

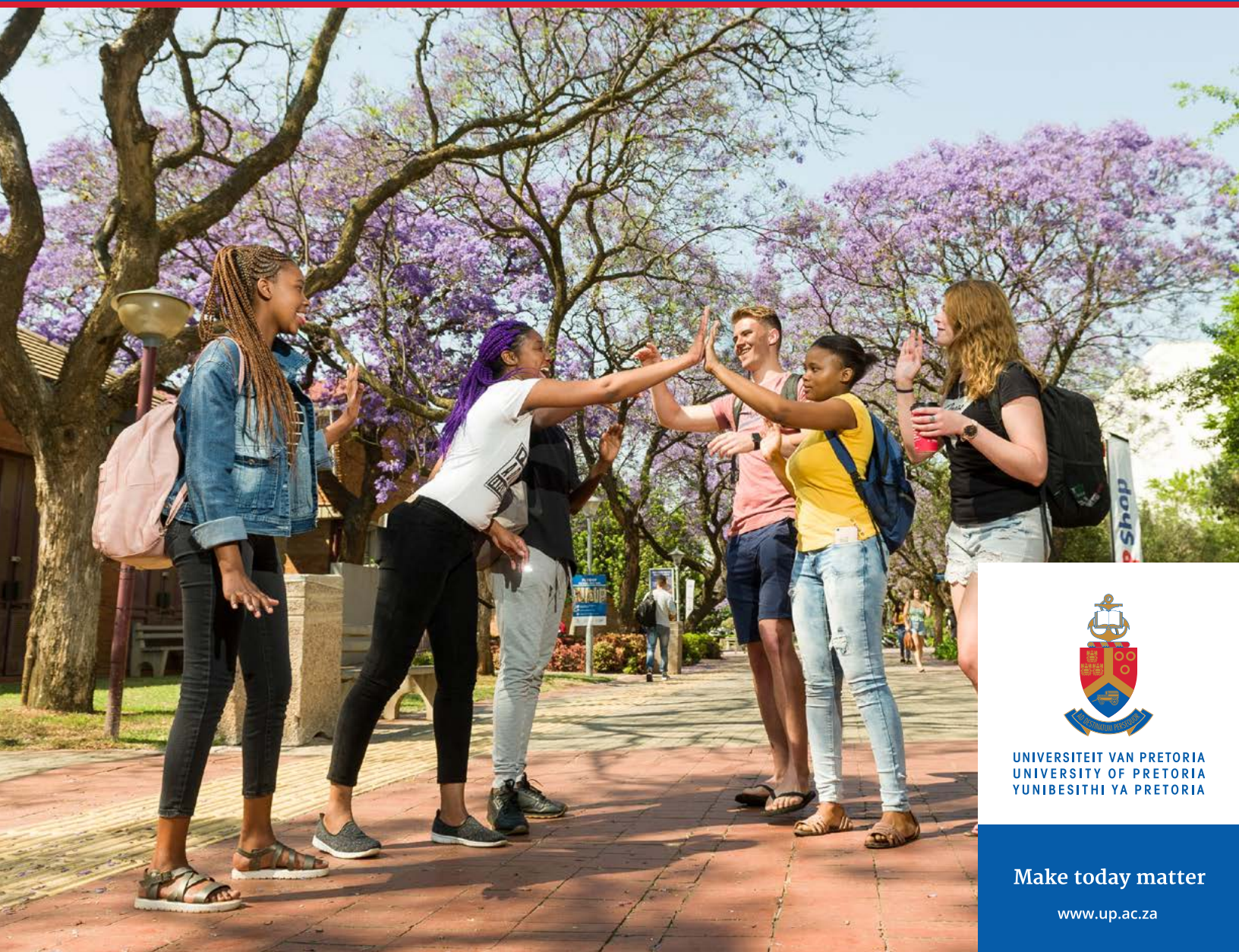
Lentš'u La Sechaba

THE VOICE OF THE CE COMMUNITY

Department for Education Innovation
Unit for Community Engagement



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Unlocking potential: Speech-Language Pathology students working at the Baby Therapy Centre

Dr Esedra Krüger (Senior lecturer and programme coordinator: Speech-Language Pathology Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)

The Baby Therapy Centre, a registered non-profit organisation in Lynnwood, Pretoria, has been providing early childhood intervention services to babies and young children with developmental difficulties for the last 27 years.

The Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at the University of Pretoria has partnered with the Centre to support the valuable services provided to members of the community who may not be able to afford specialised therapy.

Final-year speech-language pathology students visit the Baby Therapy Centre weekly and, together with the team at the Centre, they render early communication intervention services to infants, young children and their families.

