

## HEARING AND TALKING TESTIMONY OF UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

JANUARY 2016

If you have the opportunity to visit the **Carel du Toit Centre in Parow**, you will experience the joys of children's voices in an unexpected way. You'll see soft flickering lights of their hearing devices. You will hear that conversations are as any other hearing children. Then only will you realise the magnitude of how your support to the **Carel du Toit Trust** has enabled the life-changing work of the Centre. Here at this school, you have helped to influence the life path of hearing impaired children, who learn to speak and thrive.

We all have something or someone we are thankful for and this mother's story is of how she has experienced her thankfulness. Thankfulness for a precious daughter and thankfulness for the spoken language she feared may not have been possible for her hearing impaired child.

### This is Helette's story ...

"Mieke was born 12-14 weeks prematurely, weighing a dainty 495 grams. Our family was suddenly in an unfamiliar and terrifying situation, not knowing what to expect next for our precious hospitalised newborn. Waiting for her to 'make it through the next 24 hours' turned into 119.5 days!

In the Neonatal ICU, medical terms such as CPAP, Bradycardia, and resuscitation became normal terms, and the once nerve wracking sounds of monitors became comforting. We waited three weeks for her eyes to open and her ears to be fully formed and it was actually a privilege to see my daughter develop in this way. Regular eye and hearing tests were done and though she failed her hearing test on her left ear, it was retested and found to be fine. Had we known better at the time, we would have requested another test.

Six weeks after her discharge, she started physiotherapy. We realised that her speech development was not on par with her peers and at the age of four we could no longer ignore the fact that she was still not talking, especially since having speech therapy too. I phoned the physiotherapist for some direction after an emotional day and she put me in contact with an Occupational Therapist to determine whether any physical problems were hindering her development. Our appointment was at the Carel du Toit Centre and there, our partnership with this organisation started. Mieke was initially accepted due to her severe speech delay and apraxia from birth and enrolled in 2012. We participated in critical Parent Guidance sessions once a week to learn how to assist Mieke to progress optimally. We realised there were things we had to stop doing to help Mieke progress – simple things like completing her sentences for her instead of leaving her to complete it by herself. We also had to stop repeating incorrect sentences but rather give her the chance to try again.

In 2013 Mieke's hearing was tested at the Centre and the diagnosis was a moderate hearing loss in her left ear and that she needed a hearing aid. Since wearing the hearing aid, Mieke has excelled in her speech and progressed well in all areas where she previously struggled. She has learned to speak and we are very grateful for that. We have witnessed how Mieke blossomed from a shy, insecure little girl into a beautiful butterfly. Our darling daughter won the 'Talk Trophy' in 2013 for the pupil who best developed in speech for the year. At the Carel du Toit Centre, the teachers and therapists are so tuned in with the children and constantly build their independence, confidence and self-esteem. The Centre taught our family how to embrace her impairment and not be afraid of it.

The Carel du Toit Centre is definitely a preferred choice for a child who is hearing impaired."

- Helette Slabber  
Mother of Mieke

Visit [www.careldutoit.co.za](http://www.careldutoit.co.za) for more information.

