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Unit for Community Engagement



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Table of contents

A Reading Day hosted to celebrate International Literacy Day 2023	1
Introducing Kanye Rampa	2
Matters of interest	3
Opening of the Sensory STEM Garden on the Mamelodi Campus	4
One Health in Action: An interdisciplinary collaboration between Veterinary and Medical students	5
The impact of Holiday Club programmes on UP Theology leadership	7
Creating awareness of nutritional management and prevention of non-communicable diseases in the Daspoort community	8
Tourism management honours students visit Etosha National Park and King Nehale Conservancy in Namibia	10
Enabling working 'Moms 2B' to breastfeed successfully	11
Highlights of the IHL 120 community engagement tour	13
Nourishing communities and fostering engagement: The Mastercard Foundation scholars' soup kitchen initiative at the University of Pretoria	14
The Phafoga Project: Promoting student success in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences	15
Lessons learned from planning a Hypertension Awareness Day: Community internship	16
All things pigs	17
AfriPEN conference in Blantyre, Malawi	18
DSSO hygiene drive with Bramley Children's Home	19
Take Action Ministry NPC	20
Repurposing for community engagement	21
Reflections on the 25th IEASA conference: A retrospective and prospective view	23
Caregiver coaching at a special needs early childhood centre: Reflections from final-year speech-language pathology students	24
Faculty support – contact details	26

A Reading Day hosted to celebrate International Literacy Day 2023

Prof Mia le Roux (Associate Professor: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



International Literacy Day is an international observance and is celebrated every year on 8 September. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) proclaimed this day as International Literacy Day in 1966. The intention was to remind people around the world that the ability to read and write is a human right and a matter of dignity. The first International Literacy Day was celebrated in 1967.

In the spirit of International Literacy Day, the Reading Day team from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology hosted a Reading Day for the Foundation Phase classes at Kingdom Preparatory School in Pretoria on 8 September this year. The vision is to help grow a love of

reading and enhance learners' literacy skills by engaging in fun educational literacy activities. First-year students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology read stories with small groups from each class and then did activities with the learners based on the stories.

All activities focused on literacy being fun and making learners aware that reading and literacy learning are not or should not be limited to the classroom and academic tasks. One group of students did a physical interpretation of a song about a butterfly, incorporating movement, music, and early literacy skills with a group of young learners.

The learners particularly enjoyed this activity. The Reading Day was also the first practical experience of being

engaged in the community that the first-year students in the Department had. Feedback from the students was overwhelmingly positive, and they professed that they gained valuable insight into the literacy acquisition process.

Supporting lifelong literacy is an aim of the literacy activities, and the team exhibited to the learners that young adults, as well as older ones, also enjoy reading and the fun and joy associated with it. Teachers, students, and learners enjoyed this event, and plans are in progress to host another Reading Day soon. I would like to believe that our team is supporting the learners of all the schools we visit to enjoy literacy activities and achieve literacy success, academic progress, and a prosperous life.

Introducing Kanye Rampa

**Education Consultant: Curricular Community Engagement
(Unit for Community Engagement: Department for Education Innovation)**



at the University of Pretoria in 2021 on a United Kingdom (UK)-funded rural education project based at the Centre for the Study of Resilience under the Faculty of Education. Her main contributions were co-producing a school leadership training curriculum and facilitating training interventions along with partners from University College London and the University of Limpopo.

One of Kanye's biggest strengths is building collaborative partnerships with local and international researchers. She has worked on large-scale flagship programmes such as the National E-Skills Programme, Living Labs in South Africa, SMART Cities, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Education, and Digital Doorway. She has published scientific papers in international peer-reviewed journals and presented at international conferences.

Kanye was also a member of the Africa-European Union (EU) Cooperation Forum on ICT from 2009 to 2014, contributing significantly towards the Horizon 2020 digital transformation strategy. Kanye's vision is to be a bridge for the co-creation of relevant and impactful knowledge between the university and surrounding communities.

Fun fact: My pursuit of Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) has led me on some incredible road trips around the country—from the vast desert-like Northern Cape to the hills of KwaZulu-Natal. One place I would particularly recommend is Mafarafara in Mpumalanga. It has the best fresh fish stop in Dullstroom. Get some local wine and honey for your loved ones while you are at it.

I had the amazing experience of working with a user group of elderly women above the age of 60 on a technology application. Their wisdom resulted in the publication of a peer-reviewed article titled 'We cannot be defeated by something that cannot talk'.

In a nutshell, their determination is far superior to technology!

Kanye Rampa is the newly appointed Education Consultant in the Unit for Community Engagement, Department for Education Innovation at the University of Pretoria (UP). She holds an MSc in Technology and Innovation Management as well as an MA in Environment, Development and Policy from Sussex University and is pursuing a PhD in Informatics at the UP.

Her research is primarily on finding innovative solutions to complex, often conflicting community problems using multidisciplinary approaches.

She derives great satisfaction from making science accessible to ordinary people living in resource-constrained environments, which makes her an excellent conduit for innovative education in the twenty-first century. Kanye started working

Matters of interest

- Refer to the links below to some of the recommended journals for submission of community engagement articles:
 - [Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement](#)
 - [Research involvement and engagement](#)
 - [International Journal of Community and Social Development](#)
 - [Journal of Community Practice](#)
 - [Journal of Community Service and Empowerment](#)
- Copies of the previous CE Newsletters are available at <https://www.up.ac.za/education-innovation/article/257709/community-engagement>.

The Unit for Community Engagement invites you to report on community engagement activities by submitting articles for publication in the next newsletter (Autumn 2024).

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From left: Mr Albert Matlheketha, Ms Kanye Rampa, Dr Eugene Machimana and Ms Londiwe Mahlangu

Opening of the Sensory STEM Garden on the Mamelodi Campus

Dr Martina Jordaan (Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus)



Prof Themba Mosia, Interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University officially opened the Sensory STEM Garden on the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus. He and the Director of the Mamelodi Campus, Prof Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann, also planted two fruit trees during the ceremony.

The Sensory STEM Garden is the brainchild of a team of individuals whose dedication has brought this project to fruition.

Dr Carin Combrinck from the Department of Architecture, Dr Helga Lister, the driving force behind the Siyathemba Clinic in Mamelodi, and Dr Lelanie Smith from the Community-based Project Module (JCP) within the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and IT (EBIT), are the masterminds behind this endeavour.

Several other collaborators have also participated in the project.

The SA-HEN grant provided vital support in the initial stages of the project, facilitating the training of 28 Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners.

The sensory STEM garden has become an invaluable resource for students from the faculties of Health Sciences and EBIT, as well as ECD students, providing a platform for ECD practitioner training. In addition, the garden's integration into the Extended Curriculum Programme has added a layer of enrichment to the academic offerings.

