

Monthly Newsletter

OLD UNIONITE ASSOCIATION

December 2024



A Word from the Chairman

As we approach the close of another year, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared in 2024.

This year has been one of consolidation and planning, a time where we focused on strengthening the foundation of our community and laying the groundwork for the future. Together, we have made significant strides in uniting our network and advancing the values that have long defined our Old Unionite family. The support and dedication from each one of you has been invaluable. Your engagement, whether through your time, energy, or contributions, has been instrumental in the progress we've made.

It is this collective effort that truly defines the spirit of our Union, and I am deeply grateful for the commitment shown by our members throughout the year. As we look toward 2025, I am filled with a sense of optimism and anticipation. The hard work we've put in over the past year has set the stage for even greater opportunities in the year ahead. I hope that this festive season offers you time to recharge, reflect, and enjoy the company of loved ones, and that 2025 brings renewed energy, exciting possibilities, and continued success for us all.

On behalf of the Old Unionite committee, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your families for a blessed and peaceful festive season.

May the new year be filled with health, happiness, and fulfilment.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support. I look forward to all that we will achieve together in 2025.

Rhett Newton

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News from the school

Our beloved Union Schools' Bluthner Baby Grand piano, a treasured instrument that has been part of our community for many years, is in need of restoration.

This piano, which was manufactured in 1906, was purchased from the **Education College** and has since provided countless beautiful memories, enriching the musical experiences of both learners and our community. It has been the heart of many performances, events and music lessons, creating a legacy of harmony and joy.

As with all precious things, time and use have taken their toll, and the piano now requires some much-needed TLC to continue bringing music into the lives of future generations.

We are incredibly grateful to share that we have received a fantastically generous donation of R50 000 towards the restoration of our Baby Grand.

This donation comes from a very special family who has supported Union by putting four of their children through our school and have been firmly entrenched into the very fabric of Union. This heartfelt contribution has given us a wonderful start to the restoration project and we are now reaching out to our extended Union family for help in completing this important work.

We appeal to anyone whose blood runs with musical notes to consider donating towards the remaining balance needed. No contribution is too small - every bit will make a difference and help us bring this iconic piece of Union history back to life for future generations of learners.

If you are moved to support this project, please make your donation to the Academic Fund via our fundraising platform at www.oua.co.za. Please send us a message on 067 338 8098 or email oldunionites@unionschools.co.za, should you make a donation, so that we are able to allocate it directly to this project.

Thank you for your continued support, and for helping us keep the music playing at Union.



Members of the Union community are invited to attend the **FOUNDERS' WEEKEND 2025** celebrations on Friday and Saturday, 24 and 25 January 2025. *The event will mark the founding of Union High School 106 years ago.*

- Full details about the weekend's programme will be made available early next year.



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We are proud of...

The Old Unionite Association is proud to announce the appointment of Old Unionite, Maré Bosch, as the new principal of HMS Bloemhof in Stellenbosch.

A graduate of Union High School's Class of 1994, Mare's remarkable journey from a talented learner to a seasoned educational leader is an inspiring testament to her dedication, versatility and passion for education.

Maré Bosch enters her new role with an impressive array of qualifications and skills that perfectly position her to lead HMS Bloemhof into its next chapter of academic excellence. With a background in education, sports, and business, Mare has always been known for her multifaceted approach to learning and leadership.

These skills, combined with her in-depth understanding of the challenges facing modern education, make her an exceptional choice to guide one of Stellenbosch's esteemed institutions.

During her time at Union, Maré stood out not only as an academically gifted learner but also as a well-rounded individual who excelled in sports, playing 1st team hockey and tennis. Her involvement in these various sports activities developed her leadership, teamwork, and time-management skills.

Her mature approach to life earned her a place on the prefect body, while her love for mathematics and logical problem-solving laid a solid foundation for her academic career. These qualities, honed during her high school years, have clearly shaped her into the dynamic educator and leader she is today.

The HMS Bloemhof community is fortunate to have such an accomplished and versatile leader at its helm. Maré's appointment heralds an exciting new chapter for the school, and the Old Unionite community could not be more delighted to see her continue to flourish in her career.

