



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Keeping **HOPE** afloat

Note from Founder / Managing Trustee

Every year reminds us that lasting change is never created by one person or one organisation. It is built by a community of people who choose hope over hardship, opportunity over limitation, and action over words.

2025 has been a year of meaningful growth, courageous partnerships and measurable impact. Together, we have created safer spaces, launched new Sailing Therapy pilot sites, empowered children and youth of all abilities, served thousands of meals, donated hundreds of books, developed future leaders, strengthened our team, and shared our work both across South Africa and internationally. We have also been deeply honoured by the recognition and trust placed in us through prestigious grants and national awards—affirming that compassion, innovation and purpose can create lasting change.

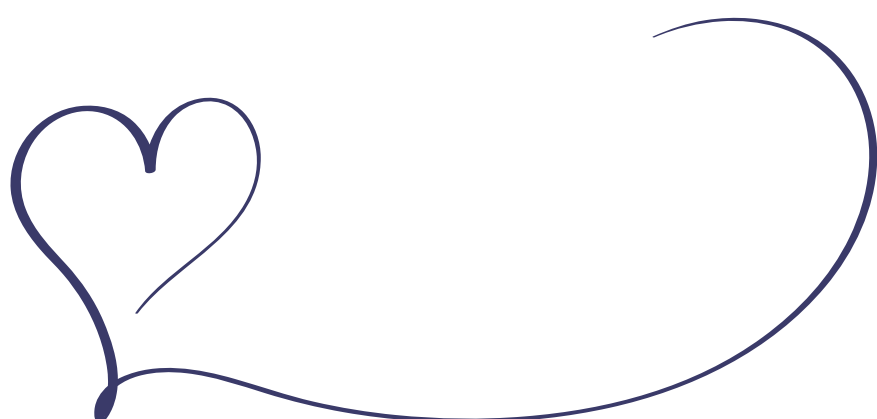
None of this would have been possible without our remarkable staff, volunteers, trustees, partners, donors, sponsors, funders and supporters. Thank you for believing in our vision and walking this journey alongside us. Your generosity has become opportunity, your trust has become impact, and your support has changed lives. I am immensely proud of what our team has achieved—not only in the outcomes we celebrate, but in the integrity, passion and optimism with which they serve every single day. Equally, I am proud that we continue to build a financially responsible and increasingly sustainable organisation, ensuring that every contribution creates meaningful and lasting value.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains unchanged: to create safe spaces where every child can belong, discover their potential and believe that their future is full of possibility.

Together, we are proving that little people with big hearts can achieve extraordinary things.

With optimistic gratitude,

Greg Bertish
Founder & Managing Trustee
The Little Optimist Trust



Who, what and why

WHO WE ARE:

The Little Optimist Trust was established by Greg Bertish in 2017 and is a registered Trust, PBO and NPO. Our main beneficiaries are at-risk youth between the ages of 8 and 16. Our unique Sailing Therapy Academy is based at the V&A Waterfront in the heart of Cape Town and was opened in April 2022. Since then we have opened 3 pilot sites and 2 community projects.

WHAT WE DO:

Create Safe Spaces through beautifying under resourced places of healing & learning.

Harness the therapeutic & rehabilitative benefits of water, through Blue Mind & Sailing Therapy.

Upskill & educate marginalized youth & create pathways to a better future & meaningful employment.

OUR AIM:

To have enrolled 2000 at risk youth in our programmes by May 2026.

To uplift marginalized youth by creating safe spaces, providing opportunity, education & pathways to employment.

Create scalability by developing therapy programmes & training material that can be used nation/worldwide.

Empower other NGOs, sailing clubs & institutions to offer our programmes & projects.

To offer positive mental health intervention through sailing therapy and blue mind theory teachings, for marginalised, at risk and youth with disabilities.



Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive push. A smile. A world of optimism and hope. A 'you can do it' when things are tough.
Richard M. DeVos

Vision

Through the power of optimism, we inspire marginalized youth in South Africa to SURVIVE and THRIVE!



Mission

To foster a growth mindset and develop resilience in youth by:

- Sharing the teachings of The Little Optimist
- Sharing the personal real-life experiences.
- Through sailing therapy
- Through creating safe spaces

Our main beneficiaries are vulnerable youth, be they marginalized economically, differently abled or have compromised health.