The ECD storytelling project jointly presented by the University of Pretoria's Merensky 2 Library and Mamelodi Library captivated the senses and imagination.

The garden is envisioned as a dynamic space for interdisciplinary research, catering to learners in the ECD phase, individuals with special educational needs, and the elderly.

The immersive sensory environment will benefit all of them. To amplify the impact of this space, students from all disciplines are invited to channel their creativity into projects that empower the local community. The sponsors, including the US-SA-HEN grant, the Merensky 2 Library (Christine Nel), and the Goethe-Institut Johannesburg, are thanked for their unwavering support in making this endeavour a reality.

Dr Martina Jordaan, Mr Solomon Makganelisa, and Mr Jack Thobakgale are acknowledged for their dedicated efforts in maintaining the garden on the Mamelodi Campus.

One Health in Action: An interdisciplinary collaboration between Veterinary and Medical students

Lungile Mkhabela (Pulse), Monde Mzamani (VetSCO) and Dr Alfred Kgasi (Community Engagement Lecturer: Faculty of Veterinary Science)

The One Health project involved an external collaborative community engagement in Makapanstad village in Hammanskraal aimed at promoting interdisciplinary healthcare approach within the university. The approach entails a joint healthcare initiative that benefits humans, animals, and the environment.

Pulse, which is a UP student structure that represents and serves medical students, has been collaborating with their counterparts within the Faculty of Veterinary Science i.e. Onderstepoort Veterinary Students Committee (OPVSC). This favourable collaboration on One Health projects has been going on from 2022.

On Saturday, August 2023, Pulse, OPVSC, Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VetSCO), House Sport Science House Sport Science and Tuks friends of Médecins Sans Frontières/ doctors without borders (MSF) hosted a One Health activity at Poppy's Animal Outreach centre in Makapanstad village.



Date	Venue	Time
09/08/2023	Makapanstad, Mmaude section	08:00–13:00

On the day, students from the Faculty of Veterinary Science offered various primary clinical services such as physical examinations, deworming, and vaccinations of pets from the community.

Medical students from the Faculty of Health Sciences offered community members general physical health examinations and health screenings, as well as engaging the young children in structured fun-filled physical activities.

Since the event was held on Women's Day, sanitary pads were donated and women's reproductive health pamphlets were distributed to women and young girls.

There were separate stations for registration, vitals check, history-taking, physical examinations, light refreshments, and kids activities. At the registration station, the community members had their personal and demographic details recorded. They then moved on to the vitals station, where measurements were taken of their blood pressure, respiratory rate, pulse, temperature, and blood glucose level.

After that, each community member's medical history was taken, and a basic physical examination was performed. If the vitals, histories, or physical exams showed any abnormalities, the community members were referred to a local primary health care facility...

Their last stop was the refreshments station, where they received light snacks, fruit, and drinks. Children were kept occupied at our physical activity stations, where students from House Sports Science taught them physical activities they could do to keep fit and healthy.

continued on page 6



The veterinary students had a similar set-up for pets, with stations for registration, history-taking, and physical examinations. Additionally, there was a station for deworming and tick control and another for rabies vaccinations. All these veterinary activities were performed under the strict supervision of a qualified veterinarian and lecturer, Dr Alfred Kgasi, from the University). At the last station, pet owners were given free pet food and dog jerseys donated by Poppy's Animal Outreach Centre.

During the planning phase, we invited dental, oral hygiene, and dietetics students to join us via the House Dental Life and House Dietetics student structures. This would have allowed us to offer the community additional targeted health assessments like diet screening and oral examinations.

These are areas of our health that we can easily ignore, especially if we do not have education about them. Having these student structures on board would have allowed us to bridge a huge gap in the community's health knowledge.

Unfortunately, they were unable to join us on the day, but this is an opportunity that the project must explore again in the future. We also planned to have an HIV testing station, but we were unable to procure HIV testing kits.

In our interaction with the community, some community members reported that going to their local clinics can be a waste of time as certain services like HIV testing are not always available or very long queues force them to wait there for most of a day. Another challenge is that they cannot afford to miss work. As a result of these challenges surrounding access to healthcare, many community members end up ignoring their health.

Health sciences students examined and assisted more than 50 people, and veterinary science students vaccinated over 50 cats and dogs.). The community members appreciated the health screenings, with some mentioning that their nearest clinic was far away, and it was expensive to travel there. Similarly, some pet owners said they sometimes could not afford veterinary care for their pets, and therefore, the outreach was a great opportunity for them and their pets.

The outreach project was indeed a great success, and we had a good response from the community. The students from both Faculties, enjoyed working with one another and there was a great sense of appreciation for the benefit of all working together in a collaborative One Health approach.

Special thanks to:

- the Faculty of Health Sciences for sponsoring health sciences students with a bus and gazebo;
- the Department of Family Medicine for sponsoring medical examination bags;
- Dr Alfred Kgasi (Faculty of Veterinary Science Community Engagement Lecturer) for supervising the veterinary students;
- Miss Lousie Pinkham and Miss Gontse Kodisang of Poppy's Animal Outreach Centre for liaising with the people of Makapanstad; and Ms Lungile Mkhabela (Pulse), Mr Tumelo Mothokoa (OPVSC), and Mr Monde Mzamani (VetSCO).

The impact of Holiday Club programmes on UP Theology leadership

Ms Daryll Curtis (Peer Advisor in the Faculty of Theology and Religion) and Ms Mahlatse Mathabathe (Former Chairperson of House Theology and Religion 2022/2023)

Gracepoint Holiday Club

The Gracepoint Holiday Club is a five-day programme filled with young people who love the Gospel and wish to share it with the children in their local communities. This week-long event includes hours of unforgettable activities and games, turning an ordinary school vacation into a lifelong memory.

All staff members and volunteers involved in the Holiday Club are trained, screened, and thoroughly evaluated to ensure that children who attend are in a safe and welcoming environment.

What are the purpose and objectives of the Gracepoint Holiday Club?

The aim is that every child and young person who joins Holiday Club will experience the love of God through the amazing activities, lessons, and stories and that they will learn and believe how loved, accepted, and valued they are. Holiday Club programmes typically run during the June/July school holidays to provide children in the community with an opportunity to encounter Jesus with their peers during the winter season.

The Holiday Club is an opportunity for teenagers to grow their leadership skills and continue on their journey of vocational discernment.

Through serving children who attend the yearly Holiday Club programme,



this is also an opportunity for leaders, teenagers, and staff alike to leave a mark on this planet, make a difference, and continue doing great things.

