



## Breaking the cycle of poverty by empowering vulnerable women with food-cultivation and life skills

**Sanele Rochelle Mntla (Marketing and Communication Officer: UP COPC Unit) and Dr Ellenore Meyer (Informal Settlement Health Project Manager)**

On Monday, 27 September, the University of Pretoria (UP) Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Informal Settlement Health project, in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Future Africa, hosted the launch of its project ‘Breaking the Cycle of Poverty’ on the premises of the Living Word Church in Pretoria East.

The aim of the project was to promote female urban farming (food production) and transfer critical health and social skills for health and livelihood to the urban residents of the Cemetery View informal settlement.

To advocate and create a supportive environment for vulnerable women, this research project made use of an action research framework to

develop and test food production (farming and animal protein), and an educational kit that included entrepreneurship, food production skills, (cultivation and preparation, and maternal and childcare).

The objectives of the project included the exploration of the knowledge, attitudes and needs of mothers, caregivers and community health workers with a view to establishing food gardens and egg production (laying hens) in the Cemetery View informal settlement, and developing and testing information, educational and communication material for use in primary care and vulnerable communities. Their efforts were facilitated by inputs from experts on health, nutrition, and urban farming.

The principal project investigator, Dr Ellenore Meyer from the Family Medicine and COPC Research Unit

in the Faculty of Health Sciences, was among the few speakers who touched upon the topic of empowering women through the development of agricultural and money management skills. She highlighted the importance of not only teaching women how to farm, but also how to conduct business.

Other speakers included Dr Sunette Laurie, who spoke on farming with vegetables and Marion Beeforth who, in collaboration with the final-year dietetics students, discussed the importance of locally grown food and healthy eating habits.

Ms Rebaone Molebatsi emphasised the importance of life skills for a healthy family and business, and Prof Este van Marle-Koster spoke about keeping laying hens to provide families with eggs as a source of animal protein.



# Table of contents

Breaking the cycle of poverty by empowering vulnerable women with food-cultivation and life skills	1
Promoting lifelong literacy: Reading with the students is fun	3
Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences students do community engagement work: SPAR ladies race	5
The importance of occupational engagement as seen in the Daspoort Community	6
Community engagement research seminars	8
Drug prevention and health promotion for high school learners in Mamelodi	9
Students from two continents raise their own 'banners for freedom'	11
Hluvukani 2021: Our year so far...	12
Occupational engagement and community co-design with learners from the Mamelodi Pre-University Academy	13
The Lifting Dreams project	16
Better health begins at home	17
Building victorious women	19
University of Pretoria lifting dreams through sports partnership in Soweto	20
Future Africa at the University of Pretoria	22
Do I Really Understand what I'm Getting myself into? Stop and think!	23
The Feast of the Clowns & Trash-to-Treasure workshops	25

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# Promoting lifelong literacy: Reading with the students is fun

Dr Mia le Roux (Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria)



The Reading Day that was held at Confidence College in the Pretoria CBD on Friday, 15 October was aimed at inspiring learners to read and add meaning to texts in an interactive, enjoyable, and creative way. This event was organised by Dr Mia le Roux (Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, University of Pretoria (UP), who is a board member of the Gauteng branch of the Literacy Association of South Africa (Litasa), in collaboration with Mrs Anélize van Eeden (principal of Confidence College) and Dr

Renata Eccles (fourth-year Speech-Language Pathology practical module coordinator in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology).

Dr Le Roux and Dr Bernice Badal from the Department of English at UNISA and chair of the Gauteng branch of Litasa, attended the event at the school and participated in the activities. Students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology facilitated the activities for the Grade RR to Grade 7 classes. The events per class started with a song, a

rhyme or a brief game focused on a particular story, which was then read. This was followed by various fun educational activities relating to the different stories.

The characters in the stories became alive through drawings, crowns, cowboy hats, masks, and spider webs, among other things. In turn, the school came alive with splashes of colour flashing by as busy feet, minds, ears, and hands moved to the rhythm and rhyme of the words.

*continued on page 4*



The principal, Mrs Van Eeden, said that 'the atmosphere was loaded with excitement since the Monday prior to the actual event'.

On Friday she wore a story character dress with drawings made by herself and painted by the learners. The staff and learners dressed up in costumes that related to the specific stories that were read to the different classes. All those who participated agreed that it had been a highly successful event.

Dr Badal offered special thanks to the principal and staff 'who showed us that growing up does not mean that we need to forget that learning is fun'. She continued to thank the participating students who had prepared and executed all the activities with passion and dedication.

She concluded by thanking the sponsors of the event, the World Literacy Foundation (WLF), Sun Books and Tobias, saying that the Gauteng branch of Litasa was grateful to all the key players who had made the event possible and looked forward to many similar events in the future. Dr Le Roux mentioned that the need to foster lifelong literacy is often

forgotten in the drive to improve the literacy skills of Foundation Phase learners.

However, the need to be competent readers never stops; in fact, it becomes more important as learners enter higher grades and are expected to read and comprehend complex academic text.

This event organised by the Gauteng branch of Litasa is therefore seen as the first of many, especially as the principal of the school expressed the hope that the Reading Day will become an annual event.

The students involved stated that one should never forget that literacy forms the foundation of academic success.

They mentioned that participating in the Reading Day at Confidence College had been a privilege and working with the learners had been both exciting and rewarding. The final-year students also conducted hearing screening on 33 children with the support of a master's student in audiology. The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology plan to

conduct hearing screening on more children from Confidence College next year.

This community engagement project allowed the students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology to accumulate much-needed practical hours.

Dr Eccles observed that the project had also given them an opportunity to have fun during their professional training, and that they 'were reminded of the reason for their hard work and the difference they can make'.

Prof Jeannie van der Linde, head of the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, concluded with the following statement: 'As a department, we strive to improve the literacy of our children to ensure that they have the capacity to excel academically.'

Book reading from an early age is one of the best ways to improve literacy abilities in young children. Fostering a love for reading is therefore the name of the game'.

# Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences students do community engagement work: SPAR ladies' race

Gosiame Mokoka  
(Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences Student)

**O**n 3 October 2021, I accompanied a group of female students enrolled for the Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences to Johannesburg to assist with the SPAR Woman's Virtual Challenge that took place at Marks Park Sports Club. We left Pretoria at 04h00 and arrived there at 05h00. The race started at 07h00.