Following a multi- and interdisciplinary team approach, the staff at the Baby Therapy Centre, whose slogan is 'Unlock potential', take pride in providing excellent evidence-based therapeutic and support services to families and their little children.

The multidisciplinary team at the Centre consists of a speech-language therapist, an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist, a music therapist and a dietician with a special interest in managing infants and young children with special needs.

The Centre is run by Dr Scheàn Babst who is a scientist by profession and has personal experience in parenting a child with autism. A number of passionate administrative and support staff members, as well as a specialised day-care centre for little ones with specific caregiving needs, further enhance the unique services and care that are provided.

The speech-language pathology students provide assessment and treatment for early speech, language, communication and feeding difficulties that may be due to preterm birth, low birth weight, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, or other developmental problems.

Many of the children who receive these services offered by student therapists are infants and toddlers who are being cared for in places of safety in Pretoria, or permanently live in children's homes. Young children

with disabilities who may not be able to afford the therapeutic support that may be required are thus supported by this community engagement initiative at no cost to their families.

Services are provided in partnership with the therapy team at the Centre under the supervision of speech-language therapist Dr Esedra Krüger, a Senior lecturer in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology who presents the final-year module Early communication intervention practicum (KMP482) together with Dr Renata Eccles from the same department.

Students engage in interprofessional education and collaborative practice by working closely with nursery school teachers and daycare staff. Providing real services to families in a supportive environment such as that of the Baby Therapy Centre affords students valuable learning opportunities. They are able to engage with and solve problems in real-life scenarios, providing students the opportunity to unlock their own potential in the field of early intervention.

Master's students in Counselling Psychology initiate a psychological service at Daspoort Clinic

Dr Kamilla Rawatlal (Programme Manager: MA Counselling Psychology)



Global health concerns and the need to improve access to mental health care services have inspired the Department of Psychology, Masters in Counselling Psychology programme to become involved in the establishment of a psychological consultation service at primary care level.

The M1 Counselling Psychology Groups, have been involved in initiating a Psychological Service at Daspoort Clinic in 2021–2022. The

student training team offers assessment services and therapy and are supervised by the MA Counselling Psychology coordinator and clinical supervisors.

The vast majority of patients and clients seen at the Daspoort Clinic experience significant health disparities, live at or below the poverty line, and are frequently faced by intersecting health, mental health and substance abuse problems. The service offered in the city of Tshwane extends to the nearby informal settlements of Malusi and Zama Zama.

As part of their practicum exposure, the trainee psychologists gain in skill and competence in the application of psychotherapeutic modalities such as cognitive behavioural therapy, person-centred therapy, brief solutions-focused therapy, child therapy and trauma management.

Contemporary approaches, such as positive psychology interventions and integrative psychology, have also become increasingly popular for application at resource-constrained

sites. Psychological assessment services are currently limited to the provision of basic screening services for learning and psychological disorders. However, there are plans to develop a more comprehensive assessment service that will include career and skills assessments. During their practicum, students also gain exposure to the management and referral of outpatients who manifest with neurological and clinical conditions.

Core to trainees' development of their identities as professionals in counselling psychology is a focus on developing competencies such as prevention, health promotion, holistic care and interprofessional collaboration. This focus is seen as critical for trainees to contribute and drive agency in society as scientist practitioner advocates.

Our students have also been able to contribute on international (University of Minho) and local platforms (Psychological Society of South Africa, PsySSA) to enhance their abilities and community practitioner engagement skills,' said Dr Kamilla Rawatlal (MA Counselling Psychology Programme Manager).

We would also like to acknowledge Mr Kennedy Mafala, Dr Tania Boshoff and Dr Gerhard Botha, (UP, Department of Family Medicine), for their role in supporting the students with the coordination of the service rendered at the Clinic.

Seeds of change

Dr Carin Combrinck (Senior Lecturer • Director: Unit for Urban Citizenship - Department of Architecture)

A few timber benches, small tables and a trench around a water tank may seem like small projects, but they were made with much love by groups of dedicated undergraduate students with limited resources. What cannot be seen at first glance are the complex processes, networks and tacit learning experiences that form part of these intersectional moments of emergence.

The people residing in the informal settlement of Plastic View in Moreleta Park face daily struggles of basic survival, poor sanitation, inadequate water and extreme socio-economic strain.

Over several years, they have generously collaborated with students in the honours and master's programmes in the Department of Architecture's Unit for Urban Citizenship (UUC). Through their eyes and through their stories, the UUC has been able to develop an understanding of the hopes, dreams and aspirations of young men and women from all over the African continent in search of better opportunities.