Staff

42% Female - 72% Previously disadvantaged youth

Trust Team:



Greg Bertish
Founder/ Managing Trustee



Cara de Vogel
Operations and Project Manager



Erica McCune
Education/ Governance/ Academy

Academy Team:



Amir Yaghya
Sailing and Pilot site
Manager



Shane Joseph
Sailing Manager



Adrienne Coleman
Snr Facilitator/ Instructor
& site co-ordinator



Dawnay Jamaar
Facilitator/ Instructor
& site co-ordinator



Renton Geduld
Senior Sailing
Instructor



Jeanne Nduwa
Volunteer
Office Co-ordinator

Laurium Capital YES Programme Interns:



Reggie Benjamin



Joshua September



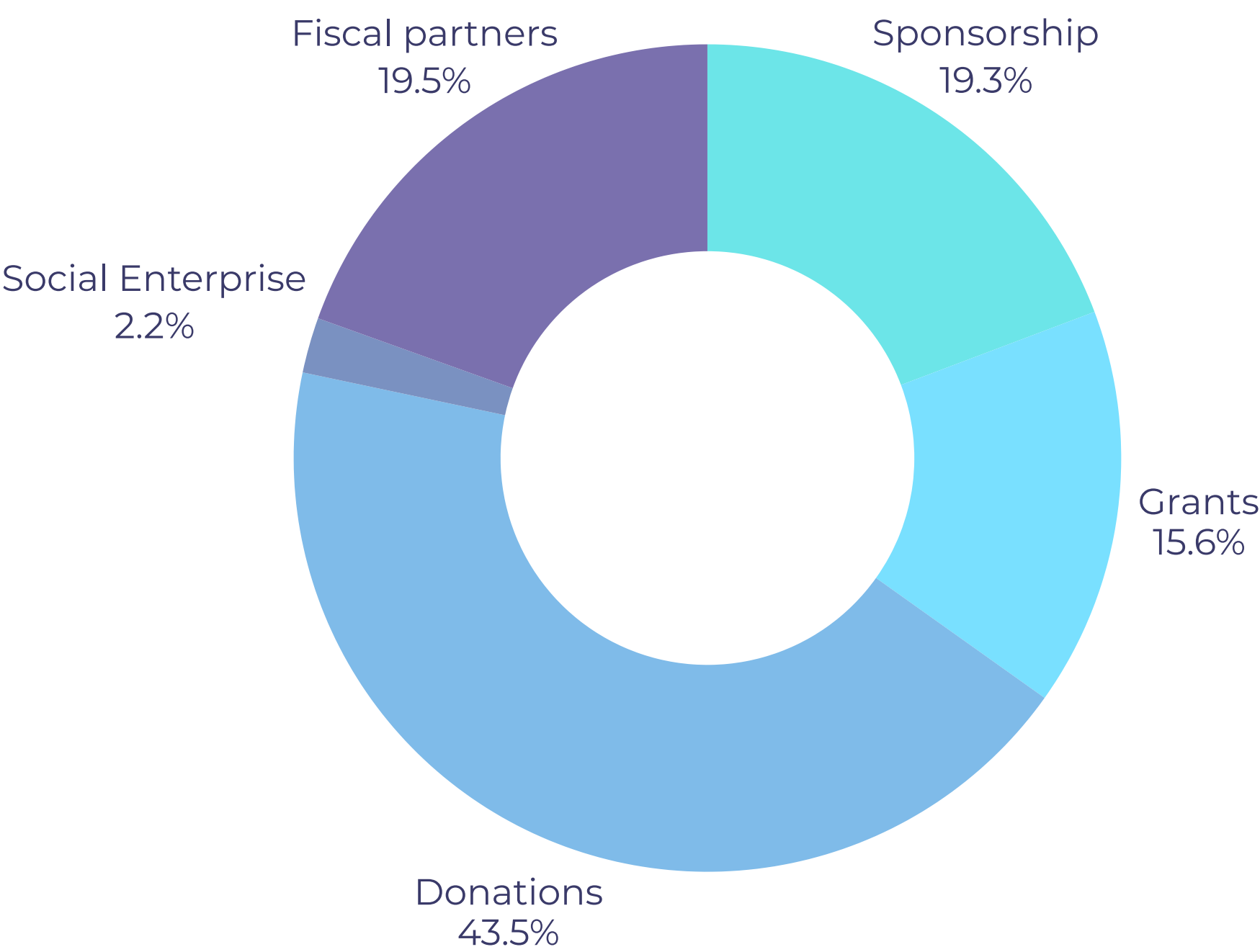
Aneeqah Bosch

Finance Summary: 01 March 2025 – 28 February 2026

Revenue in 2025/26:
ZAR 4 136 139

Expenditure in 2025/26:
ZAR 4 051 061

- Donations - ZAR 1 798 284
- Fiscal partnerships - ZAR 807 187
- Sponsorship - ZAR 796 272
- Grants - ZAR 644 869
- Social Enterprise - ZAR 89 527



Grants

We had the honor of obtaining the following Grants:

February 2026 - Laureus Sports for Good Foundation – Grant winner



What is a Laureus Sport for Good programme:

- An organisation, which realises that it cannot solve all the world's problems, but it can focus on making a difference to a particular social issue.
- An organisation whose clear mission it is to tackle a particular social issue(s) relevant to a clearly identified group and/ or their community.
- An organisation that uses sport as a tool to achieve that mission in some way.
- A programme that is unique, innovative, creative, dynamic and able to achieve a certain level of stand-out.