We wish Maré Bosch all the best as she embarks on this new and exciting phase of her professional journey. Her leadership will undoubtedly inspire the next generation of learners at HMS Bloemhof, and we look forward to hearing about her continued success in shaping the future of education.

Congratulations, Maré!



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The 'Big Field'



**BY OLD UNIONITE
REBECCA LANGMEAD
(CLASS OF 2018)**

We currently live about 400m from the high school that I attended.

What is particularly noticeable about this school is that it has a massive green field, a lush and vibrant welcome mat. The groundsman are masters at their art, and somehow, they are able to keep the grass luminous all year round.

With a mountain as a backdrop, a skirting of trees and white wooden fences, I truly believe that this field could be one of the most beautiful school fields in South Africa.

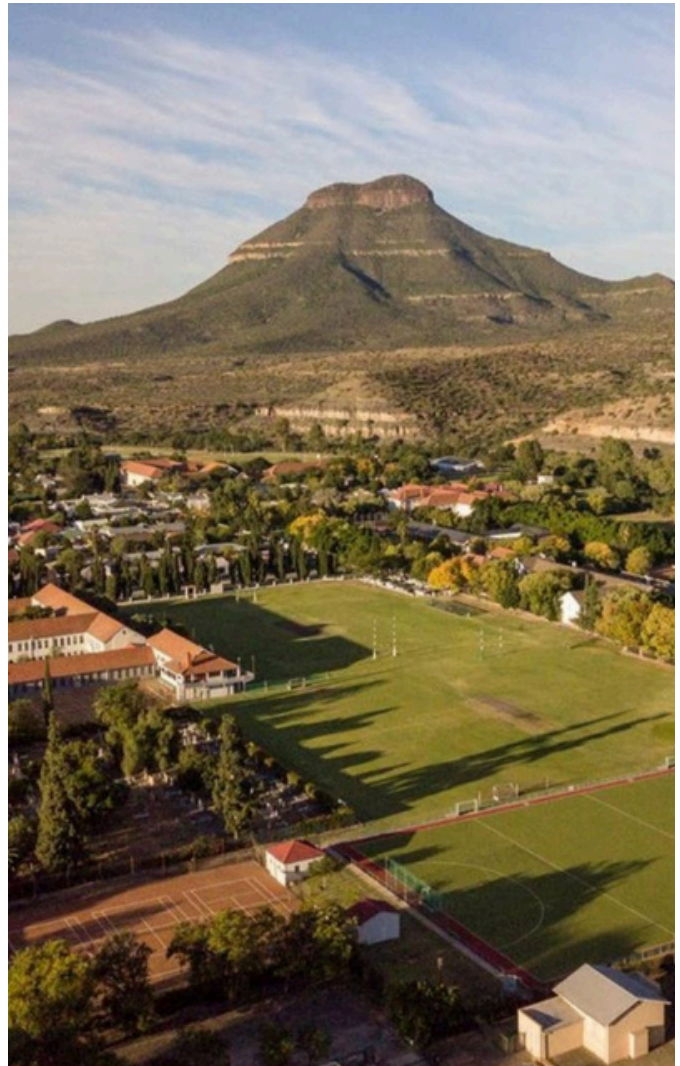
From grade one to four, we used the 'pikkie' field, a smaller patch of grass, a little sanctuary for the younger learners. But how we yearned for the "Big Field" (we quite literally called it that). In the evenings when the 'Big Field' was less occupied, we were allowed half an hour on it to play.

We relished in those precious moments of jumping, running, sprinting, imagining and dreaming on the soft kikuyu. It always went so fast, and before long, the 'inside time' whistle was blown.

When we got to high school, the Big Field was now our everyday stomping ground. It was where we spent our break times, afternoons, sport practices, and even some weekends. It sounds ridiculous, but other than being in actual class, the rest of the time we spent on this field. The more time that you spent on the green grass, the more you realised that it was so much more than just a school ground.

There was a slight indented trail in the grass, running from the hostel, across the field using the most direct route, to the front gates of the school. Gosh, the amount of times that we walked that route.

In the winter, the frost would turn the ground white, and you could literally see the trail of footprints as the school-going soles melted the ice away. We started school very early, so in the darker months, we walked that route under candy floss sunrises. About once a month, you would see a rare phenomenon...