This universal desire for making a place of your own is the stuff of dreams, which is what architects are best at. Our students have had the opportunity to learn, to listen and to make sense of what Plastic View could become. They have developed community action plans, urban visions and diverse proposals for amenities that range from schools to markets and various housing options.



During 2021 and 2022 we were also able to host master's students in architecture from Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, first online (2021) and then in person (2022). They joined us in gaining an ever-deepening understanding of the nuanced layers of needs and aspirations in the settlement, and from these interactions increasingly diverse suggestions for spatial and systemic interventions were developed.

Despite the potential that we have recognised for the implementation of *in-situ* upgrade strategies in Plastic View, it has become clear over this time that the tensions that exist between government authorities, non-profit organisations (NPOs), surrounding residential estates and the community of Plastic View will not be resolved any time soon. The

stalemate that exists regarding local and national government's position regarding economic migrants without South African citizenship has resulted in a lost generation—children growing up playing in raw sewerage, living in inadequate housing, seeing their parents' dreams evaporating in the smoke of burning plastic.

It is in the context of this humanitarian crisis developing on our doorstep that UUC students have identified the need to conceptualise projects and potential interventions that address the immediate and pressing needs associated with disaster relief. Through recognising that Plastic View has much in common with refugee camps housing populations displaced by economic distress, the focus has shifted to developing action plans and micro-scale interventions that

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Upgrade the water tank

can be implemented NOW, improved upon SOON and formalised LATER.

An integrated curriculum approach was followed where post-graduate (honours and master's) and undergraduate (second-year JCP203 in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment & Information Technology) students collaborated with community members in Plastic View to identify three main focus areas, namely early childhood development (ECD), water and sports as drivers of social cohesion and community galvanisation. Students were able to identify how micro-scale interventions may serve to address immediate needs in each of these areas while simultaneously creating a platform to support systemic development.

The ECD facility in Plastic View, which currently consists of shipping containers and is managed by the NPO SA Cares for Life, provides a ray of hope in the settlement. A co-design studio with honours and JCP students revealed possibilities for the future expansion of the ECD to make it a mixed-use node supporting education and trade. At the immediate scale, however, the ECD is under-served and has a need for robust furniture for their day-to-



Soccer benches

day functions. Two JCP203 groups collaborated, pooling their budgets to create strong and ergonomically appropriate tables for the children.

The water tanks that are situated throughout the settlement are refilled by the City of Tshwane and serve as important social gathering points, bearing the core qualities of public space and the beginnings of urban life. Since much water is spilled when collecting with buckets, the community leadership requested a micro-scale intervention that would serve as a demonstration of how the excess water could be captured and re-used for urban agriculture. The co-design process resulted in a trench lined with plastic bottles filled with dirt ('eco-bricks') that would be big enough to accommodate a bucket. Through this small intervention, residents are able to continue using inherited agricultural skills to produce their own food and galvanise the community spirit around the central gathering point—the water tank—thereby improving communication and network power in the settlement.

The students were tremendously inspired by the energy of the sports enthusiasts in Plastic View, especially the soccer teams who are active on Sundays, with various teams battling it out on the dusty sports field on one side of the settlement. Research conducted over several years has shown that netball and soccer players have become increasingly respected

in the community, with events that included teams from elsewhere in Pretoria visiting Plastic View for mini-tournaments. Short gum poles had been inserted around the field by the soccer teams to demarcate the area and students in the urban citizen studios realised that these could form the support structures for spectator benches and rudimentary pavilions.

Through collaboration with the York Timber research chair, some materials were donated and Computer Numerical Control (CNC) cut according to the designs that had been developed collaboratively by honours and JCP students, and the community leaders involved in sport. The JCP teams then completed the project by combining the timber benches with beer crates for stability and incorporating the community members in the final installation. By the time the students were done, soccer players were already busy painting and personalising these mini-pavilions to represent their teams.

Through this focus on three aspects of community cohesion in the settlement: ECD, water/ public space and sports, the collaboration between various student groups and the community of Plastic View has resulted in small seeds of change being established that promise to bring about meaningful progress over time.

Post-consumer textile waste put to good use in collaboration with Clothes to Good (CTG)

Dr Nadine Sonnenberg (senior lecturer,
Department of Consumer and Food Sciences)



From March to June 2022, fourth-year B Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management students in the Department of Consumer and Food Science at the University of Pretoria participated in the Clothes to Good (CTG) community project to gain insight into the intricacies of dealing with post-consumer textile waste and, even more importantly, to learn how it can be put to good use.