Our duties included making sure that everybody wore masks and that their hands were sanitised. After the race, the runners were handed masks and their hands were sanitised before they received their medals.

As part of this community outreach, we handed out food parcels, gift bags and water after the race. We also guided the elderly women who participated in the race to the starting line and once they had completed their race, we carried their SPAR gift bags and food parcels to where their families were waiting for them.

Marlene Gunter, a sponsorships controller for SPAR, had requested our assistance with this event as she was impressed with the way we had helped her during the University Sports South Africa (USSA) Netball Tournament

in September 2021. We welcomed the opportunity to gain some experience in working at such events and help the community.

SPAR sponsors this event to encourage a healthier lifestyle through exercise and also raises money for a very worthy cause—the SPAR Woman's Virtual Challenge—which is organised to show the resilience and strength of women.

Seeing women of all ages run this race was truly amazing and the overall experience was rewarding. We experienced an exhilarating moment when Tadu Nare from Ethiopia won the 2021 SPAR Grand Prix title for the fifth consecutive year. Another highlight of the event was seeing a 90-year-old woman complete the race.

We also met Bongiwe Msomi, the captain of the Protea netball team, who told us about her new role as an athlete ambassador for Africa.

The event was inspiring and eye opening and showed us that one should never give up, regardless of how young or old you are.

# The importance of occupational engagement as seen in the Daspoort Community

Bandile Gazu and Christie Luyt (Occupational therapy students) and Nthabiseng Ramodisa (Supervisor)



One of the first things we are taught as occupational therapy students is that people are occupational beings, and that participating in meaningful occupations provides physical, mental and social wellbeing. The act

of doing enables people to develop their own identities and realise their potential. Simply put, the activities that one engages in play a vital role in determining one's purpose, identity, and drive.

When people are not able to participate in necessary or meaningful activities for a prolonged period of time due to their circumstances, occupational deprivation occurs.<sup>1</sup>

*continued on page 7*



create their own leisure activities. Thus far they have established their own resident soccer team that practices during the week, constructed an outdoor twister board, and made morabaraba game boards and equipment needed for duster hockey. We hope that since they can participate in those activities without our presence, the initiative will be sustainable.

At the Holy Cross Old Age Home, we are working closely with a member of the staff with the aim of establishing a sustainable programme of activities that can be implemented to stimulate and provide occupational opportunities to the residents. By explaining the importance of occupational engagement and providing a resource booklet containing low-cost group activity ideas, we hope that the elderly residents will be able to continue to participate meaningfully in the activities that they choose.

Having the opportunity to work in both of these communities has convinced me of the importance of occupational engagement as a core principle of occupational therapy as it became clear that participation in occupations has a direct impact on health, well-being and life satisfaction.

The feedback from group members has also been encouraging as they have enjoyed the constructive leisure activities and have reported an improvement in their occupational balance.

This can adversely affect both physical and mental health, with consequences such as a feeling that life is meaningless, despair, loss of skills, poverty, poor health and social isolation.<sup>1</sup> These are such dire consequences that the World Federation of Occupational Therapists has declared that engagement in occupations is not only a need, but also a right.<sup>1</sup>

While working in the Daspoort community, I saw that occupational deprivation is present among many different population groups. It affects not only the young men at the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP), but also the elderly at the Holy Cross Old Age Home. Both of these

population groups spend their days in idleness as they are unable to participate in activities due to a lack of resources and appropriate activity programmes.

With nothing to do, they tend to sleep during the day and many of the individuals report decreased well-being and quality of life. They also suffer from depression due to the large amount of time they spend alone with their negative thoughts. As final-year occupational therapy students, we have been working with these groups to promote sustainable means of occupational engagement.

At the COSUP site in Daspoort, we have empowered the community members by encouraging them to

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# Community engagement research seminars

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

The Mamelodi Campus has been organising monthly seminars with the focus on community engagement research. Three experts in the field who shared their expertise at the August and September seminars were Prof Tim Stanton, Thandiwe Matyobeni and Prof Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco.

- Conduct the data gathering
- Analyse the data
- Share research findings in the community and in the academy
- Take appropriate action

His presentation is available on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/DzEVIbBGje4>



**Prof Stanton's** presentation focused on the 'how' of community engagement research. As a Senior Engaged Scholar with Ravensong Associates, he consults on service-learning design and development in Africa, Asia and the USA. He was the founding director of Stanford University's Bing Overseas Studies

Programme in Cape Town (2008–2014), and assisted Campus Compact in organising national faculty institutes on curriculum development for service learning. He also coordinated The Research Universities Civic Engagement Network (TRUCEN), co-authored the online Research University Engaged Scholarship Toolkit (1991–2013) and served as an academic advisor and consultant to South Africa's Community Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) programme, working with 12 South African universities (1998–2018).

He presented an overview of good practices, focusing on engaged research and sharing valuable experiences and examples of projects conducted by his students in South Africa.

He concluded the seminar by discussing the following seven steps for conducting community-based participatory research:

- Find a partner and form the partnership
- Formulate the research question
- Explore research relevant to the community context and plan the research



**Ms Thandiwe Matyobeni's** presentation focused on the 'how' of digital storytelling. She is the Programme Coordinator of the Social Innovation Hub and the Intsomi Reading Programme, two community engagement projects at Rhodes University.

She explained the process of developing a digital story and shared examples of digital stories developed by the Social Innovation Hub.

Her presentation is available on YouTube at:

<https://youtu.be/p2XzTHCczYY>.

**Prof Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco**

discussed the "how" of photovoice research.

She serves as Faculty Director of the Eigel Center for Community-Engaged Learning and Associate Professor in the Department of Classics and Modern Languages at Xavier University (USA).



Her presentation is available on YouTube at:

<https://youtu.be/vzQhaOGluDg>

# Drug prevention and health promotion for high school learners in Mamelodi

Chrisne Roode (Fourth-year occupational therapy student, Department of Occupational Therapy) and Marike Smit (Community work-integrated learning supervisor, Department of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences)



Fourth year occupational therapy students with Mr Sato at a high school in Mamelodi

Occupational therapy students participate in their work-integrated learning placement at various Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP)<sup>1</sup> sites. COSUP, implemented by the University of Pretoria's Community Orientated Primary Care (COPC) Research Unit is a community-based harm-reduction programme<sup>2</sup> for people who use or have used substances, especially the heroin-containing drug called nyaope. There are three COSUP sites in Mamelodi.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth-year occupational therapy students' involvement in the wider Mamelodi community has

**Walk a mile in my shoes, see what I see, hear what I hear, feel what I feel. Then maybe you'll understand why I do what I do. Till then, do not judge me (Unknown).**

provided opportunities to facilitate Health Awareness events focused specifically on substance use prevention at high schools. At one

substance use prevention campaign that was held at a high school in April 2021, a COSUP client shared his life story to warn the learners against the devastating effects of using substances.