All of the girls would be sprinting back to hostel after school (despite the usually lethargic post class state). When you saw this happening, you knew that pork chops were being served for lunch. They were everyone's favourite hostel meal and the first people in line got first choice for the biggest chops. If you were in 'love', your handsome knight in shining bottle green uniform would walk by your side the entire way to the gate, ensuring that you managed the treacherous 150 meter journey home.

There was a certain section of the field with a cement block that hosted the ongoing 'four square' or what we called 'bolla' championship. This was serious business, four major athletes at a time, fighting for champion title with only sheer grit and a (now brown) tennis ball.

There was a tiny cement skirting around the one side of the field, about ten centimetres high. As much as we claimed to be teenagers, and not children anymore, conversations tended to gravitate towards the block. Turns out, you're never too old for some casual balancing practice.

In about grade six or seven, when boys started being more than stinky monkeys, the girls would wait eagerly to see if they would come to the field after lunch (we didn't have cellphones yet to plan these sort of things). If they did, we would play cricket and touch rugby for the whole afternoon, be incredibly mean, and show absolutely no love interest at all.

It was on that field where we pooled together our coins and counted them frantically to try and afford one portion of warm slap chips. If we could, we would share them between about 12 people and only end up with approximately three chips each. Totally worth it.

That field means a lot to me. It was when I was lying on it, under the shade of the evergreen trees on one warm afternoon that I discovered the feeling of newness in the spring air that I now look forward to every year.

It was on that field where I ran and played my heart out, trained until I was broken, and formed a sisterhood with my team mates for so many years.

It was on that field where I had my first little hand hold and first little kiss.

It was on that field where I experienced the most thrilling thunderstorm of my life. It was bucketing down and we were all drenched, sprinting, laughing and spinning around in the rain.

It was on that field where I realised the importance of female friendships, and how lucky I was to start and end each school day walking in a bundle with my best friends. We had a silly little rule that nobody was allowed to walk to school alone, we waited for everyone before we walked. In retrospect, perhaps it wasn't so silly.

When we lived in hostel, there was no wifi, TV or Netflix. No makeup, dresses or kitchen to bake in. Most of what we had to entertain ourselves with was a really big green field.

The grass of Union High School runs deep. It's roots fed by every soul that has walked on it. Soft enough to provide a cushion for when you fall down, hard enough to make you stand up again. I have been returning to this field more often recently. I am trying to keep fit, and it is the most convenient place to practice my sprints. However, it feels different than it used to, there is now an energy of quiet, deep longing, and the comforting pain of nostalgia.

Perhaps it was never about the field, and it was always about the people who I walked it with. The laughs, tears, stories, fights, problems... they didn't come from the ground, but from the bodies around me. That field holds the people together who are meant to be there, and when your time is done, it lets you go.

This week in the panic years, I wondered what my next 'Big Field' will be. Will it be a cycle lane that I cycle countless times with my friends, on all days, good and bad?

Will it be a dinner table that gets embedded with conversations, card games, conundrums and cuddles?

Will it be a tiny cafe on the corner where they know my name and ask me if I want my 'usual'?

Will it?



The date for **INTERSCHOOLS 2025** has been set!

Mark your calendars for the weekend of **15 & 16 August** next year! Get ready for an amazing weekend filled with spirited rivalry between our beloved Union Schools and Volkskool!

In 2025, the honour of hosting goes to the Union Schools and we can't wait to see everyone there!

A historic announcement!

Interschools moves back to the Union campus

We are thrilled to announce a landmark moment in the history of Union High School - for the first time since 1971, the entire Interschools festival will be hosted on the Union campus!

This exciting development marks the return of all Interschools events, including the much-loved rugby matches, to home turf.

For years, the rugby games have been held at the Botanics Sports Grounds, but after much debate, careful negotiation, and meticulous planning, it has been decided that Interschools 2025 will bring all the action back to the Union Schools' campus. This is a monumental occasion for the Union community, one that promises to elevate the Interschools experience to new heights!

A Proud Tradition Reborn

The tradition of Interschools has always been one of fierce competition, school spirit, and the chance to celebrate the rich history of Union High School and its rivalry with Volkskool. We know that Interschools is about more than just the games - it's about the gathering of the Union family. It's about old friends reconnecting, current learners showcasing their talent, and supporters cheering from the sidelines.

