

2004
Oprah Brings Special Gift from a Little Angel
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Oprah Winfrey travelled with a treasured cargo of \$280 (R1 600) from the United States to Benoni on the East Rand.

The money was a special gift, saved by an 11-year-old girl who died in an accident in New York this year. Hallie Geier had been saving her lunch money to send to children affected by HIV/Aids in Southern Africa.

Her parents had found the money after her death, said Lisa Halliday, the communications director of Winfrey's production company.

"Her parents had established a foundation in her name called the Love Hallie Foundation. The money they raised was given to Oprah's Angel Network," she said.

'There was shock and surprise on their faces and then squeals of delight'



Angel in Gauteng: A new-look Oprah Winfrey joins in as children at Kids Haven in Benoni sing and dance to celebrate her visit to South Africa. **Photo: The Star**

Halliday said Winfrey had promised to donate the money to an appropriate cause and had come to South Africa to hand over \$10 000 (almost R57 000) to Kids Haven in Benoni. This was in addition to the money that Hallie had saved.

Kids Haven is a shelter for about 195 children, mostly street children.

Moira Simpson, director of the shelter, said they were overwhelmed by the donation though she was not sure what the money would be spent on.

"They (Angel Network) are going to send the details to us of specifically what the money is to be used for. But when Oprah was here she did a tour of the shelter and chose a girl's dormitory to spend the money on." Simpson said Hallie's \$280 would be used to buy medication for HIV-positive children at the shelter.

She said she had been sworn to secrecy about Winfrey's visit and had been told that if it was leaked to the press beforehand, Winfrey would cancel her visit because of security concerns.

'She even joined in when the children were dancing 'But Simpson said that it had been a complete surprise to both the staff and children at the shelter when Winfrey had arrived.

"There was shock and surprise on their faces and then squeals of delight. It was actually so exciting. She (Winfrey) is even more beautiful in the flesh than on TV.

"She is lovely and she even joined in when the children were dancing," Simpson said. Halliday confirmed Winfrey was in South Africa with her partner Stedman Graham, who was conducting a mentorship programme in conjunction with the Life College School.