

Aaaahhhh, what is Christmas?  
What does Christmas hold for each one of us, in our hearts and in our minds?

For most of us...  
a time of warm nights, colourful lights,  
pretty things, and candlelit hymns...  
Friends and family, laughter and love,  
Cookies and "Glühwein", blessings from above!  
"Shiny wrapped packages, tied up with string...  
Christmas is time for my favourite things!..."

And all the while there are many who cannot even imagine this...  
Many who have never experienced such joy.

So in our own small way, we try to bring "Christmas" to some less fortunate people and children in South Africa, throughout the year and that is why FoSA has undertaken to collect money for well deserved charities by holding various events which you have so generously contributed to.

We held our first "Advent Markt" on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, at the "Bach-Hengl". Heurigen-Restaurant, Sandgasse 7-9, 1190 Wien. A beautiful location, perfect for the occasion!

With all the "pre-preparations" which our President Hans Werner Autz, once again pulled off like a magician, there was much stress and excitement to start.

The usual "pre-nerves" of getting everything set-up, ready and looking perfect in time, making sure there was enough of everything (like Glühwein and cookies, shiny things and treats) and waiting for the members and guests (customers with wads of paper money, feeling charitable and truly in the spirit of sharing at Christmas!!!) ran high amongst the exhibitors and FoSA board members.

After a slow start in the morning some curious "passers-by", some invited guests and some who had heard about it on "Radio Wien", started coming in.

What fun! We had tables with goodies to eat (sweet and spicy), artwork, hand made Christmas cards and decorations, exquisite hand-made jewellery, and hand-made craftwork for the home, including handmade boxes decorated with pull-off tabs from cans.

"Hand made" was the order of the day, hours of dedicated work, made with love, to assist us in our cause.

We also had FoSA related tables, one from the HIV negative Organisation with beautifully crafted African beaded jewellery, another supported by SOS Kinderdorf SA, which had goodies for sale which were an absolute delight amongst the "children", young and old. We had "Nkosi" dolls, supporting children suffering with Aids, The American Women's Association supported us too with their delightful wares.

What a colourful and wonderful event. We had our "Glühwein" stand to provide warmth, and the "Heuriger" appeased the hungry with warm light meals. We also had a table selling Austrian red wine liqueur...secret family recipe of course! Then the FoSA tables with an array of beautiful ethnic beaded (and other) items for the home, and last but not least the "peppadews". An extraordinary taste experience for those introduced to these delightfully tasting fruits which are only grown in South Africa. The bottles sold like crazy. And if you want to know more about our "peppadews" you will just have to come to our next event or let us know!

Mr Tiller, "Bezirksvorsteher" of the 19<sup>th</sup> District officially opened the event for us, accompanied by a drum session, at 2.30 pm. Mr Anderson from the South African Embassy also supported us in endorsing our cause and charities by thanking our guests and members. Mr. Peter Tichatschek from ORF and Mr. Hannes Pinczolits, Chief of Protocol of the Province of Burgenland were also part of the opening session. And last but not least our President, our star organiser, thanked everyone warmly for coming along and supporting us. Him we have to thank that we have been live on the air at "Radio Wien". A special thank you to Smiley Divinzenz who sang Christmas carols to enhance the Christmas atmosphere, and Dr Karl Stoss (CEO, Generali) who came along with his family, even though they had a very busy schedule.

I speak on behalf of the FoSA board members and exhibitors/vendors by saying that it was a wonderful "first" Christmas market, which we hope will be bigger and better next year and again like to sincerely thank everyone, our friends, our members, our sponsors, media representatives, helping hands, and other VIP guests, for simply being there and supporting us.

Without you this would not have been such a success! If I have forgotten to mention anybody please forgive me! It was a wonderful day.

Hope to see you all at our next event in 2006! We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous and happy New Year!

Hester Wyhlidal