This grant will be spent in 2026 and reported on next year.

WTW: Year 2 Grant winner



Grant Objectives continued:

- Promote Growth Mindset and Resilience
- Sailing Therapy for At-Risk Youth
- Inspiration Days at ECD Centers
- Life Skills & Job Readiness through Sailing
- Youth Employment & Mentorship Pathways

Awards

- South African Sailing:
The Outstanding Sailing Development Award
- SABBEX/ Blue Cape:
The Diversity of Achievement Special Mention Award



Sustainable Development Goals

Our Trust and Sailing Academy align with 7 of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



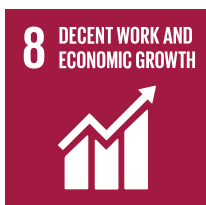
Positive mental health intervention through sailing therapy and blue mind theory learning and activities.



Life skills, ocean health, water-safety and growth mindset teachings



47 % of all attendees of sailing therapy are female



Skills building, upskilling, mentorship, advanced courses, life skills programs



We break down barriers to the marine and sailing industry by offering opportunity and access to marginalised, at-risk youth and persons with disabilities.



Ocean health and plastic pollution education



We collaborate and partner with organisations who are experts in these fields, as well as with smaller grass roots organisations to assist them to create more impact and better sustainability.

Impact Summary



Impact

1465 Direct Beneficiaries

Sailing Therapy – 1 day programmes

488 vulnerable and at-risk youth were given access to opportunity, education, and positive mental health support through our sailing therapy programmes between March 2025 and February 2026. These participants come from informal settlements and the area known as the Cape Flats, where many communities continue to face significant poverty. Ongoing challenges include high unemployment and widespread gang activity. Each attendee receives a healthy lunch, snacks, and water during the programme.

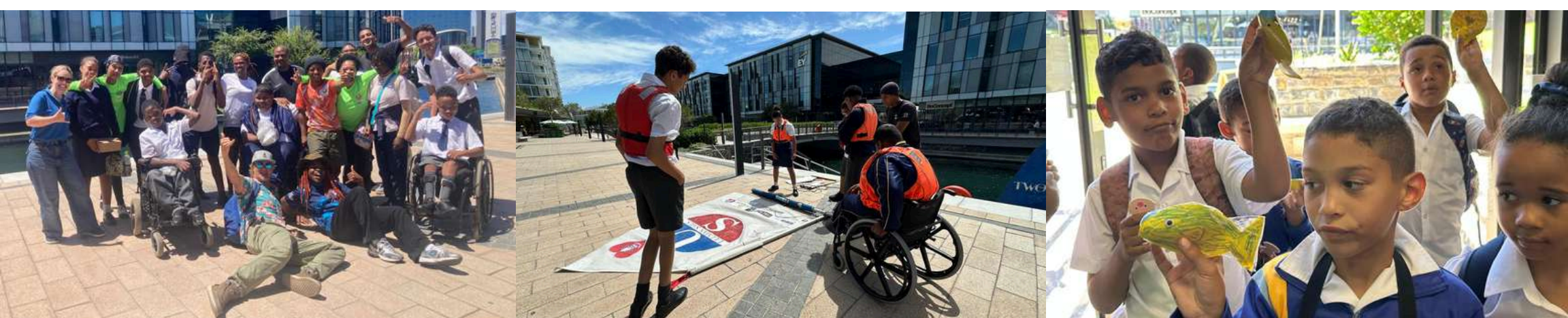


Multi-day Programmes

During 2025 we hosted **76** children for multi-day programmes.

By the end of the programme, every participant had learned how to rig and sail an Optimist dinghy and successfully completed sessions covering ocean health, the science of sailing, growth mindset principles, and water safety. Monitoring and evaluation results showed that 80% of participants felt more confident and optimistic after completing the programme.

The following groups attended: Heideveld Youth, Marsh Memorial, Vista Nova, Oranjekloof Primary and Astra Special School.



School Inspiration Days

A total of **131** young people benefited from our school-based inspiration days. When circumstances prevent youth from attending the academy, we bring the programme to them. Through these visits, we share the teachings of The Little Optimist, adapting the content to suit each group's context, abilities, and age. Our youth facilitators also share their personal, inspiring stories—creating meaningful connections that resonate with participants.



