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Deaf Children at Carel du Toit Centre - HOLA - April 2026 - article

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Renovation Unlocks New Futures for Deaf Children at Carel du Toit Centre

For children born with hearing loss, the ability to listen, speak, and connect with the world can shape the course of their lives. The Carel du Toit Centre has unveiled its newly renovated facilities, strengthening its ability to support deaf and hearing-impaired children during the most critical years of development.

The renovation was unveiled on Thursday 9 April, and was made possible through the support of the Rotary Club of Bellville (South Africa), and the Rotary Club of Bristol Breakfast (United Kingdom), the National Lottery Commission, Janie Mouton Foundation and leading furniture retailer Lewis Group.

At its core, the project reflects the power of sustained collaboration, particularly the longstanding partnership between Rotary Clubs in Bellville and Bristol Breakfast, which has evolved in the last decade into a model of international cooperation in action.

Rotary's involvement has helped improve the facilities and expand the programmes that children and families rely on every day. Together, the partnership demonstrates how shared purpose can translate into tangible, life-changing outcomes.

“Our partnership shows just what can be achieved when communities come together with a shared commitment to service and opportunity. The impact is seen not only in the facilities, but in the futures of the children who benefit from them every day,” says President, Pieter van der Walt from the Rotary Club of Bellville.

The Sound of Early-Stage Change

Based at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town, the Carel du Toit Centre, together with its CHAT Early Intervention Centre, continues to champion early diagnosis and intervention as the most decisive factor in a child’s development. Its listening-and-spoken-language approach is rooted in natural language acquisition and maximises the critical early years of brain development.



“Early intervention changes everything. When children are identified and supported early, their communication skills and in turn it changes the entire trajectory of their lives, and those of their families,” comments Louise Eksteen, director at the Carel du Toit Trust.

The launch also marks the return of Sue Petersen to Rotary Club of Bristol Breakfast.

Peterson’s personal journey has become closely intertwined with the Centre’s history and growth, after her son, Hughan, was diagnosed deaf at 14 months old and became one of the earliest children to receive cochlear implant support in South Africa in the early 1990s.



The upgrade strengthens the Centre's capacity to support children at the earliest stage, when intervention has the greatest impact on their ability to communicate, learn, and thrive.

Through audiology services, speech and occupational therapy, parent coaching, and family-centred support, children with hearing loss are given the opportunity to develop spoken language skills that enable them to participate more fully in everyday life.



Rotary

Club of Bellville



“What we have achieved through partnership and shared purpose shows how powerful it is when people come together across countries to give children the ability to listen, speak, and thrive,” Louise adds.

While the renovation marks an important milestone, the centre emphasises that its work is ongoing, and as a specialised institution, it continues to face essential maintenance needs, including roof, plumbing, and long-term facility upkeep, costs that are often not covered through traditional funding streams.

In addition, the centre relies on philanthropic and corporate support to sustain its core services, including therapy, audiology, educator training, and family support programmes. It is now calling on businesses and donors to consider long-term partnership models that ensure sustainability beyond capital upgrades.



Initiatives such as 'Sponsor a Child' offer meaningful opportunities for individuals and companies to contribute directly, with potential BBBEE recognition benefits for corporate partners.



What began as a moment of profound uncertainty for her family evolved into a lifelong commitment to advocacy and support for deaf children and Peterson's involvement ultimately helped spark the connection between Rotary Bristol Breakfast and the Rotary Club of Bellville, forming the international partnership that continues to support the Centre today.

Reflecting on her journey, she explained that discovering the Carel du Toit Centre changed everything for her family.

"While this renovation is an important milestone, the daily work of changing children's lives depends on sustained support. We invite and challenge businesses and other partners to join us in building facilities, and shaping futures," adds Nicky Jacobs, head of fundraising at Carel du Toit Trust

The Carel du Toit Centre, and CHAT Early Intervention Centre supported by the Carel du Toit Trust, remains one of South Africa's leading institutions for listening and spoken language development. Its work ensures that children with hearing loss are given the strongest possible foundation for communication, learning, and long-term independence.



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