Ajabu: Clouds of Hope

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Clouds of Hope, Underberg, South Africa

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Ajabu means extraordinary or wonderful in Swahili. AfJEM publishes non-medical related content such as poetry, prose and art because all work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy. These items have to be original, are not peer reviewed and are placed at the discretion of the editor. You can contribute to Ajabu by submitting your original non-medical work as a letter to the editor.

Clouds of Hope is synonymous with the work of its founder, Nurse Abigail Ntleko, affectionately known as Sister Abi to everyone in the Underberg, a farming community at the base of the Drakensberg Mountains in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. Sister Abi took on her first adoptive child in 1972, a 5-year-old of mixed parentage, shunned by the community, and shortly afterwards took in a 9-month old baby that had been abandoned. In order to provide a home for her new family she built a small house on her parents’ old homestead. By the end of the 1980’s more and more orphans and vulnerable children were coming to Abigail’s attention as family structures broke down under the strain of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. By 1990, Sister Abi had already adopted 22 children. Convinced by her urging and troubled by what they saw happening, concerned local residents called a Public Meeting in 1989 and the Underberg/Himeville Aids Initiative was

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Fig. 1 Receiving the ambulance.

Fig. 2 Nurse listens to the trauma handover.
established. Through lobbying and sponsorship the Initiative acquired land and has grown into what is now Clouds of Hope – clouds being associated with the hope of rain for a dry land. All of the children living at Clouds of Hope (there are more than fifty at any given time) have in some way been affected by HIV/AIDS. Sister Abi has since retired from Clouds of Hope, but not content with sitting idly, is currently involved in a new project also involving children at age 77.

The pictures featured (Figs. 1–4) were commissioned by AJEM for Ajabu from the young resident artists at Clouds of Hope (Fig. 5). If you want to help, sponsor or contribute in any way to the work done by Clouds of Hope, please visit their website at http://cloudsofhope.com/.

Fig. 3 Performing a primary survey in the hospital.

Fig. 4 Emergency surgery and recovery room.

Fig. 5 Clouds of Hope’s young artists.