Impact Hub – Feeding Programme

The Heideveld Feeding Programme was launched in late July 2025, kindly sponsored by Mark & Tristan Hartmann. The programme is located at the Heideveld Youth Center where our own Academy employee, Dawnay Jamaar, cooks delicious meals for the kids from the Heideveld area every Saturday and Sunday. Ensuring the children get lovely hot meals on the weekend. We have served **2522** meals from 27 July until 28 February 2025. This is approx. **80 children per weekend** and we hope the numbers grow as more children hear about it. Aunty Dawnay ALWAYS includes dessert on a Sunday which keeps the kids coming back week after week.



Books

Every child that comes through our doors for Sailing Therapy receives a Little Optimist book. This past year we donated **650** books in 3 languages. These books go on to be shared with siblings, family and friends - the message of courage and inspiration reaches far beyond the recipients.



Easter & Christmas Drives

Collection drives were held in collaboration at HIIT Fitness - Parklands, KOM Surf - Kommetjie, Darios – Hout Bay, Intercorp, Ullman Sails, Moving Tactics and ?

255 Easter eggs were delivered to the Roxy Davis Foundation sailing Therapy kids, Somerset Hospital childrens ward, Hout Bay Educare, Wavescrest ECD and 9 Miles Project.

For Christmas **435** teddy bears were distributed to the children at Tygerberg Children's Hospital and New Somerset – Children's wards



Safe Space Creation

Khanyisa ECD - Zithulele, Eastern Cape

Khanyisa ECD located in Zithulele in the Eastern Cape suffered a devastating storm which destroyed their roof and toilet block. Together with the product donations from Italtile and monetary donation from Italtile Foundation we were able to rebuild the toilet block, install a new roof and tile the classroom. This project will impact **30 students per year**.



Train the Trainer workshops

In To ensure the successful implementation of the Sailing Through Life Sailing Therapy Programme, The Little Optimist Trust conducted two intensive Train the Trainer workshops from 3–7 March 2025 (**18 participants**) and 3–5 June 2025 (**9 participants**). These interactive training sessions equipped crew members from our pilot sites with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to facilitate meaningful sailing therapy experiences for children and youth.

The training focused on both personal development and practical programme delivery. Participants explored how to create safe and supportive spaces where young people can learn, grow, and thrive. Through interactive storytelling exercises, trainees practiced sharing their own life experiences in ways that inspire resilience, hope, and positive change in others.

A strong emphasis was placed on developing a growth mind-set, active listening skills, and effective communication techniques that enable facilitators to build trust and meaningful connections with participants. In addition, crew members received hands-on instruction in sailing, boat handling, equipment care and maintenance, ensuring that safety and seamanship remain central to programme delivery.



The importance of monitoring and evaluation was also highlighted, providing trainers with the tools to measure participant progress, capture impact, and continuously improve programme outcomes.

The training was attended by representatives from our three pilot sites: 9Miles Project, Hout Bay Yacht Club, and Zeekoevlei Sailing Centre. To support practical implementation, an additional on-site mock sailing therapy day was conducted at each new pilot site. These sessions provided valuable opportunities to test programme delivery in real-world conditions and fine-tune adaptations specific to each site’s environment, resources, and participant needs.

By investing in the development of local facilitators, The Little Optimist Trust is building a sustainable network of skilled sailing therapy practitioners who are equipped to positively impact the lives of children and young people in their communities.



Setting Sail for New Horizons

The Launch of x 3 Sailing Therapy Sites

In collaboration with Advancing Olympism 365



2025 marked an exciting milestone for The Little Optimist Trust as we successfully launched three new Sailing Through Life pilot sites, creating opportunities for more children to experience the transformative power of sailing therapy.

The first pilot launch took place on 30 April with the 9Miles Project. **19** enthusiastic Optimists took to the water, learning to sail on the largest tidal pool in the Southern Hemisphere. For many, it was their first opportunity to develop sailing skills while building confidence, teamwork, and resilience in a unique outdoor environment.



On 26 July, the programme was launched at Hout Bay Yacht Club, where **9** eager Optimists from local Disa Primary School were welcomed into the sailing community. Sailing in the beautiful Hout Bay harbour gave participants the chance to engage with their local environment in a new way—becoming active participants rather than spectators in a space that has long been part of their community.



The final pilot launch of the year took place on 5 September at Zeekoevlei Sailing Centre. **15** Optimists from the JP21 Foundation traded the cricket pitch for a day on the water at the picturesque Zeekoevlei lake. The day combined sailing instruction with team-building activities, including rope-tying challenges, a picnic lunch, and a prize-giving ceremony, creating a memorable experience both on and off the water.

These pilot launches represent an important step in expanding access to sailing therapy and ensuring that more young people can benefit from the life skills, confidence, and sense of belonging that sailing provides.

Dance Therapy Session

At The Little Optimist Sailing Academy, we've always believed in helping young people step into their power, whether it's balancing on a sailboat or standing tall in front of a mirror. In June 2025 we did something a little different. We traded our buoyancy aids for ballet slippers, and our beloved boatyard became a place of poise, rhythm, and self-expression.