The impact of this event was such that the principal of another secondary school requested the students to share the same presentation at their school, where illicit substance use was rife, which we presented on 15 October 2021.

*continued on page 10*

Since the occupational therapy students could not address the entire school, the teachers chose approximately 30 Grade 10 to 12 learners to participate. We invited one of the COSUP clients, Mr Tshepo Sato, who has walked many miles in the shoes of a substance user, to be the speaker for the day and to share his life story.

As a resident of Mamelodi, Mr Sato comes from a similar background and context to the secondary school learners and he shared his life story in Sepedi, a language with which all the learners were familiar.

### Overview of the events of the day

The day's activities started with a practical illustration of how decisions have consequences. Mr Sato then told his life story. He had not prepared a speech as he wanted to talk from his heart. He was excited to share his story with the learners, as he said he was certain that he could help people. The atmosphere in the classroom was electric as they listened to him. His story made the learners aware of the devastating consequences that drug use can have on one's life and dignity. He emphasised how extremely challenging it is to rebuild one's 'name' and regain the respect of the community, as well as the negative impact it had on his relationships with family and friends. The learners were intrigued by Mr Sato's story and listened attentively. When one learner asked him what had motivated him to 'quit drugs', he said that it had been his loved ones, especially his children. He assured them that COSUP was there to help and explained exactly what COSUP does and how it contributes to the community.<sup>2</sup>

After listening to Mr Sato's story, the learners rotated between different game stations in groups of five.



Occupational therapy was integrated into awareness campaign throughout the day, for example, some of the games were designed to create awareness of the consequences of substance use, for example that smoking damages one's lungs and ability to learn, or that substance use can be debilitating and can affect all other activities in life. Other games emphasised healthy lifestyle choices, such as participation in physical activities and building healthy supportive relationships in order to achieve your dreams.

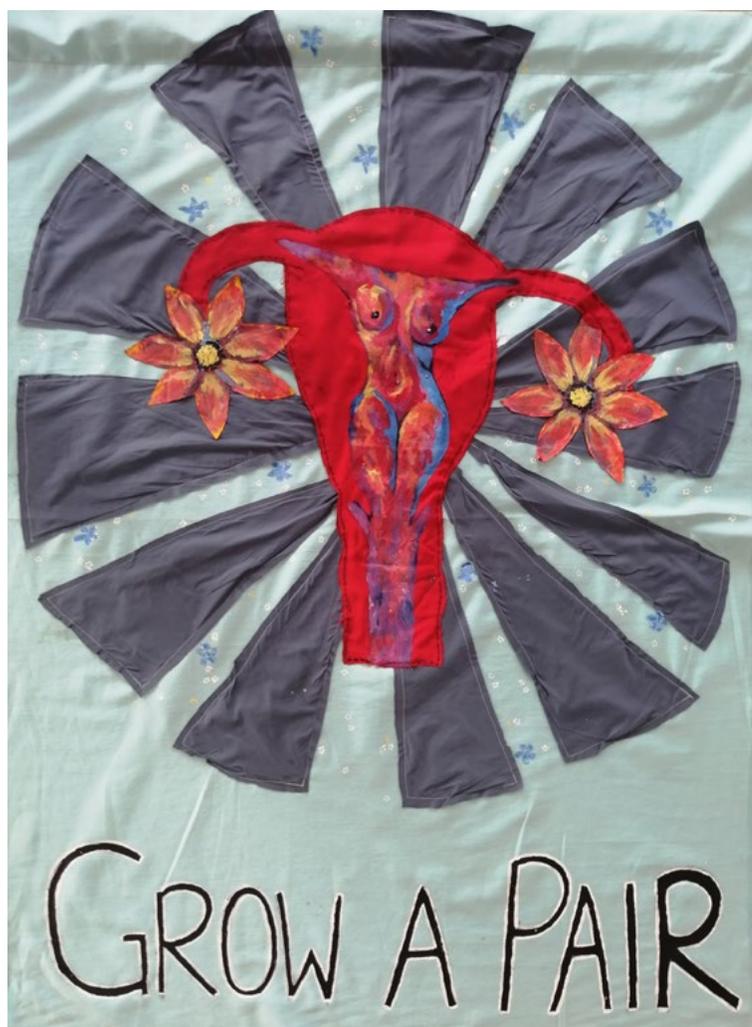
We want to conclude by quoting Mr Sato's serious warning to the learners: *'You cannot get into drugs and then quit it easily... If you start using drugs you sign an agreement with the devil'*. We are grateful to have been part of an important event that has hopefully impacted the way young people think about substances and the decisions they make.

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# Students from two continents raise their own ‘banners for freedom’

Dr Raita Steyn (Senior lecturer: Art Education)



Julia Bartlett



Keabetswe Kodiseng

**O**n 30 September 2021, students from Greece and South Africa exhibited their artworks at a breath-taking exhibition titled *Banners for Freedom*, which was held at the Pedagogical School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUT), Greece.

The project, which started as an online collaboration between the AUT Theatre Department (Mr Stergios Proios) and University of Pretoria (UP) Art Education students (Dr Raita Steyn) during the COVID-19 lockdown period, resulted in a highly successful exhibition. The Greeks celebrate their liberation from the 200-year Ottoman rule, while South Africans celebrate their liberation from the yoke of apartheid, commemorating the first

democratic election of 1994. Inspired by history, the students used their banners as national, religious and sociocultural symbols to express their own voices for freedom.

In the words of one of the reporters, Violeta Fotiades: ‘Freedom of expression, speech and thought and freedom from any form of oppression, are some of the current ideas of the young people who “raise” their banners and give the visitor hope for a tomorrow for a world without racism, that does not justify, nor conceal any form of violence’.

Plans are underway to bring the students’ artworks to South Africa in 2022 to be exhibited at the Javett Art Centre.

