé community in France as a long term volunteer for eight months. She had previously volunteered in 2023. Inathi left in April and returns in January, and has been involved in managing the kitchens, the children and family program, and a whole lot more. She is learning new skills that will be invaluable here on her return. She even met up with one of our regular leadership facilitators who was attending a meeting in Taizé. We were then invited to send two more young people to volunteer for three months, and they are currently applying for visas.

This week the VYLTP drummers welcomed the Tutu Travel seminar group to Volmoed with drumming, as well as the VYLTP coordinator who had been away on surgery recovery and sabbatical time. The group also sang for the visitors.



The young people continue to work in the drum workshop on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Thanks to your generous donations, we are now able to pay

them a small hourly rate, so they receive a small amount monthly, according to the hours they worked. This makes a big difference as they are able to contribute to their families and putting food on the table.



They spend Thursdays at Volmoed, and this month the focus for discussion and learning is Gender Based Violence and Femicide. They also spend time drumming together, as this helps them deal with the stresses they carry and is part of the healing aspect of the program.

**THANK YOU ALWAYS FOR YOUR
GENEROSITY AND SUPPORT!**

