

# 'I LOVE YOU, UNCLE': GIRL READY TO FACE CLASS WITH NEW FALSE EYE

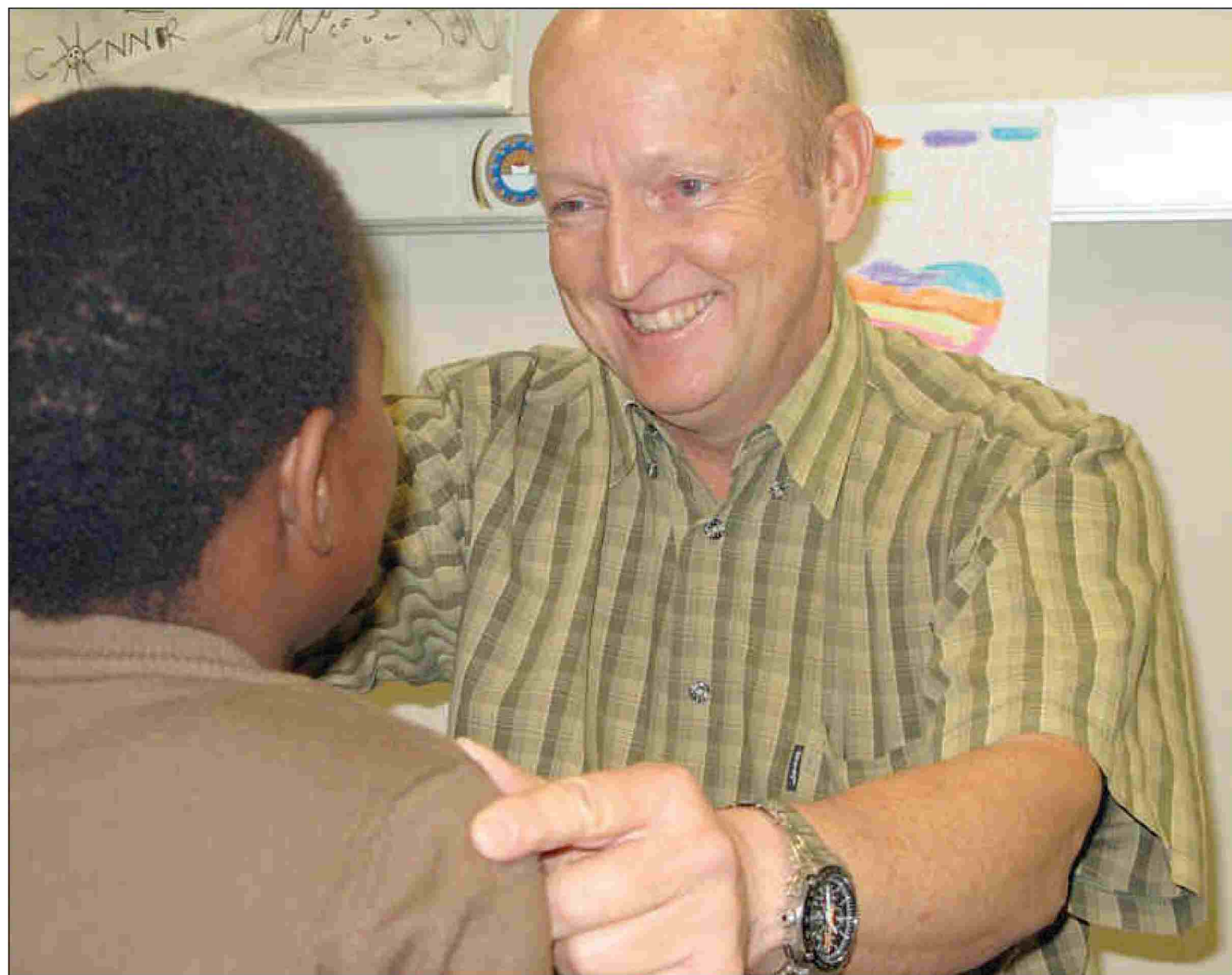


PHOTO: PHOTO24

Peter Furber, a lecturer in dental technology, had to gain the trust of a nine-year-old orphan who had her eye gouged out during a rape before he could make a new artificial eye for her.

## DRIES LIEBENBERG

DURBAN — Two months after a fellow pupil raped an eight-year-old orphan and gouged one of her eyes out, her little smiling face peered out from behind her caretaker “mother”, thanks to a handmade artificial eye.

A 15-year-old boy at her former school in the Gingindlovu area was arrested in connection with the gruesome rape at the end of April. The girl, whose name may not be disclosed, was attacked while on her way to her grandmother’s house.

Her rapist choked her, gouged her eye out and left her for dead in a sugar cane field.

Although she attends a new school in another town, children started mocking her at the end of last term because the temporary artificial eye was too small for the socket.

“She was in tears and phoned me to fetch her,” Rita Khuzwayo, a lay preacher who took pity on her, said yesterday.

When she was taken to the Durban University of Technology (DUT) this week for a new artificial eye to be made and fitted, her first thought was that Peter Furber, a lecturer in dental technology, was going to “rape” her eye, Khuzwayo said.

With much patience, and Khuzwayo’s help, Furber slowly but surely gained the child’s trust while they worked on the artificial eye for three days.

Yesterday morning, after a final fitting, the girl got off her chair and spontaneously embraced Furber.

She looked shyly into the mirror, then started smiling from ear to ear.

“She didn’t want to take the eye out again, and wanted to return to school

as early as tomorrow,” Khuzwayo said in an interview.

It was it a bitter-sweet experience for Furber. “My work is very satisfying, but I would have preferred being spared this experience,” he said.

“It is a terrible pity that we live in a society where such things can happen to such an intelligent young child. But on the other hand, there is help for her.”

Khuzwayo said the child was being treated by a psychologist, but until now they had not been able to speak about the rape.

In the past few days, memories of her nightmare experience have started welling up.

The girl gave Furber a sketch with the names of the children who mocked her. In the centre she drew a big rainbow heart and wrote in it: “Uncle, I love you.”