With the help of the incredibly talented and gentle Tristan, Professional dancer and Aloha Award founding member, we hosted our very first-ever ballet class, right in the heart of the Academy. The **9** girls who joined us were from Heideveld, a community filled with resilience, strength, and untapped potential. For many, it was the first time they'd stepped into the world of ballet. The room filled with the soft sweep of arms in port de bras, the careful bending of knees in pliés, and the quiet giggles as they tried their first tendu. There was no pressure to be flawless, only an invitation to be free.

The class wasn't just about learning how to move. It was about learning how to feel. As the girls flowed through each step, they explored what it means to be graceful in their own skin, to trust their bodies, and to celebrate them. For a moment, the outside world faded away. There were no worries, no comparisons, just movement, and magic.



Events

Paddling Together: Lessons in Teamwork

On 24 May 2025, the Little Optimist Trust team traded sails for paddles as we participated in a Dragon Boat Race at Battery Park. The event formed part of celebrations for the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, which saw the canal transformed into a vibrant hub of culture, community, and competition.

Dressed in our unmistakable lime green shirts, our team embraced the challenge of racing alongside experienced and professional dragon boat crews. While we may have been newcomers to the sport, our optimistic spirit, enthusiastic cheering, and determination carried us through every race.

Beyond the excitement of competition, the experience provided valuable lessons in teamwork. Dragon boating requires every paddler to move in perfect synchronisation, reinforcing the importance of communication, trust, and working together towards a common goal. Most importantly, it was a day filled with laughter, learning, and team spirit.

The event reminded us that whether we are sailing, paddling, or working together on land, success is built on collaboration, resilience, and a shared sense of purpose. Let's go!



S.E.A. - Surf Expo Africa

From 28 – 30 November, we had the incredible opportunity to be part of the very first Surf Expo Africa. Our station became a vibrant pocket of love, optimism, and pure fun in the middle of the Expo.

The moment the doors opened, kids were sprinting toward our pool like it was treasure. Their eyes lit up the second they spotted the pink flamingo floating, and before we knew it, boys and girls of all ages were jumping in to float for charity.

Right next to the pool, our colouring station was buzzing nonstop. Tiny artists took over the tables, crayons everywhere, adding colour and creativity to the Expo. Throughout the weekend, we also hosted a silent auction, a raffle, and a lucky draw where every entry, every bid, and every ticket sold helped raise funds that directly support the children and communities we work with.

On the final day, our founder closed the weekend with a heartfelt, inspiring talk. He shared our mission, our impact, and the real-life stories behind The Little Optimist, stories of courage, healing, hope, and believing in brighter futures.



Events

Laureus Fund run

On the 17th of February 2026, the Little Optimist crew traded in our usual sailing gear for something a little different... Running shoes! Yes, for once, it wasn't about our dinghies, the wind, or mastering our sailing skills on the water. Instead, it was about the crew themselves coming together for a day filled with energy, laughter, and community spirit.

Thanks to an invitation from Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, we had the incredible privilege of taking part in the eXp Realty Fund Run.

If you know the Little Optimist Academy staff, you know we rarely do anything quietly! Our vibrant crew arrived ready to have fun, proudly wearing our colorful leis around our necks and bringing all the joy and excitement we could. Among the crowd, you could definitely spot us laughing, cheering each other on, and soaking in every moment of the experience.

What made the day even more special was being surrounded by people from so many different organizations, all gathered for a shared purpose. The atmosphere was filled with positivity, encouragement, and a real sense of community. It was a beautiful reminder of how sport and movement can bring people together in the most powerful ways.

While some of us are much better at steering a dinghy than running in a straight line, that didn't matter at all. Whether we were running, jogging, or simply enjoying the walk, the most important part was being present and sharing the experience together.

For the Little Optimist crew, it was never about being the fastest. It was about celebrating the moment, connecting with others, and being part of something bigger than us. But our Sailing Manager, Amir Yaghya, did come in the top 10.

We are incredibly grateful to Laureus for inviting us to be part of such a beautiful and meaningful day. Experiences like this remind us why community matters and why moments of joy, laughter, and togetherness are so important.



Event fundraiser

In February 2026 - Joanne Seymour, embarked on a 140km (14 day trek) circular route from Lukla up to Everest Base Camp tackling freezing temperatures and steep icy slopes of the Cho La Pass (5420m) to the turquoise waters of the Gokyo Lakes back to Lukla. Her cause - The Little Optimist Trust.

Joanne raised over R50 000 which will be used for Sailing Therapy, transportation and hot meals for the children who attend programmes at our Hout Bay pilot site.