# Hluvukani 2021: Our year so far...

**Dr Louise Biggs (Senior Lecturer:  
Veterinary Specialist - Hluvukani Animal Clinic)**



**H**luvukani Animal Clinic (HAC) clinic has remained active and productive during another difficult year. The client base has expanded, and this has kept the students on their toes. We have seen a definite increase in small animal cases, predominantly dogs, which shows an overall improvement in primary animal health care for companion animals.

This is a very positive and rewarding change. The production and large animal work remain as busy as ever. We have also managed to do a few much-needed repairs at the clinic and are still working our way down a list. We have had some real challenges with water and electricity, but we remain determined to solve these problems. This is all in the hope to provide an even better service to our clients. We also have two dedicated staff members working at the clinic, namely Mr Fakude and

Mr Seepane. They are invaluable and have had a huge and very positive impact on keeping consistency in the clinic and helping it to grow.

The ability to provide consistency is something the animal owners requested some years ago so to have been able to achieve this goal has been fantastic. As the students only do a two-week rotation this has been an extremely positive change and not only for the clients but for the students too.

Mr Justify Fakude and Mr Weshald Seepan have a vast amount of knowledge in many different spheres and disciplines. They generously share this knowledge on a daily basis, and it has been extremely beneficial to all of us. The clinic vegetable garden is another one of the ongoing projects and we are able to share fresh produce amongst all of us at the HAC, including the security

guards and environmental monitors. The recycling project has had a bit of a dip due to some logistical issues but this is still on the to-do list so we can get it back on track again. One of our motto's is we can't preach one health to our clients unless we live it ourselves and be a positive example.

The wildlife has also been very accommodating this year on our drive to work. As the first 7 km of our drive are through the Kruger National Park (KNP) we often have very special sightings but lately the wildlife has outdone themselves with stunning cheetah, leopard, lion, honey badger and ground hornbill sightings to name but a few. And some stunning sunrises too. I think this makes up for our students having very early morning starts.

We have made a lot of positive progress in the last few years despite a lot of adversity, and we hope to continue to head in a positive direction. It makes every minute of our day worth it! Even when the temperatures soar to 45 degrees!

# Occupational engagement and community co-design with Mamelodi Pre-University Academy learners



## Elkebitso social hubs Phase 1 – Creation of ecobricks

Rienie Germishuys (Fourth-year student, Department of Occupational Therapy)

Kirstin Niebuhr (Interior Architecture master's degree candidate, Department of Architecture)

Helga Lister (Lecturer, Department of Occupational Therapy)

Marike Smit (Community engagement student supervisor, Department of Occupational Therapy)

Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg (Senior researcher, Community Oriented Primary Care [COPC] Research Unit)



Community engagement is defined as 'the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people'.<sup>1</sup> During our community engagement

work, we noted that although community members' voices are considered in intervention and programme development, there remains a lack of unfiltered, first-hand, directly shared information from community members, especially from marginalised communities. Oral histories are an important

component of traditional African cultures, and the use of storytelling is a long-established tool to engage audiences from various sectors.<sup>2</sup> Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg, senior researcher at the Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC)

*continued on page 14*



Research Unit, and Mrs Helga Lister, lecturer in occupational therapy, initiated the UNICEF-OHC (One Health for Change) interdisciplinary storytelling project to gain insight into the lived realities of those living in vulnerable contexts. This information will be used to ensure truly person-centred service delivery to marginalised individuals.

The project is based on the participatory action research process, during which issues are systematically evaluated from the perspectives and lived experiences of the community members who are most affected by the issues under examination.<sup>3,4</sup> This larger project involves, among others, youth from the Mamelodi Pre-University Academy (PUA). The focus of this article is on the youth and the interdisciplinary work between occupational therapy and architecture. Kirstin Niebuhr, a master's student in interior architecture, asked the question of how the developmental needs of identity and belonging of adolescents in the PUA could be met through co-designing a deployable (mobile/portable/make-shift) urban structure or safe space. This project

aims to design social storytelling hubs for the youth or learners attending the PUA in Mamelodi to enhance their development.<sup>4</sup>

From an occupational therapy point of view, the project fits into the occupational science framework and considers the concept of occupational injustice, which is defined as the denial of the physical, social, economic, or cultural resources or opportunities needed to engage in meaningful occupations (those things that are meaningful in one's life). The youth in Mamelodi experience various forms of occupational injustices, such as poverty, inadequate educational resources and a lack of opportunities for recreation.<sup>3</sup>

The architecture research project could combat these occupational injustices by creating opportunities and resources to facilitate participation in meaningful occupations.<sup>5</sup> The project designs include a conversation hub for social participation with friends and the community, a sports field, a performance area for dancing and singing, a storytelling gallery for art creation, storytelling walls,

community gardens and a spaza marketplace for job creation.<sup>4</sup>

The project aims to use the proposed designed infrastructure as a means to promote the development of identity and a sense of belonging in the youth in Mamelodi, focusing specifically on PUA learners. Although initially conceptual in nature, all those involved hope that this will become a sustainable intervention resulting in real change.

The project's long-term aim is the creation of social hubs to provide a real or potentially appropriate avenue in the context of Mamelodi for the sharing of stories.

Since the final-year occupational therapy students at the University of Pretoria are involved in the collection and authentication of stories in the storytelling project, they assisted Kirstin with the implementation of some of the design ideas in the architecture project undertaken in collaboration with the PUA learners. From March to June 2021, the PUA learners were involved in

*continued on page 15*

occupational therapy groups with work integrated learning (WIL) blocks 1 and 2 final-year occupational therapy students. The learners were guided in the process of self-discovery and were taught certain soft skills.

In September and October 2021, the third block occupational therapy students engaged the learners in practically creating the designs in the project. They started with the creation of the design Elkebitso, which means 'every word, every talent and every person'. Elkebitso is a collection of safe spaces created with eco-friendly infrastructure for the youth of Mamelodi to gather and participate in meaningful occupations, which include, but are not limited to, telling stories, singing, dancing, art creation, sports and social interaction that will enhance their personal development.<sup>4</sup>

During the process of data collection, the PUA learners indicated the Mamelodi Campus as a space where they feel safe. Elkebitso is designed to be situated along the wall on the Mamelodi Campus that is adjacent to one of the main roads (Hinterland Road) and aims to extend the safe space experienced on the Mamelodi Campus into the learners' community. Permission for this still needs to be obtained.