The benefits for the University of Pretoria and Gracepoint Church

The Holiday Club provides University of Pretoria students and high school volunteers with an opportunity to work off community hours by volunteering in terms of spiritual and emotional care. The benefits are amazing! Students can participate in fun activities while being led and mentored within the community and church by teams of trained and committed Christian leaders.

How challenges have been identified and overcome

Many of the previous attendees of the programme stopped attending physically because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gracepoint Church opted for online ministry during this time. This has been overcome through



the relaunching of the project, sponsorships, donations from multiple donors, and much prayer and support, including volunteerism. Much of the momentum prior to the pandemic has picked up, and children are ready and willing to return!

Gracepoint Holiday Club's connection to the University of Pretoria

Gracepoint Methodist Church has recently partnered with students in the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Theology and Religion to make Holiday Club 2023 a success. Former Chairperson of House Theology and Religion (2022/2023) and Honours student in Practical Theology and Missiology, Mahlatse Mathabathe, and Faculty Peer Advisor and Masters' student in Practical Theology and Missiology, Daryll Curtis, have partnered with Gracepoint Methodist Church to bring children from surrounding areas, including Refilwe, Glenferness, and Kayalami, to this amazing project.

Creating awareness of nutritional management and prevention of non-communicable diseases in the Daspoort community

Ms Magdalena Mlotshwa, Mr Ndiphile Mcondobi, and Ms Dineo Phahlamohlaka (Fourth-year Dietetics Students), Ms Marion Beeforth and Ms Phumudzo Tshiambara (Supervisors)



Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), commonly referred to as lifestyle diseases, significantly impact global mortality rates and diminish individuals' quality of life.

To combat this growing health concern, it is essential to equip the public with knowledge on effectively managing NCDs through lifestyle modifications and behaviour change.

This report highlights an initiative undertaken by fourth-year dietetics students on 13 June 2023, aimed at raising awareness about the nutritional management and prevention of prevalent NCDs, including type 2 diabetes,

hypertension, and dyslipidaemia, within the Daspoort community.

The primary objective of this endeavour was to educate community members on the critical aspects of NCDs, including their underlying risk factors, associated consequences, and practical strategies for prevention and management. By disseminating accurate and relevant information, we aimed to empower individuals with the necessary tools to make informed decisions regarding their health.

The awareness day, meticulously planned and executed, garnered substantial community engagement and adherence

to the structured programme. Drawing inspiration from the words of Hippocrates, 'Let thy food be thy medicine and thy medicine be thy food,' the team provided the community with comprehensive education on adopting optimal dietary practices.

Educational sessions focused on distinguishing between refined and unrefined carbohydrates, understanding the nuances of different dietary fats (saturated and trans vs. unsaturated), and embracing alternatives to excessive salt consumption.

continued on page 9



Recognising the multidimensional nature of NCDs, our initiative embraced a collaborative approach involving diverse stakeholders.

To provide a holistic perspective, medical students delivered an informative talk highlighting the risk factors associated with NCDs and their consequences.

Representatives from the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) supplemented the discussions by shedding light on the intricate relationship between substance use and NCDs.

The active involvement of community members, who shared their personal experiences and practical insights into effecting positive dietary changes, further enriched the educational platform. The awareness day on nutritional management and prevention of

NCDs in the Daspoort community served as a pivotal platform for disseminating crucial knowledge and empowering residents to address their health concerns proactively. By promoting optimal dietary practices, addressing underlying

risk factors, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, we aspire to cultivate a culture of prevention and effective management of NCDs within the Daspoort community and beyond.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals and organisations whose invaluable contributions were instrumental in the success of our awareness day:

- Mr Luiz Jardin from Danville Spar, whose generous provision of bread served as a nutritious lunch for the attendees
- The Malusi Youth Development Centre (MYDO) for its unwavering support in supplying serving plates and facilitating a smooth and efficient event
- Mrs Mariete Roets, whose remarkable generosity extended to providing us with herbal samples, which served as practical demonstrations of salt alternatives, as well as her contribution of 250 spinach seedlings aimed at encouraging community members to embark on their own home gardening endeavours
- Ms Sara Mojapelo for actively demonstrating gardening techniques to the community members
- Dr Gerhard Botha and Daspoort staff members, Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) students, and our lecturers

Tourism management honours students visit Etosha National Park and King Nehale Conservancy in Namibia

Dr Felix Bello (Senior Lecturer: Tourism Management) and Prof Elizabeth du Preez (Associate Professor: Tourism Management)

On 3 September 2023, 14 tourism management honours students and two academic staff members from the Department of Marketing Management set out on a week-long field trip to Etosha National Park and King Nehale Conservancy in Namibia. The excursion, under the supervision of Dr Felix Bello and Prof Elizabeth du Preez, forms part of the Tourism management honours degree programme and allows students to experience tourism operations in a real-life context.

The purpose of this field visit was to provide the students with first-hand, practical information on community involvement in tourism and conservation; law enforcement and infrastructure management in a protected area; sustainable tourism enterprise development; and biodiversity conservation based on best practices in Southern Africa.

This community engagement field visit provided the students with an opportunity to understand and discuss the linkages that exist between local communities and protected areas; examine the contribution of wildlife tourism to sustainable local development; and assess conservancies as a tool for biodiversity conservation and sustainable local development. Students were also challenged to investigate these elements within a wider destination management context.

The students' activities in Namibia were organised in collaboration with the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). After arriving in Windhoek, students were

briefed by officials from the Namibia Tourism Board and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism.

The briefing included presentations on the overall competitiveness of Namibia as a tourist destination and conservation and tourism development in national parks in Namibia. After two days in Windhoek, the group departed for Etosha National Park.

There was a stopover at Henties Bay en route, and students had the opportunity to experience some of the adventure tourism offerings in Swakopmund. In Etosha National Park, the students camped at Halali Campsite, which is owned by Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR), a government entity that holds exclusive rights to provide accommodation facilities in Namibia's national parks.

While in the park, the students engaged with park officials and NWR staff, who briefed them on conservation, tourism development, and the involvement of local communities in tourism associated with the national park. During a number of game drives, students were able to gauge the interrelationship between conservation efforts and tourism operations. On the last day in the park, students joined NWR staff at Halali Camp to clean the campsite.

They also visited the neighbouring King Nehale Conservancy to appreciate the involvement of local communities in conservation and protected area-based tourism.

This conservancy presents a living example of the partnership between the community and the tourism industry. Through a partnership

with Gondwana Collection, one of the biggest tourism companies in Namibia, an upmarket lodge (King Nehale Lodge) was constructed in the conservancy. As a result, the concession fees from Gondwana Collection have become a main source of revenue for the conservancy and surrounding communities. Back in Windhoek, the students experienced some of the local culture before returning to South Africa.