Corporate team buidling & family days

At The Little Optimist we offer team building and family days to our sponsors. These fun filled days are designed to reminder co-workers that at the end of the day we are all on an even playing field and nothing reminds you of that better than putting an adult in an optimist dinghy for the first time - it doesn't matter if you are the CEO or the tea lady - you are all equal now. Our brilliant instructors give a crash course in how to sail then its Regatta time. We split you into teams by random and you relay race for glory (or for the chocolate prize). By the end of the day your team see's their co-workers as friends and therefore builds a stronger working unit.

We also offer family days where corporates can bring their families sailing for the day - be it at our academy or at the venue of your function - if there is water we will bring the boats.

We had the honor of hosting **172 people** from the following companies: Gold Sponsor - Ullman Sails, RMB, Laureus Sports for Good Foundation, Surgical Navigation Technology and Gold Sponsor - Southern WInd.



Youth Development

Disability Training with ShonaQuip : Empowering Inclusivity

On March 4th and 5th, 2025, The Little Optimist hosted an impactful training session aimed at enhancing the understanding and support of individuals with disabilities. This initiative brought together our staff and those from our pilot sites to engage in comprehensive discussions and practical training - **18 participants**.

Key Focus Areas

1. Understanding Different Types of Disabilities

The training began with an exploration of various disabilities, including:

- Physical Disabilities: Conditions affecting mobility, such as paralysis and limb loss.
- Sensory Disabilities: Challenges related to vision and hearing impairments.
- Intellectual Disabilities: Issues surrounding cognitive functioning and adaptive behaviour.
- Mental Health Conditions: Recognizing the impact of mental health on daily life and communication.

2. Language Use and Attitude

A significant portion of the training focused on the importance of language and attitude:

- Inclusive Language: Emphasizing the use of person-first language to promote dignity (e.g., “person with a disability”).
- Fostering Positive Attitudes: Encouraging empathy and respect towards individuals with disabilities.
- Combating Stereotypes: Addressing common misconceptions to promote understanding and acceptance.

3. Reducing Barriers

Participants learned strategies to eliminate barriers that hinder inclusivity:

- Physical Barriers: Identifying obstacles in various environments and advocating for accessible facilities.
- Attitudinal Barriers: Promoting an inclusive mind-set among staff and participants.
- Communication Barriers: Ensuring clear communication methods, including the use of alternative formats.

4. Practical Skills: Wheelchair Transfers to Sailing Boats

The training concluded with hands-on practice in transferring individuals from wheelchairs to sailing boats:

- Safety Protocols: Understanding the importance of safety for both the individual and the assistant.
- Techniques: Step-by-step guidance for respectful and comfortable transfers.
- Equipment Familiarization: Learning about tools that facilitate this process.

This training initiative not only equipped our staff and partners with essential knowledge and skills but also reinforced our commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity and support. By understanding disabilities and learning practical assistance techniques, The Little Optimist is paving the way for an environment where everyone can thrive.

For further insights into how these practices can be implemented in our organization, we encourage continued dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders.



Youth Development

4 of The Little Optimist sailing instructors were given the opportunity to assist in a boat delivery from Durban to Cape Town - something these young sailors have been dreaming to do. Amir, Shane, Renton and Josh spent a week not only sailing but learning about patience, safety, life and the ways of the ocean.

"We had some stunning days at sea: calm skies, smooth sailing, and epic views — especially those sunrises and sunsets that made it all feel worth it. Had a few awesome chill moments on deck, soaking it all in, and just vibing with the ocean.

But let me tell you, it wasn't all smooth. The wind and waves didn't play nice the whole way. Some tough nights out there, barely any sleep, rough seas, and cold as hell at times. Sailing at night with just instruments and the ocean around you is another kind of test — mentally and physically." - Josh September

Personally, the sail from Durban to Cape Town was a mental challenge, but one I'm proud to have faced. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I feel so lucky to have been a part of it." - Amir Yahgya

"I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt thanks to Bruce Tedder and The Little Optimist for creating this journey for the 4 of us. From the moment we set sail, I was captivated by the beauty of the open ocean water and the joy of being out at sea." - Shane Jospheh

"The mission became more real when we started our final stretch back home to Cape Town which started beautifully and then all of a sudden mother nature gave us a last reminder who was boss!" - Renton Geduld



Conferences

Riding the Wave of Innovation: ISTO Conference 2025

In October 2025, The Little Optimist Trust had the privilege of attending the International Surf Therapy Organisation (ISTO) Conference in Ratho, Scotland—an inspiring gathering of practitioners, researchers, and advocates dedicated to advancing the field of blue space therapies.

Hosted in part at the impressive Lost Shore Surf Resort, the conference offered a unique blend of practical learning and professional collaboration. Participants had the opportunity to experience surfing on an inland wave pool while engaging in interactive workshops that explored best practices in surf therapy and the growing field of Blue Mind research. The hands-on environment fostered meaningful connections and the exchange of ideas among professionals from around the world.