The learners and the occupational therapy students have started making ecobricks to be used to create a boundary for Elkebitso. Eco-bricks are PET bottles (soft drink bottles) solidly packed with clean and dry used plastic<sup>6</sup> and offer a simple, low-tech solution to the overproduction of plastic in a community.<sup>6</sup>

The PUA learners engaged in five occupational therapy group sessions to start the creation of these eco-bricks. Before the sessions with the PUA learners commenced, the final-year occupational therapy students engaged with Kirsten in an online meeting to gain insight into learners' interests, likes and dislikes.

The first session was focused on the creation of a relationship between the new occupational therapy students and the PUA learners, and to establish what the learners understood about the project as they had been involved in various group sessions with Kirsten during the year.

The occupational therapy students also had to implement community development and engagement principles to ensure that the learners took ownership of the implementation of the project, which required their empowerment and active participation. The learners had to create their own timeline for future sessions and set goals for each session. The sessions that followed were focused on collecting the soft plastics

and bottles needed to start making the ecobricks. The aim was to make approximately 150 bricks. Due to the large scope of the project, it is structured in three phases: 'now', 'soon' and 'later'.<sup>7</sup> The current occupational therapy students are in charge of running the 'now' phase, which is the creation of the ecobricks. To continue through the phases, the project requires the involvement of a team, and thus hopefully in 2022, will continue with JCP students, Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) clients and more learners from the high schools involved in the PUA.

In conclusion, Elkebitso, designed within the interior architectural discourse, is an example of the creation of occupational balance, which refers to participation in all areas of occupation (activities of daily living, e.g. dressing, bathing, grooming; instrumental activities of daily living, e.g. cooking, driving, cleaning; sleep and rest; education; work; play or leisure; and social participation) as strived for by occupational therapists.<sup>5</sup> The implementation of the Elkebitso project with the PUA learners is an example of how interdisciplinary collaboration is being used for community engagement and development.

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# The Lifting Dreams project

Claudio Pardal and LJ van Zyl  
(Lecturer and Sports Practical coordinator)



Lifting Dreams, a non-profit organisation based in SOWETO, is dedicated to uplifting communities by providing educational support in underserved schools and communities. The Higher Certificate in Sport Sciences is part of the Lifting Dreams project and focuses on students completing their sports practical hours.

The programme was designed for children and aims at providing them with the necessary resources to enable them to improve their overall achievement. The organisers of the Lifting Dreams project firmly believe that time invested in someone's future is the most important gift one person can give to another. While they believe that South Africa has a bright future, they also recognise the need to enhance teaching to ensure a better education for our future leaders. In order to achieve this, they

are calling upon us—the people of South Africa—to offer our services in communities and engage in the education of our children.

Lifting Dreams aims to make learning more enjoyable for children and to help them realise their full potential. Furthermore, the organisers aim to spread a message of optimism and tear down the racial barriers that have for so long caused divisions in society. Above all, they hope to encourage children to be the best they can be, to pursue further education and to return to their townships determined to help bring about change.

Currently the organisation has arrangements with local schools to utilise their facilities on Saturdays to instruct children and assist them with their schoolwork. At the end of each day's activities, the children

participating in the programme are provided with a healthy meal so that no one goes home hungry. The teams helping the children consist of volunteers and include university students and working professionals. Lifting Dreams hopes to be able extend its programme to more schools and to buy more learning materials. The various programmes designed to assist learners include a food programme, the building of restrooms (which are needed to improve hygiene in schools and communities) and a soccer field, and the conversion of a storage room into a reading centre. However, this can only be achieved once additional funding has been obtained.

While Lifting Dreams welcomes monetary donations, donations of services and products are equally appreciated. All donations are used directly for community and educational development. Lifting Dreams aims to make learning fun and emphasises the fact that a sound education can ensure a better future for children, their communities and the country. The team is in the process of launching an additional project in Mamelodi, Pretoria, where the Higher Certificate Sport Sciences students will also be involved.

# Better health begins at home

Riana de Lange



**B**etter health care outcomes are not achieved by spending more money, but rather from applying an integrated approach that requires awareness of the health care and social needs in communities, and effectively addressing them. A model called Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC), which focuses on starting healthcare at the household level, is designed to do just that.

COPC, initially developed by the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Pretoria (UP), has been successful in several municipalities countrywide and was recently adopted and scaled by The Impact Catalyst (<https://www.impactcatalyst.co.za/>).

This initiative, founded by the mining giant Anglo American, entails close collaboration with partners across sectors to bring about sustainable socioeconomic change on a regional scale. Besides Anglo American, others that are on board are the mining company Exxaro, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, World Vision SA (an NPO with international experience in development), the

engineering firm Zutari and the Industrial Development Corporation, a state-owned development financier. Government, at the provincial level, is an integral partner in delivering sustainable socioeconomic benefits in the most rural and impoverished regions in South Africa.

Dr Suzi Malan from the COPC Research Unit in the Department of Family Medicine at UP explained: 'The Impact Catalyst initiative is a perfect example of how the private sector can accelerate impact in communities when resources are combined with government sector efforts. Health care in the rural areas constantly suffers from a lack of resources due to many factors, and the concerted effort by the Impact partners to support the Department of Health with resources including training, IT and internet connectivity, goes a long way towards creating positive spin-offs such as improved relationships, connecting partners and better health literacy for individual community members'.

*continued on page 18*

Dr Malan explained that the focus of COPC is to start at household level. The Department of Health employs community health workers (CHWs) who fulfil this indispensable role in their communities, but they have limited training, resources are scarce and they are often under-supported. For the past few years, UP has worked in different municipalities to support CHWs in the form of weekly integrated training sessions to complement the two weeks of upfront training provided by the Department. She added: 'We strive towards a system of continuous learning, mainly through clinical associates we hire. Clinical associates support the weekly learning sessions and clinical services'. The scope of practice of a clinical associate lies between that of a nurse and a medical doctor. A three-year degree course for clinical associates is offered by UP, the University of the Witwatersrand and Walter Sisulu University.

Approximately 100 clinical associates are currently deployed at the various Anglo American mining sites and will in future also be employed at Exxaro mines. From there, they build relationships with communities to help assess needs, identify problems, offer advice and keep COPC managers updated on their work and progress.

Currently 133 health clinics are involved and the training of close to 1 700 CHWs is envisaged, which means that an estimated total of 2.7 million people will benefit from the programme.