The excursion forms part of the students' final examinations in two modules, Responsible Tourism Management and Destination Management, and the students are expected to write two strategic reports. The first report (Responsible Tourism) entails an assessment of the sustainable tourism development in and around Etosha National Park and the local community's involvement in tourism and biodiversity conservation with a focus on King Nehale Conservancy.

For the second report (Destination Management), students are expected to propose relevant strategies to further develop and promote Destination Namibia through novel, creative tourism experiences.

The reports, along with their recommendations, will be shared with all the key stakeholders involved in the project. These recommendations will assist our partners in Namibia, King Nehale Conservancy, the Namibia Tourism Board, Namibia Wildlife Resorts, and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, in improving sustainable wildlife tourism and enhancing local community participation in tourism to ensure sustainable local development.

Enabling working 'Moms 2B' to breastfeed successfully

Ms Abba Leya, Ms Ellimdeen Tayyibah, Ms Kotze Ina, Ms Magubane Nontokomalo, Ms Mahlaka Mhlali, Ms Makgato Katarina, Mr Nashed Andrew, Ms Sonaba Olona, Ms Marion Beeforth, Mrs Molatelo Kgodane, Prof Karien Mostert, Dr Heather Legodi, and Ms Phumudzo Tshiambara



Figure 1: Multidisciplinary team

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is a life-saver for infants. Breastmilk should, therefore, be promoted as a right for all children unless medically contra-indicated. Hence, World Breastfeeding Week was celebrated during the community nutrition block in the training of dietetics students.

Under the initiation of the Department of Human Nutrition (HOD Dr Heather Legodi), the fourth-year students, as part of a multidisciplinary team, focused on the health of both the mother and the infant as a whole, which resulted in a successful programme.

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) presents World Breastfeeding Week in the first week

of August each year. More than half a billion working women in the world are not given essential maternity protections in national laws. About 20% of countries require employers to provide employees with paid breaks and facilities for breastfeeding or expressing milk, and fewer than half of infants under six months of age are exclusively breastfed.¹

World Breastfeeding Week is also supported by the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund, and many ministries of health and civil society partners worldwide. The main focus is on promoting breastfeeding with an emphasis on its significance as a natural and beneficial way to nourish infants.¹

The World Breastfeeding Week

observation was held at Eersterust Community Health Centre (CHC) on 2 August 2023, headed by the fourth-year dietetics students. The multidisciplinary team assembled for the event included physiotherapists, audiologists, dietitians, and breastfeeding experts.

The team approach facilitates the provision of comprehensive education by addressing the health of individuals as a whole. Furthermore, the information provided is well-rounded and covers a wide range of topics.

The main aim for this day was to raise awareness of breastfeeding benefits for both the mother and the baby and to provide solutions to breastfeeding challenges and

continued on page 12



Figure 2: Group photo

practical tips on how to breastfeed successfully, even when the mother has to return to work.

The dietetics students placed at the Daspoort poli-clinic educated the mothers on the composition of breastmilk, using visual aids, including a doll and nutrient composition models, to demonstrate the nutrient adequacy of breastmilk.

The model was used to explain that breastmilk is sufficient for feeding during the first six months of an infant's life as it contains all the nutrients and liquids an infant requires.

To further encourage breastfeeding, the Eersterust CHC-based students emphasised the benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and baby. Additionally, they addressed many misconceptions and myths around breastfeeding, with the most common ones held by mothers being not having enough

breastmilk and the notion that a baby seems to be continuously hungry. Related to this, the Laudium CHC-based student group addressed problems regarding breastfeeding and how to resolve them.

These included engorged breasts, sore or cracked nipples, and correct positioning. Additionally, Ms Bongiwé Nkondo (Eersterust CHC dietitian) demonstrated the 'expression of breastmilk' technique and educated the attendees on the importance of good nutrition during breastfeeding.

Furthermore, the health care workers explained their role in empowering mothers to breastfeed. Another important aspect of breastfeeding is the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and this topic was covered by Sr Mudau (Eersterust CHC). To provide extra support to breastfeeding mothers, a La Leche League leader, Ms Tobie

Muller, elaborated on the services her organisation provides and covered correct positioning techniques for breastfeeding. The lecturers, Ms Phumudzo Tshiambara (Human Nutrition), Ms Marion Beeforth (Human Nutrition and Family Medicine) and Ms Kgodane Molatelo (Nursing), shared their personal experiences related to breastfeeding. Overall, the day was enjoyable and successful.

Even with the limited interaction and engagement from the audience due to time constraints, the reception and interest expressed by most of the attendees was positive. Education is a cost-effective and powerful weapon in changing behaviour.

Reference

1. World Health Organisation. 2023. World Breastfeeding Week 2023 [Online] Available from: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-breastfeeding-week/2023>.

Highlights of the IHL 120 community engagement tour

Mrs Margaret Kgodane, Prof Carin Maree, Dr Heather Legodi, Dr Claire Martin, Ms Germaine Lovric, Ms Nthabiseng Phalatse, Dr Maria du Toit, Dr Nonte Magida, Dr Robert Lavhelani, Ms Anri-Louise Oosthuizen, Dr Mable Kekana, Prof Karien Mostert, Mr Johan Maasz



'Do all you can with what you have, in the time you have, in the place you are'
Nkosi Johnson.



Community engagement is mandated by the Department of Higher Education and Training as one of the pillars on which higher education institutions are assessed (extract from the National Development Plan 2030).

Integrated Health Leadership (IHL) 120 is an interprofessional module that is shared between all departments in the School of Health Care Sciences and the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology of the University of Pretoria. The purpose of this module is to ignite the process of healthcare leadership development in the context of community health from the first-year level. The students who are currently

enrolled are from the departments of Human Nutrition, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Radiology, Physiotherapy, and Speech-Language Pathology.

In undertaking this module, students will be guided to understand their respective roles in inter-professional healthcare teams, take responsibility for these roles, work together as team members, and develop leadership skills to the benefit of the health of communities, contributing to reaching Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' (United Nations, 2022).

On 18 August and 8 September 2023, IHL 120 students had community

engagement bus tours to different communities, accompanied by their group mentors (lecturers). The main aim of the tours was for students to familiarise themselves with the real communities' life situations, identifying and prioritising the potential health needs of these communities.