The atmosphere at Union during Interschools is electric, and this year, watching the rugby matches from the comfort and familiar surroundings of The Union will undoubtedly take the event to another level. The stands will be packed, the crowds will be roaring, and the spirit of the Union Schools will be alive like never before.

Old Unionites, We Want You There!

This momentous occasion is not only for the current learners, staff and families, but we also want to invite all Old Unionites from near and far to join us for the festivities.



Whether you're a recent matriculant or someone who walked the halls decades ago, Interschools 2025 will be an event to remember - one that binds generations of Union alumni in celebration of the school that has shaped us all.

The Union spirit is timeless, and we look forward to seeing as many Old Unionites as possible returning to their alma mater for this historic event.

We can't wait to welcome everyone to the heart of Union High School for what promises to be a day of excitement, camaraderie and school pride. So, dust off your Union gear, practice your cheer and get ready to witness the thrilling competition from the best seats in the house — 15 & 16 August 2025!



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Sports Matters at our Alma Mater



Union cricket on the rise

The Old Unionite Association is proud to announce that talented Union High School cricketer **Yaseen Kazi** has been selected to represent the Eastern Province (EP) u/16 cricket team.

Yaseen will be competing in the u/16 National Boys' Cricket Week scheduled to take place in Tshwane from 10 to 14 December, 2024. This national event will serve as a platform for young athletes to showcase their talents and compete against some of the best u/16 players from across the country.

Yaseen's selection is a reflection of his hard work, resilience and passion for cricket.

The Union community congratulates him on this outstanding achievement and wishes him the best of luck as he prepares for this exciting competition. We look forward to seeing him shine and further his cricketing journey on a national level!



Congratulations to Union High School cricketers, **Makukhanye de Beer**, **Yonela Wana** and **Shaakir Kazi** on being selected for the 2024 EP Rural Inlands u/17 Team.

We wish them the best of luck when they compete in the SA National u17 Rural Week (5 to 10 December 2024) at the Drostyd Technical High School in Worcester.

(Well done to Shaakir who has been selected to captain the side, while Union's Mr Edorique Gouws has been appointed to manage the team.)

Well done Jenna!



The Old Unionite Association is thrilled to spotlight an exceptional Old Unionite, **Jenna McNaughton** (Head Girl of the Class of 2019), who was among the brilliant minds at the Medical Physiology division within the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Stellenbosch University to showcase their Final Honours Project Presentations, last Thursday, 21 November - achieving Cum Laude!

📷 In the group picture, Jenna can be seen standing second from the right among her fellow Honours students.

Jenna, we can't wait to see where your talents will take you next! Keep shining! 🌟

Completing the ISUZU IRONMAN 70.3 triathlon race in Mossel Bay (held on 19 November) is no small feat, but we are proud to say that Old Unionite, Mr Stegmann Van Zyl (Class of 2009) absolutely crushed it

With an impressive total time of 4:56:44, Mr van Zyl finished the 1.9km swim in a time of 0:38:49, the 90km cycle in 2:33:39 and the 21,1km run in 1:33:10.

His exceptional performance placed him 11th in the competitive age group of 30-34 and 35th overall among all male competitors.

WELL DONE!



Thank you!

A heartfelt thank you to all who joined us for our Old Unionite "Build a Burger" evening on 1 November!

What an incredible evening it was, with so many familiar faces - across generations - coming together to celebrate community. **The success of this event is a testament to the wonderful people in our local Old Unionites family, still driven by that strong sense of connection and belonging.**

Our dream doesn't stop here! We aim to expand these gatherings beyond our current community, to other provinces, and eventually, the world! 🌍

As we continue to build and refine our database, we ask that you help us keep it as up-to-date as possible.

If you know anyone who might not be on our lists but would love to join in the future, please **reach out to us at 067 338 8098 or oldunionites@unionschools.co.za**. Your support in spreading the word means the world to us!

In the next issue:

Founders Day - the what, the where, the how...

The Old Unionite Bursary - a prizegiving staple

The Class of 2024 - NSC results

2025 and the Old Unionite Association

Thank you for reading!