Mpho Kanono is a clinical associate working in Northwest and Limpopo. He previously worked with military personnel and helped HIV and diabetes patients in clinics, but when he was offered a job on a mining site at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, he welcomed the opportunity. Much of his work over the past 18 months has involved community testing and tracing, as well as educating people about COVID-19 and ensuring that they are vaccinated. Accompanied by CHWs, he visits many homes to check on patients.

Mr Kanono also works with NGOs, centres for substance abusers, victims of gender-based violence, church institutions and tribal leaders to facilitate communication and build collaborative projects. The feedback from the community services with which he liaises is positive and proves the sustainability of the initiative.

According to Dr Pertunia Kupa from Thabazimbi Hospital, clinical associates such as Kanono at the Amandelbult mine, have helped to assure successful COVID-19 vaccination drives. 'Their work helps to strengthen public-private partnerships as we continuously strive towards

our goal of providing consistent, accessible and efficient health care to patients in the Thabazimbi sub-district'.

Lesego Monnathoko, a counsellor at the Botshabelo Crisis Centre for survivors of gender-based violence and sexual abuse in Mogwase, confirmed that Kanono delivers much-needed resources and connects relevant people and institutions so that they can work together and make a difference in their communities.

The feedback received from Apostle Boitumelo Khonou from St Catherine Hospice in Mogwase is equally positive and, thanks to valuable information received from Kanono on how the hospice and hospice workers can improve their services, they now collaborate better with the community clinic and community health workers.

According to Siyabinga Mfanisibili Mngomezulu, an employee at Anglo Platinum's Amandelbult mine, the initiative helped to keep him safe when he contracted COVID-19 last year and was quite ill. He regularly phoned Kanono to ask questions about his condition and was soon connected with a community health worker who kept an eye on him, visited him regularly and made arrangements for the delivery of medication and food parcels. 'Mpho even helped me with a water project installation where I live. We are still in touch,' Mngomezulu said.

A spokesperson for UP's Department of Family Medicine stated that patients can, through coordinated care, be discharged to their homes where CHWs can attend to their needs with regular visits. These workers are ideally placed to become aware of problems such as hunger and malnutrition, or other social challenges. Health professionals and community workers frequently communicate to discuss cases, treatment, progress and aftercare.

Sister Mmabatho Tlhakola, outreach team leader at the Mogwase Community Health Centre (CHC) and a registered nurse, confirmed this: 'The CHWs under my supervision and I cherish the support received from Mpho Kanono, which is especially helpful when we do house visits and can discuss cases afterwards. He is very passionate and committed to community work and always shares valuable insights'.

Some of the areas already benefiting from the COPC programme include Namaqua, Kimberley and Kathu (Northern Cape); Parys and Kroonstad (Free State); Nkangala and Gert Sibande (Mpumalanga); Thabazimbi, Polokwane, Mogalakwena, Steelpoort and Burgersfort (Limpopo); and Bojanala district (North West).

# Building victorious women

Gloria Khoza (Co-CEO and Executive Director of Keep That Gold Shining)



Despite the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19, Keep That Gold Shining (KTG) always finds a way to add value to community service. Gloria Khoza, a vibrant and outspoken student from the University of Pretoria who is currently studying towards completing a BCom (Accounting Science) degree, coordinated a project to provide sanitary pads to high school girls in need.

Gloria is the Co-CEO and one of the executive directors of KTG, former treasurer of the Golden Key International Honours Society (UP Chapter), Financial Accounting tutor at Teach Me2, former treasurer of House Asterhof and current community outreach manager

at house Commercii (Faculty of Economics and management sciences). Her drive to lead this project was inspired by the following words: 'If we want our women to come out victorious in all fights they come across, we have to support them'.

She is a born leader, passionate about giving back to the community and always willing to offer her support to those in need.

Although Keep That Gold Shining (KTG) does not have a regular sponsor for sanitary pads, they make sure that every year in Women's Month they provide a two-month supply of sanitary pads to high school girls in need. The project targets over 230 Grade 12 learners

at Makhosini Combined Secondary School and Tswaing secondary school.

A project event was held at Makhosini in Soshanguve on 7 August 2021. Vibrant women in leadership who understand what it means to empower young females were invited as guest speakers.

They touched on various topics relating to young females, including relationships, women empowerment, and leadership, what it means to be a woman, challenges faced in achieving success (in business and academically), and being your authentic self. The purpose of this project was not only to donate pads, but also to encourage and empower young township females.

# University of Pretoria lifting dreams through sports partnership in Soweto

Phaphama Tshisikhawe



**N**ever underestimate what a simple gesture can do. 'It is the little things that you do that make a big difference in other people's lives'. This was the view of LJ van Zyl, a Lecturer and Sports Practical Coordinator, at an outreach in Soweto where the University of Pretoria partnered with Lifting Dreams, a non-profit organisation (NPO) that aims to build healthy communities through sports and academics.

Through this outreach, more than 200 learners at Thusanang Primary School in White-City got an opportunity to interact with Higher Certificate in Sports Sciences (HCSS) students from the University of Pretoria, who on the day assisted with tutoring, homework and later engaged in physical activities, which included a variety of games. The HCSS community engagement initiative is aligned to the University of Pretoria strategic objectives in addressing

development challenges by linking the research and teaching skills of staff and students to the specific needs of the diverse communities.

'Giving back to the community is the essence of progressive leadership and community development projects. Such initiatives are utilised to address community challenges and provide opportunities to communities that are often excluded. The HCSS community engagement resonates with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which intend to raise awareness of global developments in education, sustainable communities, health, and wellbeing. I am proud of the students' commitment and the great work they did,' said Leepile Motlhaolwa, HCSS Lecturer.

HCSS Students also got an opportunity to visit Lifting Dreams Soweto gym, which operates out of the front yard of defending South African Weightlifting Champion Khati Mabuya's mother's house. Lifting Dreams Soweto offers free weightlifting training for children aged 9 to 17. Mabuya shared with students how he started the club in 2019 with his brother, Katleho, to get children off the streets, drugs and out of trouble to teach them discipline and perseverance.

'I wanted to build a gym which was going to be a place of safety for the kids,' says Mabuya. 'A space where they can gather together after school and do their homework and train'.

*continued on page 21*

Soon after starting the club, the Mabuya met Hein Badenhorst when they turned up at a weightlifting competition with 14 youngsters from Soweto. Badenhorst introduced the club to British weightlifting Olympian Sonny Webster, who helped them raise funds. With their help and donations from the National Federation of Weightlifting and My Fitness gym, the club now has functional equipment.