The inter-professional teams were expected to come up with suggestions for management, with the emphasis being on addressing short- and long-term goals and leadership approaches to be followed. Through the assistance of the University of Pretoria's Transport Services, five buses were organised to transport the students to the following communities:

1. King's Hope Development Foundation
2. VIVA Foundation in Alaska informal settlement, Mamelodi East
3. Plastic View informal settlement
4. New Schools of Hope in Zama-Zama (healing of poverty through education)
5. Malusi Youth Development Organisation in Hercules

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Nourishing communities and fostering engagement: Mastercard Foundation Scholars' soup kitchen initiative at the University of Pretoria

Elosy Kathambi (MSc Project Management: Mastercard Foundation Scholar's Program at the University of Pretoria, media representative)



Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Program hereafter, at the University of Pretoria (UP), in collaboration with the Association of Catholic Tertiary Students (ACTs) at UP, organised a soup kitchen as a community engagement (CE) project.

The purpose of this project was to provide a hot meal to homeless individuals in the Hatfield area and demonstrate the Mastercard Foundation's commitment to social responsibility and community development.

By partnering with ACTs, a recognised community organisation at UP, the

University aimed to strengthen its ties with the local community and foster meaningful relationships.

The primary objective of the CE project was to prepare, pack, and distribute meals to homeless people on the streets of Hatfield. The aim was to address hunger and contribute to the well-being of those in need.

The collaboration between the Program and ACTs at UP fostered a stronger connection between the University and the local community and established a sustainable framework for future collaborative efforts.

This partnership enabled the University to work closely with a trusted community organisation, leading to a deeper understanding of community needs and effective engagement strategies.

Additionally, the project aimed to foster community engagement among the Mastercard Foundation Scholars and other students at UP, encouraging active involvement in community service and promoting a sense of social responsibility.

It showcased the Mastercard Foundation Scholars' dedication to making a positive impact beyond

continued on page 15



academic pursuits and allowed them to develop leadership skills, empathy, and a deeper understanding of social issues.

These qualities will contribute to their personal growth and prepare them for future leadership roles.

During the CE project, one of the notable challenges faced was the limited resources available for meal preparation and packaging, particularly due to the large size of the volunteer group. However, the organising committee efficiently addressed this challenge by proactively reaching out to the management of the Program and ACTs. Through their efforts, the committee was able to secure the supplies required to carry out the project effectively. Another challenge was the time constraints involved

in organising the project within a limited timeframe. The team effectively managed time by establishing a detailed plan, delegating responsibilities, and coordinating efforts to ensure efficient execution.

To address the challenge of sustainability, the Program through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars and ACTs established a framework for ongoing collaboration and future initiatives. The soup kitchen successfully achieved its objectives of providing meals to homeless people in Hatfield while fostering community engagement. By participating in the project, students developed a greater awareness of community issues and were encouraged to engage in other community initiatives. This fostered a culture of active

citizenship and contributed to the University's mission of producing well-rounded graduates.

The collaboration resulted in a tangible positive impact on the Hatfield community, addressing immediate needs while raising awareness about homelessness and poverty-related issues.

The project also showcase the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program's commitment to social responsibility, strengthened ties between the University and the community, and benefited all parties through increased student engagement, leadership development, and positive community impact. Despite initial challenges, the collaborative efforts of the University and its community partner led to a successful and impactful CE project.

Lessons learned from planning a Hypertension Awareness Day: Community internship

Ms Lethabo Tabane, Ms Velia Mampane, Ms Emma Davidson, Ms Bridgette Motsepa, Ms Janie Mittermaier, Ms Dineo Phahlamohlaka, Mr Ndiphile McOndobi, Ms Magdelina Mlotshwa, Tabea Mokgethoa (fourth-year dietetics students) Ms Phumudzo Tshiambara and Ms Marion Beeforth (supervisors)

On 9 June 2023, the community nutrition block 1 students celebrated Hypertension Awareness Day at Laudium Community Health Centre (CHC). We were excited to share our knowledge about what hypertension is, its risk factors, and its complications. We also had the opportunity to share how salt affects blood pressure, what food items are high in salt, and salt alternatives.

The last part of our education session was on saturated and unsaturated fats and how they influence blood pressure. The health awareness day reminded us that 'Rome wasn't built in a day', and in order to have a successful programme, planning ahead is essential. More than that, it confirmed that having a backup plan is important in case there are unforeseen challenges on the day.

In the lead-up to the event, we were not very enthusiastic about it. We were still in the early stages of our community block and were not in tune with how we were supposed to align with being ready to host it by ourselves. There was not much planning to do as we divided the responsibilities among the three clinics. Each clinic was responsible for its own element pertaining to the management of hypertension. We

had planned that the order would be risk factors and complications (Daspoort Clinic representatives) first, followed by salt and salt alternatives (Laudium CHC representatives), and lastly, saturated and unsaturated fats (Eersterust CHC representatives).

It happened in that order on the day, with question-and-answer sessions in between the education sessions. Our planning also included requesting resources from the Department of Human Nutrition, which was a smooth process—everything was received as requested (the Department of Human Nutrition banners and gazebo).

We planned to hold the event in a specific spot at Laudium CHC and to go out into the various sections of the clinic to invite people to the event. That was however unsuccessful, as the clinic clients were busy with their appointments and waiting for their files. Therefore, we decided to take the event to the people, so we moved our gazebos, tables, and chairs to the area where clients wait for their files, enabling us to carry out our education sessions successfully. This experience taught us that community nutrition is about getting information to the people in the spirit of care and passion rather than expecting them to come and get it.

The participation of the clients was encouraging. The audience engaged well in our question-and-answer sessions and activities in which they received oranges for correct answers. After all the education sessions, the clients engaged in one-on-one questioning, which went well and showed that they were eager to gain knowledge.

The Hypertension Awareness Day taught us the importance of planning, adaptability, and direct engagement with the community. It reminded us that education and awareness are powerful tools for promoting positive health outcomes. We also learned that we need to conduct more education sessions at schools to ensure that children are well-equipped with knowledge about healthy eating from a young age.

We are grateful for this experience and look forward to applying the lessons learned in our future endeavours as community nutrition professionals. We have learnt that after education sessions, we must always allow for one-on-one sessions where participants can ask individual and personal questions on the topics discussed. A few individuals indicated that they found the session informative and were willing to make changes where applicable.

All things pigs

Nontokozo Mtshali (Fifth-year BVSc student)



highlight of the week for me as this is not something we routinely do as students. I also had an opportunity to visit the CS Vet Laboratory.

I think the vet community tends to underestimate the time it takes for the laboratory technicians to process the samples we give them. For some reason, I have always thought that there are machines that do the majority of the work. To my surprise, on average, 75% of the work is done by these technicians.

This knowledge impressed upon me the importance of sending my samples in good time and gave me an understanding of the laboratory's turnaround time. On the last day, a Friday, I attended a short course on artificial insemination and was awarded a certificate of attendance.

The main lesson I took home from this course was that the implementation of a proper management system in a pig farm is imperative. It surely is the heart of any pig farm, as the farm's success depends heavily on the efficiency of its management system.

