

Jovial kids give princess a right royal welcome

BY TANYA FARBER

Today it is a labyrinth of empty peach-coloured rooms with blue carpets or cement floors, but the next time Princess Caroline of Hanover walks through it, there will be a sea of little faces staring back at her.

This is the soon-to-be Soweto paediatric palliative care ward in Diepkloof, which officially opens its doors on March 15. It will provide help for babies and children suffering from medical crises related to HIV.

The ward will share the building with an adult female ward, an adult male ward, an income-generating section and a crèche. It is of particular interest to the princess because the NGO of which she is president, Amade Mondiale, focuses on and advocates for the rights and wellbeing of children in developing countries across the globe.

Yesterday, when she made her way from room to room in her tailored brown crop jacket, beige pants and high-heeled shoes, she must have felt assured that the large sum of money Amade Mondiale donates to the Hospice Association of the Witwatersrand will be put to good use. The hospice association is in a partnership with Big Shoes, of which the soon-to-be ward is a project.

It already funds the running costs of the pilot project ward in Johannesburg, which was also visited by the princess yesterday morning.

This five-bed children's



HAVING A GOOD TIME: Princess Caroline meets children at the Mapetla Daycare Centre in Soweto yesterday.

PICTURE: CHRIS COLLINGRIDGE

ward is situated at the Houghton Hospice in Johannesburg, and though it is located some distance from the community it serves, it has nonetheless provided an invaluable service as a training unit.

But now, with the ward moving to Diepkloof, family and friends of children who are ill

will be able to visit the patients far more easily.

For Caroline, these whirlwind tours of the organisations affiliated to Amade Mondiale must seem quite overwhelming, but they nonetheless provide her with a glimpse into the projects that receive funds.

Yesterday, sandwiched in her cavalcade of white cars and metro police cars, she was whisked from Houghton to the unit in Diepkloof. After that, she visited the hospice association's Mapetla Daycare Centre, also situated in Soweto, which provides daycare facilities for children whose families are

affected by HIV.

While the children themselves aren't ill, they are all facing the same situations at home, with parents and extended families who have been deeply affected by the virus.

At the crèche, the princess learnt about the days of the

week, the months of the year, the four seasons and the letters of the alphabet – all sung in jovial unison by a sea of little faces.

She helped to serve lunch to the little ones before being whisked off, flanked by two beefy bodyguards, for her next engagement.