'Currently, the club trains 60 youngsters and their biggest problem is a lack of space. They can only accommodate 20 at a time. With schools being on rotation

due to COVID-19 regulations, the youngsters train on alternating days. Lifting Dreams also focuses on improving academic outcomes. All members have to get a minimum of 60% at school, and if they don't they have to do a set of squats for every percentage point they missed,' said Hein Badenhorst.

Nombuso Khoza, a Higher Certificate in Sports Sciences student indicated that visiting the school and they gym has taught her a lot about giving

back. 'Today I learned that we rise by lifting others. I feel proud to have contributed my time to a worthy cause, helping these kids with homework and also bringing smiles on their face with the fun games we played was heart-warming. I wish to do more moving forward,' she said.

LJ van Zyl added that the task team will continue to engage with Lifting Dreams to forge a solid partnership. 'We believe in the power of sport to transform lives. This partnership aims to promote positive development through physical activity. I foresee a lot of our students benefiting greatly from this partnership as we vigorously promote a community engaged scholarship, life skills and sport-based youth development,' concluded van Zyl.





# Future Africa at the University of Pretoria

Post Graduate Residence: Applications for 2022

**F**uture Africa is a flagship institute of the University of Pretoria located on the university's Hillcrest campus. The campus offers a tranquil, yet modern environment away from the busy Hatfield centre.

The postgraduate residence at Future Africa offers accommodation for post-doctoral fellows, researchers, PhD, and master's students as well as visiting scholars of Future Africa.

The residence offers bachelor apartments, communal kitchens and dining spaces, and a fully equipped laundry. The rooms have an open space design, each with a study area and an en-suite bathroom (shower). The amenities at Future Africa include a dining hall for residents who prefer not to self-cater. The dining hall provides breakfast, dinner, and other meals subject to a pre-order system.

Future Africa also hosts a fully equipped Research Commons with 24-hour access, and library

services providing full access to e-resources and repositories, and regular onsite assistance.

Many shopping centres are conveniently located in close vicinity of the campus, and residents can choose from an array of restaurants in the area. The campus is also in close proximity of the UP Sports Centre, Student Gymnasium, High Performance Centre, Hillcrest public swimming pool and the Hatfield Gautrain station. A scheduled bus shuttle service is available to residents.

Residents are required to sign a rental agreement that is subject to annual renewal. A code of conduct and house rules apply.

Access information about the Future Africa Campus here: <https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/campus/post-grad-and-academic-residence> and apply online: [https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/form/residence\\_application](https://www.futureafrica.science/index.php/form/residence_application)



For added information, bookings and payment enquires please email: [reception@futureafrica.science](mailto:reception@futureafrica.science)

# Do I Really Understand what I'm Getting myself into? Stop and think!

**Elaine van Wyk, Thabang Rameetse, Bianca Henderson, Phindile Mokomane, Qukeza Nokele, Marni Grobler (Fourth year students from the Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Healthcare Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences)**

**Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg, Senior Researcher, Community Orientated Primary Care (COPC) Research Unit, Faculty of Health Sciences (Work-integrated learning fieldwork supervisor)**

**T**he Occupational Therapy Department from the University of Pretoria has been working closely with some of the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) sites across Tshwane. COSUP is a programme that aims to provide effective community-based support for people who are affected by or who use harmful substances. Its focus is on prevention of substance use, harm reduction for people who use drugs (PWUD), improving health and restoring the functioning of PWUD, and, ultimately, reducing the social destruction of harmful substance use.<sup>1</sup>

COSUP in Atteridgeville presents regular substance use prevention and awareness days in the community. One particular school identified for an awareness day was the Olievenhoutbosch Pre-Vocational School, as they have reported substance use among learners. The social worker from COSUP Atteridgeville asked the occupational therapy students to assist in the presentation of the awareness day at the school, along with two COSUP service-users and the COSUP peer educator (who has previously used drugs and now works for COSUP to educate and inspire PWUD).

*continued on page 24*



Occupational therapy students providing information to learners

The principal of the school welcomed the team and explained that the school specialises in the following pre-vocational skills: needlework, hairdressing, consumer science and mechanical science. This is important to note, since these are occupations that can be used in future intervention opportunities at the school.

After orientation, the occupational therapy students had the opportunity to address the learners. Initially, the learners seemed disengaged and not interested in the session. In order to encourage participation, the students played some music and asked learners who wanted to dance for the rest of the group. This proved to be very successful as the learners cheered each other along and it created an opportunity for them to become comfortable with the session. The students then facilitated another fun icebreaker to encourage the learners to listen to information and to get their attention.

The occupational therapy students provided education about the physical dangers of substance use, using posters as visual aids. It was apparent that the learners weren't aware of some of the effects that the use of substances can have on your body. The COSUP team shared valuable insights on why it is harmful for developing brains to be exposed to harmful substances. Learners were encouraged to rather never start, than to experiment with substances and regret it later.

The team explained how substances can negatively influence learners' lives at their current age, how substances can 'rule' their lives, how substances have ruined lives, and named withdrawal symptoms. Learners were warned that the school has the right to suspend or expel them when in possession of drugs or if they're found using harmful substances. *'There is nothing you can gain by using substances'*.

The social worker explained what COSUP is, where it is located in Atteridgeville and how it's a 'no-judgement' space where one can receive advice, support, treatment and counselling for free. She invited them to visit the site if they want more information regarding substances or if they are already using and want to receive counselling or start with harm reduction intervention.

The occupational therapy students then tested whether the learners had focussed during the session by asking them 10 questions related to the information given. When someone was able to answer the questions, they were rewarded with a sweet. This worked well since the 'testing' was fun, and the sweets acted as motivators for learners to answer the questions.

The learners retained the information well and could recall the mnemonic for drugs, namely: 'Do I Really Understand what I'm Getting myself into? Stop and think!' All of the posters were left at the school and enough copies were made for each class as a constant reminder of the harmful effects of drugs, not only on health, but on quality of life. The day ended with the principal reporting that she felt the session was a massive success and the occupational therapy students and COSUP team should definitely return to the school to continue encouraging the learners to live their best lives.