In conclusion, I am grateful for this opportunity and will use the knowledge I acquired to assist smaller pig farms back home that are struggling. It was a fulfilling experience for me as a young, upcoming vet. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Dorothea Mostert for her mentorship during the week.

I also want to thank all the pig farmers who allowed me to visit their farms and give special thanks to CS Vet for allowing me to visit their laboratory and use their resources to gain this important experience.

As a final-year intensive-elective student, I was awarded the chance to spend a week with Dr Dorothea Mostert to get more exposure to the pig industry.

The focus was on how commercial farms operate and how they keep disease levels in pigs as low as possible. Seeing how these farms operate and how serious and strict they are about their protocols made me realise that the knowledge we acquire as students from lectures about pig farms needs to be supplemented with practical experience. I was fortunate enough to visit two Topigs Norsvin SA and Concord Piggery during my elective week from 11 to 15 September 2023.

Both these farms had extremely strict access control systems and other

important biosecurity measures in place. This allowed them to fully track down anyone who visited the farms and easily trace the source of disease outbreaks.

They had a clear distinction between the dirty area and the clean area, and they used a 'shower in and out' system to ensure that the potential for the introduction of pathogens was eliminated. As difficult and expensive as it might be, I believe that if such measures were translated to smaller farms across the country, disease and mortality levels would be kept to a minimum.

One of the farms we visited sells breeding stock, and I was also given the opportunity to do pregnancy scans on pigs, which was an exciting experience. This was the

AfrIPEN conference in Blantyre, Malawi



Faculty of Humanities
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Lefapha la Bumanaha



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Miss Sthembiso Ncube (PhD candidate: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology) and Dr Renata Eccles (Senior Lecturer: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



From 13 to 17 September 2023, a group of seven academics from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology attended and presented at the Africa Interprofessional Education Network (AfrIPEN) conference in Blantyre, Malawi.

AfrIPEN is an organisation with consensus-based partnerships between various institutions and individuals whose vision is to establish Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (IPECP) as an integral part of the training of the health workforce in sub-Saharan Africa.

The theme of the conference was 'IPECP: Are we making a difference in Africa', with sub-themes of 'Evidence-based studies highlighting the impact of IPECP in Africa' and 'Community health promotion in IPECP'.

The seven colleagues from the department presented various topics:

Dr Renata Eccles presented on 'IPECP in sub-Saharan Africa: A Dirisana+ Project workshop', in which she reported on an IPECP

workshop held in March 2023 as part of the Dirisana+ Project.

The Dirisana+ Project is funded by a Capacity Building Grant in Higher Education (CBHE-JP) and involves seven higher education institutions: the University of Pretoria, the University of Witwatersrand, and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University in South Africa; the University of Namibia and Welwitchia Health Training Centre in Namibia; the University of Turku in Finland; and Maastricht University in the Netherlands. The presentation at AfrIPEN described the workshop, its outcomes, and forthcoming plans.

Ms Sthembiso Ncube and Ms Meghna Patel presented on 'Undergraduate allied healthcare professional students' perceived knowledge of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)', in which they outlined the results of their undergraduate research study. It was apparent that undergraduate allied healthcare professional students were not confident in their abilities to provide services for children with ASD despite having

received some formal training on how to support this population. This study thus brought to light the importance of fostering adequate ASD knowledge at the undergraduate level.

Mr Mpilo Booi presented on 'Undergraduate health and social care students' experiences of interprofessional education and collaborative practice (IPECP) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs): A scoping review'.

This study aimed to provide a map of existing literature and evidence of undergraduate students' reported experiences regarding their participation in IPECP activities in LMIC contexts. The ultimate goal was to provide an overview of the state of knowledge in the field and help inform future research or decisions regarding the integration of IPECP in the curriculum.

Dr Maria du Toit presented on 'The reliability and perceptions of community healthcare workers on mHealth developmental screening for vulnerable children'. This study focused on the role of various community members working alongside qualified speech-language therapists to conduct developmental screening of preschool children. The study found that community workers can successfully and accurately screen children for possible developmental concerns, and community healthcare workers

continued on page 19

reported this to be an essential, easy-to-deliver service that should be conducted on a regular basis within their communities.

Dr Shabnam Abdoola and Dr Carmen Milton presented on 'Building IPECP into community health promotion'. This project aims to conduct Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioner training in a hybrid and hyflex environment and was integrated into a community engagement module in 2023. The project provides third-year students with experiential learning and makes use of technology to

facilitate learning. It will also allow healthcare professionals to address the needs of communities by bridging the digital divide and giving low-resourced communities access to skills and resources through online mediums.

If you are as passionate about IPECP as these individuals, AfrIPEN might just be the place for you. To learn more about this international organisation and/or become a member, visit <https://afripen.org/>. Alternatively, you can contact Dr Renata Eccles (renata.mosca@up.ac.za).



DSSO hygiene drive with Bramley Children's Home

Tinuade Williams (Development studies honours student in the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology, and Development Studies)



The students of the Development Studies Student Organisation (DSSO) at the University of Pretoria took the initiative to organise a hygiene drive and outreach programme in collaboration with Bramley Children's Home in Pretoria. The main objective of this drive was to raise awareness about the significance of hygiene, with a particular focus on feminine hygiene needs. The outreach programme had two primary goals. Firstly, we aimed

to collect hygiene products such as sanitary pads, tampons, soap, and other essential items through personal contributions, which would then be donated to those in need. Secondly, we conducted an educational talk alongside the drive to educate individuals, especially women and girls, about proper hygiene practices.

We were delighted to have gathered an impressive amount of donations, including 282 packets of sanitary

pads, 50 facecloths, 60 toothbrushes, 24 antiperspirant deodorants, 50 tubes of toothpaste, and 50 bars of soap.

On the day of the outreach, we had the privilege of meeting nine teenage girls at Bramley Children's Home. We spent quality time with them, playing games, getting to know each other, and participating in various discussions, both individually and as a group.

We had interactive conversations with the girls, covering topics such as general personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene, and their aspirations as young women. We discussed their academic goals and where they envisioned themselves in the future. It was an incredibly fulfilling experience for all involved, and the process of organising the drive served as a valuable learning experience for each and every one of us.

Take Action Ministry NPC

Esther Taljaard (Fundraiser and Social Media Manager)

Take Action Ministry is a non-profit company intended to give structure to and provide a vehicle for mobilising people who want to express their faith through acts of kindness—bridging the gap between those in need and those with the hearts, time and/or material resources to help.

Since 2011, we have been involved in various projects in the impoverished rural communities of Hammanskraal and Maubane. We work to equip key individuals and organisations to bring transformation to their communities by impacting the lives of children attending early childhood development and after-school programmes.

