

Pieterse, has a son who is deaf and he and some of his deaf friends were working in the factory. Although they were doing well, they needed some help in terms of education and such, and although I wanted to help, I couldn't as I was still living in Holland. Round about the same time, Vetus in Holland contacted me and said that they were keen to invest in a worthwhile project over here, and if I knew of anything, I should let them know. I thought that a school teaching deaf youth how to build boats was definitely a worthwhile cause, and Vetus was very enthusiastic in helping. I then emailed as many people in the South African boating industry to appeal for help. I was desperately in need of funds. Pertec generously donated R10 000, and the Academy was born out of that money combined with funds and available working time from ECB.



You were operating out of Peter Randle's yard in Retreat. How did that come about?

Peter is one of my customers and, as his son is mentally challenged, he has always wanted to do something for kids with special needs. Peter has been an enormous help. Without him and the offer of his yard space, the Academy would never have started.

And how did you come into contact with the Noluthando School?

I contacted the Western Province Deaf Institute and that was the only school that showed interest. Several students volunteered, and in the beginning it was tricky as they expected to be paid. It took a while for me to convince them that joining the initiative was all about the best interests of their future. Now they understand though, and my biggest problem in that regard is explaining that one day the training will be over and they will have to leave!

The Academy began in May of last year. What was their first project?

The students built three rowing boats based on a mould built by Peter Randle. This was an exercise. We sold one of them to the Waterfront as a workboat. We still have two for sale.

And then...

That's when we ran into trouble – financially. Then Tineke de Nooi came along. Tineke is a well-known TV personality in Holland, living in South Africa, and had been looking to buy a launch to use in Veldrif on the Berg River. She heard about our project, saw the pictures and paid immediately. Thus, our first launch was sold. That was a big moment for us.

Is it true that two of your students are set for an exchange program in Holland?

Yes, that's very exciting. Abromovitz & Associates and Garnett Parkin from Brikor have donated the air tickets. Choosing which two students will go is an important decision, and many factors have to be considered, as spending time in a foreign place and staying with unfamiliar people doesn't suit everyone. We are still looking for funds for the extra expenses overseas.

You have recently moved from Peter Randle's yard to new premises at the Noluthando School. How did that come about?

In a meeting with the school's principal, it was mentioned that the school had recently been granted more teachers. The principal said that, as so many of the students were becoming more and more interested in becoming boat builders, the school was willing to allocate one of their teachers to the project full time. While I was pleased by this offer, I explained that I couldn't accept due to the financial difficulties we were having, especially in terms of paying for transport to Peter's yard in Retreat. The principal then offered me full use of one of the school's