## References

1. Mosweu R. (2021). COSUP gives hope to substance users | Article | University of Pretoria [Internet]. Up.ac.za. 2018 [cited 9 June 2021]. Available from: <https://www.up.ac.za/up-copc-research-unit/article/2934203/cosup>



COSUP Social worker addressing learners in Atteridgeville

# The Feast of the Clowns & Trash-to-Treasure workshops

Lindi Claassen and Beate Vogler (Fourth year occupational therapy students, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria)  
Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg (Senior Researcher, Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Research Unit, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria)



Occupational therapy students participating in the Feast of the Clowns social justice march

The Feast of the Clowns is an annual community festival and colourful march that takes place in the inner city of Pretoria, Gauteng. Its purpose is advocating for justice, celebrating the inner city's togetherness, while reclaiming ownership and positivity among community members. The Feast took place on Saturday, 16 October 2021, where members of the inner city, as well as community organisations, participated in a peaceful protest against human trafficking and gender-based violence.

The theme of the Feast was 'Courage to be...'. This theme was specifically chosen as it is an inclusive term and allows for various interpretations, having different symbolic meanings to different people.

During the weeks leading up to the feast, various interactive community workshops were presented to community members as part of the Feast.

Pop Actions is a newly established collaborative community project, initiated by a group of artists, that makes use of recycled materials to produce valuable and tradable trinkets.

Pop Actions collaborated with fourth year occupational therapy students from the University of Pretoria to present skills development workshops to community members, entitled 'Trash-to-Treasure' at Potter's House and the Bethesda House of Kindness and Ladies Arise drop-in centres.

The purpose of the Trash-to-Treasure workshops was to enhance awareness among community members regarding the possibilities of repurposing trash, such as plastic soft drink and water bottles.

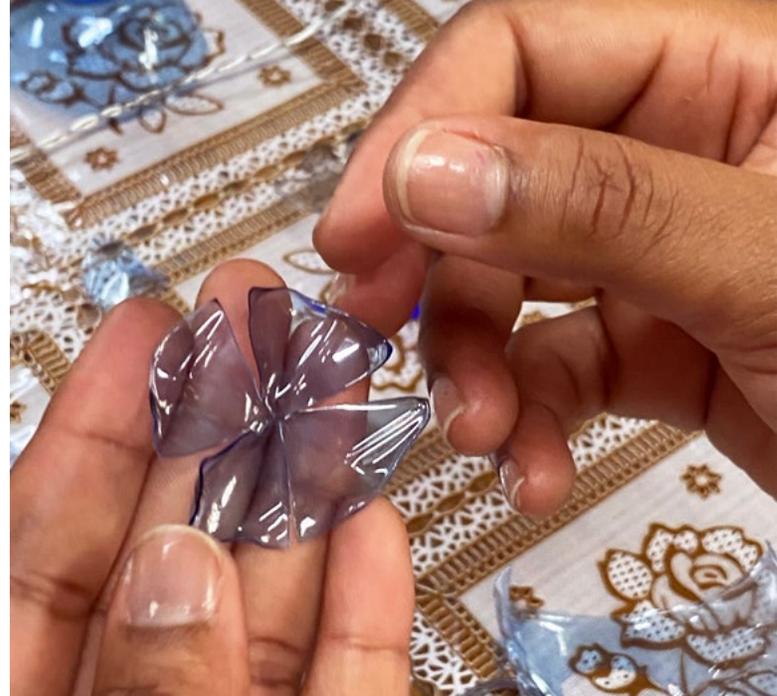
During the workshops participants were guided in how to make jewellery and décor items from plastic bottles. The plastic is cut into specific shapes and forms, and folded depending on what piece is to be made. The piece of plastic is then placed over a candle to melt and burn, which forms the flowers or leaves of the jewellery or décor pieces.

Pop Actions further collaborated with community members who showed interest and potential during the workshops to make and sell their products at the Feast of the Clowns market and at other art markets, and several items have been sold to date.

The central message of the workshop can be described in two ways. Firstly, that trash items need not just be thrown away, but the potential of what they can become should be unlocked. Secondly, these learnt skills could become a means of income for members of vulnerable communities.

The outcome that we hoped to achieve was to make people aware of how to make use of waste (as there is so much potential in recyclables) for

*continued on page 26*



**Plastic trash transformed into beautiful jewellery and décor items that can be sold for income generation**

possible income generation, which also contributes to lessening overall waste in our surroundings and helps heal our planet.

A step within the Trash-to-Treasure process, after collections, is to thoroughly clean the recycled materials in order to use them in the creative process. This allows participants to reflect on the discarded materials being washed in order to have a new purpose.

The Trash-to-Treasure workshop contributes to healing, as it symbolises how marginalised community members are cast aside by society (*'trash'*) but are now repurposing themselves and discovering their potential to become *'treasure' in the community*.

The thematic scope of the Feast of the Clowns festival was justice, empowerment and *'Courage to be'*, which can be represented by the candle flame that empowers the members of marginalised communities to be transformed into *'treasure'*.

In other words, the workshop provided opportunities for skills development and empowerment for potential income generation, which

are symbols of hope, success and new purpose.

The Trash-to-Treasure workshop corresponds with the theme *'Courage to be'*, as it represents the idea that everyone can have the courage to be anything. It allows community members to build the courage to do introspection and self-assess how they are able to find healing opportunities within the learning process of the workshop.

The Trash-to-Treasure workshops are presented in a way that provides participants the freedom and chance to have courage to design their own creations. The workshop especially represents the idea of creative individuality. The members were encouraged to use their own creativity and experiment with the different ways the plastic can be cut, melted or even decorated.

Every piece created is unique, as the plastic always burns differently within the candle flame, almost representing the unpredictability of life and circumstances. That truly spoke of how every person is unique and can have the courage to create and contribute something special to society.

The most valuable lesson provided by the Feast of the Clowns and through the Trash-to-Treasure workshops is that every person within the community deserves to be valued, respected and empowered. No matter the circumstances in one's life, one can be valuable, malleable and useable.

We all deserve to serve our purpose, to be used in a greater sense to help others and heal the community, and to be moulded by our experiences.

The Trash-to-Treasure workshops provide more than just skills development and training. It represents opportunity for marginalised people to change their lives and the lives of those around them by setting an example of how we each can be transformed to have a beautiful purpose.

For more information on the Trash-to-Treasure items, please contact [contact.pop.action@gmail.com](mailto:contact.pop.action@gmail.com) or follow @pitsayamamepe\_npc on Instagram.

Also follow the University of Pretoria's Occupational Therapy Department on Instagram: @upoccupationaltherapy