The conference concluded with two days of presentations at Edinburgh Napier University, where leading researchers, professors, and scientists shared the latest findings on surf therapy and mental health. These sessions provided valuable insights into the evidence base supporting nature- and water-based interventions and highlighted emerging trends in research and practice.

Attending the ISTO Conference reinforced the importance of global collaboration and continuous learning. The knowledge, partnerships, and inspiration gained will help strengthen The Little Optimist Trust's Sailing Through Life programme as we continue to harness the healing power of water to improve the wellbeing of young people in South Africa.



Learning from Leaders: Laureus Sport for Good Masterclass

A highlight of the year for the management team was the opportunity to attend the Laureus Sport for Good Masterclass in Stellenbosch on 19 June 2025. Representing The Little Optimist Trust, Greg and Erica joined a diverse group of sport-for-development practitioners, nonprofit leaders, and changemakers committed to using sport as a catalyst for positive social impact.

The masterclass provided a valuable opportunity to connect with peers, share experiences, and learn from some of the leading minds in the sport-for-good sector. Through engaging discussions and practical insights, participants explored best practices in programme delivery, impact measurement, organisational sustainability, and leadership.

Events such as these are an important investment in continuous learning and professional development. The knowledge gained and connections formed help strengthen The Little Optimist Trust's work, ensuring that our programmes continue to deliver meaningful and measurable outcomes for the children and communities we serve.

The day served as a powerful reminder that collaboration, innovation, and shared learning are essential ingredients in creating lasting social change.



International Speaking events

World Sailing Development Conference

Our founder , Greg Bertish was proudly invited to be the Key Note Speaker at the Development Symposium at the World Sailing Conference.

Greg delivered a powerful talk to over 100 delegates, and was able to connect with other change makers from around the world.

We were inspired to be recognised on the world stage and are proud to be helping to reshape and positively impact sailing world from grass roots level up. Its our mission to assist World Sailing to shift the narrative and positively impact our sport, by using sailing for youth development , inclusion, mental health intervention and to create community, high level competition and pathways to employment.



Success Story

Xolani's Story: Learning to Believe

At 16 years old, Xolani has faced more challenges than most. Living with cerebral palsy, he often felt that many opportunities were simply out of reach. When he first heard about The Little Optimist Sailing Therapy program, he was honest about his doubts. "To be honest, no, I didn't believe I could sail," he says. "It looked complicated for me."

But everything changed the moment he got onto the water at the V&A Waterfront. For Xolani, the boat wasn't just a way to learn a new skill; it was a place where the noise of the world finally went quiet. He explains that being on the boat helped him shut out the stress and the people who didn't understand him. "I forgot what was happening," he recalls. "You just focused on being on the boat."

Even when things got difficult on his first day—like when his boat capsized—Xolani didn't give up. Despite not being a swimmer, he trusted his life jacket and his instructors, and he came out of the water smiling. That moment taught him something he will never forget: "It made me realize that I could do anything if I learn. If I could learn sailing, we could learn other things too."

Xolani's dedication to the sport is truly remarkable. Every Saturday, he navigates public transport on his own to join us at the Waterfront to sail and chat. His passion has seen him venture from small dinghies to sailing larger boats at the Hout Bay Yacht Club, and we are incredibly proud to have him as an honorary member of our sailing club.

The Little Optimist Trust (LOT) has been honored to support Xolani beyond the water as well. Recognizing his hard work and potential, LOT has provided funding for his Grade 7 farewell dance, school clothes, and ongoing tutoring to ensure he has the tools he needs to succeed in his education.

The program has given Xolani more than just confidence on the water; it has provided a community where he feels he truly belongs. He talks about how the supportive environment at The Little Optimist helped him move away from people who weren't genuine and instead surround himself with "real people" who truly care. For a young man who often felt overlooked, feeling "special" and having people watch and support his progress has meant everything.

Today, Xolani has big plans for his future. He wants to be a businessman, and he now has the confidence to pursue that dream. He tells other children who might be struggling to put their faith in their goals and stay consistent. "Never lose focus on what you want to do," he says.

Xolani's journey shows that when we provide the right support and a safe space, a young person can overcome their fears and start believing in their own potential. His story is a direct reflection of why sailing therapy and holistic support are so vital for children who have been told their whole lives what they cannot do it.



Support

The Little Optimist Trust has four major sponsors and a youth empowerment sponsor.

The sponsorships cover the majority of the Trust expenses whilst the donations and the fundraising and grants are used for our project expenses.

The three trustees of The Little Optimist Trust are Greg Bertish (Founder), Daniel Kantor and Derrick Mills. The Little Optimist Trust is managed by Greg Bertish. He is supported by Cara de Vogel as the Operations and Projects Manager, and Erica McCune as the Education and Sailing Therapy Manager.