What specific services does your organisation offer?

We walk a road with our partner centres, the caregivers, and the children in their care. We meet with them frequently and assess where they are in their growth process using the analogy of the tree (as seen in our logo):

From root to fruit

Roots

Assess if basic needs, such as access to food and water, are being met. Introduce the caregivers and children to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Trunk

Determine what steps are needed to help a centre meet the requirements of the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development to ensure that it is operating safely and legally and help it become eligible to receive funding from various sources. Plan with the centre



to complete these steps. Provide access to training and resources to help the centre fulfil its vision and mission.

Branches

Encourage centres to build on their own strengths. Provide programmes for children at centres that have shown a readiness and willingness to participate.

Fruit

Encourage centres that, in turn, help the community around them, using the training and resources they have been given, by starting their own training programmes, community forums, or celebration days. Educate children who can contribute to their community in meaningful ways and realise their God-given potential, breaking the cycle of a negative lifestyle of poverty and vulnerability.

Partnerships with other NPOs

We are always on the lookout for organisations that are already solving a specific problem and find ways to work in partnership with them rather than duplicating services by going our own way. We also endeavour to work with relevant government departments to make sure that the centres we partner with are operating within the norms and standards prescribed for them.

This is done to ensure that centres are operating safely and legally for both their own protection and the protection of the children in their care. Working within the parameters of the government departments also increases the centre's eligibility/likelihood to receive funding for its programme.

continued on page 21

What are some notable achievements or success stories of your organisation?

Just this year, we have done the following:



Describe community challenges observed by your organisation.

The main needs within our centres are the following (but we have a detailed needs list for each centre that we can provide on request):

- Food (mainly fortified porridge from ForAfrica)
- Clean water
- Working toilets
- Study programmes

- Tables and chairs
- Centre maintenance and upgrades
- Stipends for centre staff
- Funding for health certificates

Are there any upcoming events or initiatives that the University should be aware of?

Yes, our programmes run throughout the year. We have Action Days, when we take volunteers out to one of our centres to do maintenance work. We also have ECD Fun Days, when we play with the children and present educational programmes. We have our annual fundraiser event in July, as part of our participation in Nelson Mandela Month, to celebrate the late President Nelson Mandela's birthday and give back to the community of Hammanskraal. Organisations, individuals and corporates can participate in various ways: (1) financial contributions, (2) volunteering, (3) attending our event (purchasing tickets enables

us to stock up on porridge for our feeding fund). And then, we have our big year-end drive in November and December, during which we gather finances from our donors and friends to buy the children school supplies for the new year. Finally, we have extra classes where we help Grade 10, 11, and 12 learners prepare for the year-end exams. Should you require specific dates, please contact us at esther@takeaction.org.za.

How can students actively engage and support the work of your organisation?

It would be wonderful if students could come out to help with the extra classes for learners (English and Maths) on Saturdays. Alternatively, they can arrange with us to do an Action Day or ECD Fun Day at any one of our centres. It would also be of great help if they took part in the Christmas Drive, where we collect funds for stationery for learners.

Repurposing for community engagement

Dr Sunday Ochonu Ochai (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases), Mr Tedson Nkoana (Future Africa Research Chair on One Health), Dr Jeanette Wentzel (Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station), and Dr Raksha Bhoora and Prof Melvyn Quan (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases)



In a world where sustainability and community engagement are gaining increasing attention, Melvyn Quan, Lecturer in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases at the University of Pretoria, had an idea. He had a cupboard full of conference bags that were not being used and decided to start an initiative to collect unused bags from other academic colleagues and put them to good use by repurposing them.

continued on page 22



continued to stimulate young minds, promoting both learning and play. It is a wonderful example of how community engagement can foster creativity and resourcefulness.

Older children also benefited from the community's generosity. Electronic toys found a new home in a school club, where remote-controlled cars were put to good use. These toys stimulated creativity, encouraging kids to build their own cars and explore the world of technology.

Furniture contributions were not overlooked. They were carefully delivered to the local community centre, where they were refurbished and put to good use. This not only enhanced the appearance and functionality of the centre but also served as a space for the community to gather and interact.

The response that followed was nothing short of overwhelming, and it demonstrated the power of community engagement and collaboration in transforming lives.

The donations poured in, and they were not limited to conference bags; there were toys, furniture, and clothes. This outpouring of generosity is a testament to the fact that when a community comes together for a common cause, incredible things can happen.

Conference bags were repurposed into valuable assets for school children. By consulting with local schools and identifying their most pressing needs, these bags were allocated among creches, primary schools, and special needs schools in the Mnisi Community, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga.

This step made a substantial impact by reducing the need for single-use plastic bags, which are not environmentally friendly, and

replacing them with sturdy, reusable conference bags. Children can now carry their books and clothes to and from school in a more eco-friendly and sustainable manner.

Computer bags found a new purpose; they were provided to teachers and liaison officers at learning centres. They were not only intended for carrying computers but also for educating kids on the move. In doing so, this initiative solved two significant issues: ensuring the safety of valuable educational equipment and bringing learning to life beyond the classroom.

The initiative did not stop at conference and computer bags. Many toys were provided, and rather than merely handing them out to schools and creches, a toy library was created.

Toys were rotated between creches every month and shared between schools. This approach ensured that the toys remained interesting and

Finally, the clothes donations were coordinated through the Timbavati Foundation, which ensured that these essentials reached needy kids. The power of community engagement was evident in every step of this journey, as countless individuals and organisations joined forces to make a significant impact on the lives of others.

The initial idea, combined with the incredible response of the community, stands as a testament to the fact that change is possible when individuals come together to make a difference. By repurposing conference bags and donating toys, furniture, and clothes, the community has not only reduced waste but also enhanced the lives of those in need.

This heart-warming story showcases the potential of community engagement to bring about meaningful and lasting change, reminding us that we all have the power to make a difference, one act of kindness at a time.



Reflections on the 25th IEASA conference: A retrospective and prospective view

**Dr Eugene Machimana, Mr Albert Matlheketha, and Londiwe Mahlangu
(Department for Education Innovation: Unit for Community Engagement)**

The 25th International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) conference in Durban saw a robust turnout, with many delegates from both national and international universities. Notably, the University of Pretoria (UP) was represented by 13 personnel from various departments, particularly the International Office. The theme, 'Looking back, looking forward', held significant resonance.

The staff of UP's Unit for Community Engagement (CE) engaged in Workshop 3, focusing on 'The role of community engagement in developing a societally impactful internationalisation in higher education agenda'.

The conference's varied content was complementary, featuring case studies, insightful discussions, and thought-provoking presentations. Key questions addressed included:

- How can higher education institutions internationalise while significantly contributing to their local communities?
- How can these institutions recognise and collaborate with local populations/communities as knowledgeable and active partners in knowledge production rather than merely beneficiaries or subjects of analysis?
- How can we promote reciprocal, mutually beneficial interactions

between international and local academic communities, focusing on knowledge sharing and exchange rather than mere extraction?

Key highlights: Advancing CE@UP

We presented UP's innovative approach to reimagining community engagement, sparking considerable interest and supportive discussion, particularly from the workshop facilitator, Prof Yanga Zondi of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The Unit for CE is progressing in key areas, such as:

- clearly defining community engagement's scope and boundaries;
- profiling and collaborating effectively with community partners;
- managing expectations among community partners, UP staff, and students through preliminary agreements;
- recognising community partners as knowledgeable contributors, not just beneficiaries;
- conducting impact assessments to ensure mutual benefits from our research;
- considering both university and community ethics in engagements; and
- undertaking baseline studies to understand community dynamics before initiating research or CE activities.

In our reflections, we realised the benefits of hosting smaller, interactive seminars with breakout sessions to encourage full

participation. These sessions should vary in structure, moving away from traditional presentations to more engaging formats and actively involving community partners.

The impact of internationalisation on CE

If internationalisation is approached transformatively, it can:

- enhance living standards and access to services and expand collaboration networks;
- contribute to economic growth, poverty reduction, inequality reduction, and environmental sustainability; and
- incorporate diverse perspectives in partnerships, fostering cross-sharing of information based on locally defined needs.

However, without a focus on decolonial and Afrocentric ethics and practices, it risks:

- perpetuating neo-colonialism through Western-centric perspectives and
- adopting foreign knowledge-generation practices and prioritising Western agendas over local contexts.

Networking and collaborations

Networking across various disciplines opened new avenues for exploration, promoting knowledge sharing and learning from each other. This approach holds immense potential for partnerships between national and international institutions, correcting past mistakes and building stronger, more informed collaborations.

Caregiver coaching at a special needs early childhood centre: Reflections from final-year speech-language pathology students

Dr Renata Eccles (Senior Lecturer: Speech-Language Pathology), Dr Esedra Krüger (Senior Lecturer and Programme Coordinator: Speech-Language Pathology and Head: Clinic for High-Risk Babies), Cara van Wyk and Jordyn Swann (Final-year Speech-Language Pathology Students: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



Little Ables Children's Sanctuary is a centre in central Tshwane that provides holistic care to young children with special educational and rehabilitative needs. The children attending the centre present with various physical and mental difficulties, including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and autism spectrum disorder.

Three to four carers work on a day/night rotation to care for the children and conduct stimulation activities with the group. There are multiple health professional services

offered at the centre, predominantly by undergraduate healthcare students, due to the resource constraints the centre experiences.

Service providers at Little Ables currently include a social worker, a music therapist, third-year student physiotherapists from the University of Pretoria (UP) and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, third-year students from the Department of Occupational Therapy at UP, and final-year Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and

Audiology at UP. Until recently, the practical blocks have followed an interdisciplinary teamwork approach where students provided services to children in groups and individually and provided feedback to the carers.

A change in approach has recently been implemented whereby a greater focus is placed on interprofessionalism and caregiver coaching to encourage a person-centred, functional approach to the interventions that the SLP students

continued on page 25

provide. Caregiver coaching is based on the highest level of evidence available. Caregivers—in this case, the carers at Little Ables—form the central stakeholders in all activities because they are considered the true agents of change to make functional differences in the children’s lives. This is in contrast to more traditional, condition-focused perspectives, where changes are made based on inputs from healthcare professionals.

Caregiver coaching recognises that healthcare professionals providing services to children once a week in isolation cannot make the same gains as a caregiver approach, which aims to support carers in acquiring and implementing strategies for early communication stimulation for use in functional engagements in children’s everyday lives.

Two final-year SLP students provided their reflections on their recent practical block at Little Ables. From Cara van Wyk: ‘The start of our Little Ables block was quite rocky and filled with uncertainties as to how we were going to tackle group sessions in an effective and functional manner.

Dr Esedra Krüger and Dr Renata Eccles provided us with great insight as to how we needed to adapt our approach. Caregiver training taught me the importance of having respect for a caregiver and the immense role they play in a child’s life.

I realised that we have so much to learn from them and that we should always be open to learning. We therefore adjusted the way we provided information to the caregivers by providing them with strategies that are functional and can be applied within their setting.

Overall, my seven-week block at Little Ables was truly a memorable experience. Not only did it shape me as a clinician but also as a person. I learned how we need to be adaptable and use an approach that works best for the child. If they cannot learn the way we teach, then we need to teach the way they learn. Lastly, I learned the importance of interprofessional teamwork and how we can provide high-quality care when we work together.

The work we did at Little Ables prepared me for community service next year and taught me how important it is to collaborate with other healthcare professionals. I will always remember that we have never truly learned everything and that every day is an opportunity to learn more.’ From Jordyn Swann: ‘My experience at Little Ables has been truly transformative, both personally and professionally.

I have gained invaluable insights and skills that have deeply shaped me as a clinician and equipped me with tools I can carry into my future career. Starting the practical, I felt overwhelmed by how to adapt and change our approach to therapy to suit the setting, but as time went on, my confidence grew, and seeing the change we were able to make was incredibly motivating.

This experience has taught me the profound importance of empathy and patience when working with disabled children and shown me that every individual is unique, with their own set of challenges and strengths. This practical has also taught me the importance of collaborative and holistic care, involving caregivers and other professionals



in the therapeutic process. This practical has reinforced the critical role of adaptability and creativity in speech-language therapy, and I have learned to adapt my strategies to suit the unique needs and personalities of each child. This adaptability will undoubtedly serve me well in the future as I encounter a wide range of clients with diverse challenges. In conclusion, my experience has been inspiring as I have learnt a lot about myself and what I am capable of.

I am sincerely grateful to my clinical supervisors for their unwavering support, encouragement, and dedication to pushing me to strive for excellence.

As I move forward in my career, I am confident that the lessons and skills I have gained will enable me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with communication disorders, helping them to reach their full potential.

Community Engagement Forum Members 2024

Representative/Secundus	Faculty/Department
Prof Gerrit Stols	Director Department for Education Innovation
Dr Eugene Machimana	Head of Curricular Community Department for Education: Innovation Unit for Community Engagement

Faculty support: Department for Education Innovation - Unit for Community Engagement	
Ms Kanye Rampa	Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology (EBIT)
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	Veterinary Science
Mr Albert Mathekethla	Health Sciences
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