Platinum Sponsors:



Gold Sponsors:



We could not make the impact that we do without our supporters! Thank you to every person who has donated to us, attended one of our events or bought a book from us!

PARTNERS & DONORS:



Important information:

Reporting period: 01 March 2025 – 28 February 2026

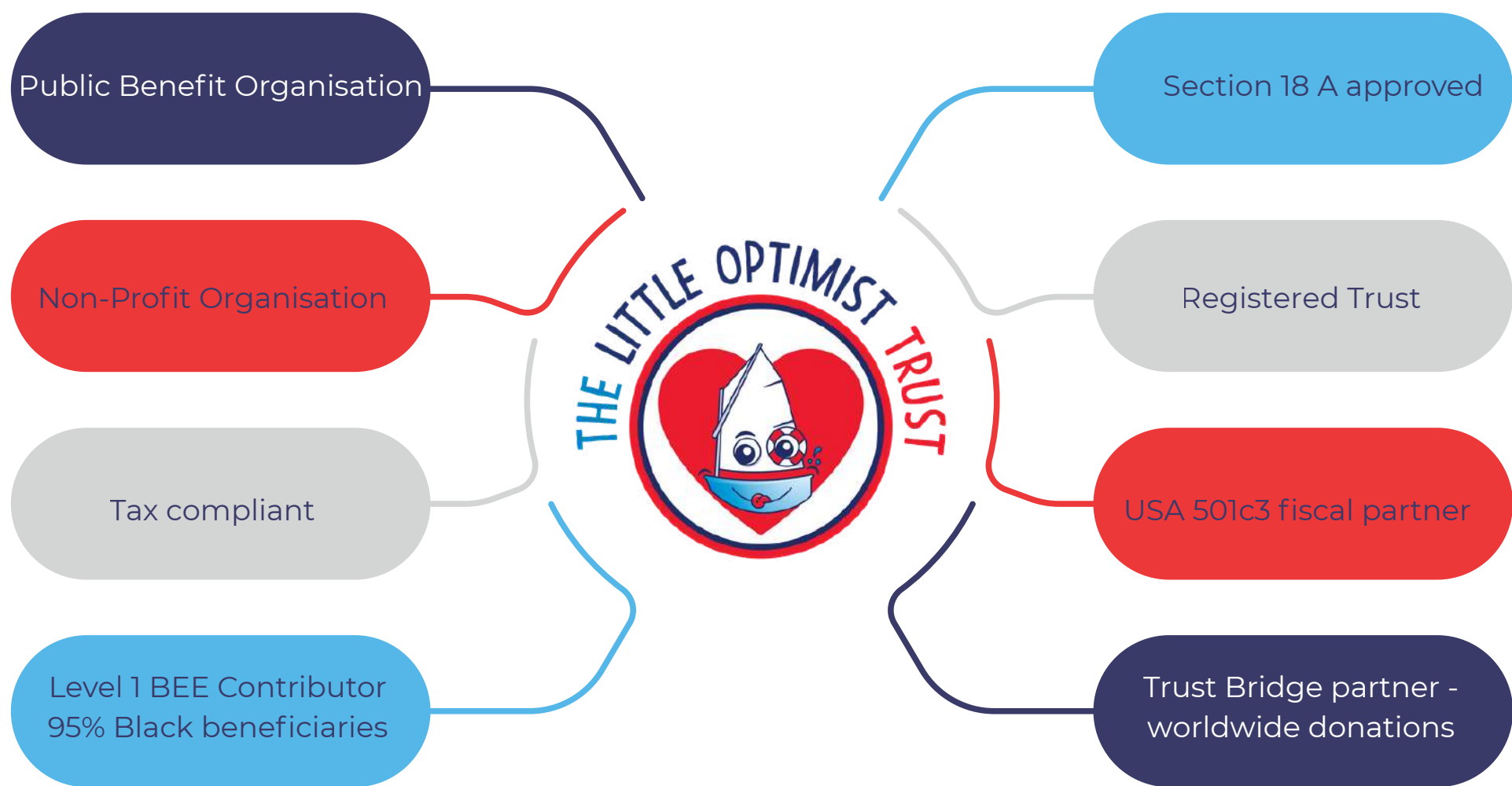
Established 2016

PBO Number: 930060059

NPO Number: 228- 978 NPO

Trust Number: IT002355/2016(C)

USA 501c3 fiscal partner donations



The Little Optimist Trust
Shop 6, Battery Park,
V&A Waterfront,
Cape Town, South Africa, 8000
Tel: +27 66 478 8786
info@thelittleoptimist.org



thelittleoptimist



littleoptimist

www.thelittleoptimisttrust.org
www.optimistsailingacademy.org

With love and appreciation from The Little Optimist Team
and all of the children!