These outcomes formed part of their fourth-year Textiles (411) module that is focused on sustainability and new developments in the clothing and textiles industry.

CTG, based in Centurion, Gauteng, is a textile recycling and disability empowerment organisation that has over the past few years sourced immense volumes of post-consumer clothing, shoes, fashion accessories and other textile waste from schools,

corporate volunteer programmes and H&M stores to work toward the greater good of the local community in various ways. At their recycling facility in Centurion, items are sorted and categorised into several recycling streams by a highly competent team of people, many of whom are disabled.

During weekly site visits, students under the guidance of CTG team members participated in the sorting of donated post-consumer textile waste into various recycling streams. The recycling streams include the reselling and repair of clothing, upcycling, downcycling and shredding of textiles for alternative end uses.

Textile items that are still in good condition are sold, for example, to micro-businesses that are owned by mothers of children with disabilities. These moms then resell the items

to their communities in order to generate an income for their families. Items that require repairs or are somewhat worn are donated to CTG's non-profit partners. Through their Enabling Denim programme, CTG also upcycles denim waste into early childhood development resources, soft toys and a variety of homeware products.

Textile waste that cannot be used in the aforementioned recycling streams is either converted into rags or is finely shredded to be used as stuffing for the mattress, insulation and motor industries.

Funds generated through these various recycling streams are then channelled toward other social impact projects that focus specifically on assisting vulnerable children in low-resourced early childhood development programmes and

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empowering people with disabilities through skills development and training. At the end of the semester, students were able to submit proposals for streamlining and extending the activities of CTG based on their exposure to on-site activities and experiences.

These proposals were well received by CTG's founding members and

staff with a clear intent to further collaborate with the students on future projects. Students' reflections on their weekly site visits and experiences were also truly inspiring and highlighted the importance of collaboration and teamwork, as well as their realisation of how, in their future work in the clothing and textile industry, they can contribute to reducing problems surrounding

post-consumer textile waste and promote the pursuit of sustainability in the fashion industry.

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Keep That Gold Shining: Robotics Programme

Matthew Beekman (Third-year Computer Engineering student and KTG Executive Director)

Kee That Gold Shining (KTG) expanded the Robotics Project to include more than 350 high school learners from various schools across Gauteng. The KTG Robotics Project aims to introduce high school learners in the rural areas of South Africa to information and communications technology (ICT). ICT, and access to ever-growing information in particular, is now more important than ever before.

The COVID-19 pandemic, in conjunction with the country's strict lockdown regulations, further highlighted this. The majority of the schools with which KTG works were forced to close for significant lengths of time throughout the country's lockdown period due to the lack of exposure to online learning platforms and minimal access to computers. These learners were unable to benefit from the use of ICT to continue with distance learning while they were away from school. Furthermore, the lack of exposure to ICT, computing and engineering

in these poorer communities has deprived learners who have brilliant potential of the opportunity to make a significant impact in these industries. KTG strives to close this gap by not only exposing these learners to the endless possibilities in the fields of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT), but by also introducing them to basic concepts in these industries to ensure that they are not at such a disadvantage when they finish high school and progress through the tertiary education systems.

Keep That Gold Shining (KTG) extended basic coding principles into more than seven schools across the country through the Tangible Africa Tanks and Rangers games. The games pose problems to the learners who are then encouraged to find different solutions using basic coding structures. In particular, the games focus on IF...ELSE statements and various loop structures as well as their integration. KTG, together with

students from the University of Pretoria's Joint Community-Based Project (JCP203) module, travelled to these schools over weekends and public holidays to introduce the learners to the basic coding structures through the Tangible Africa games while also preparing them for the Mandela Day Rangers Competition.

The competition was hosted across the country on 18 July this year in celebration of the South African hero, Nelson Mandela. The schools fared very well in the competition and a spark of interest was evidently ignited in the majority of the competing learners.

KTG plans to further expand this initiative by introducing additional computing and engineering activities to the same schools while also expanding the initiative to the rest of the schools with which KTG continuously engages for various other projects. We cannot wait to see what KTG has to offer for 2023!

Growing pigs, growing a future!

Cassendrah F Gamede, Andrew McAdam and Leonie van Niekerk (BVSc V – Faculty of Veterinary Science)



Nine veterinary science students from the University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort Campus visited a pig farm on the outskirts of Centurion. Doornrandje (Kenosi's Farm), an emerging small-scale pig producer, currently houses 91 sows and weans, on average, 40 piglets a week. The students were allowed to evaluate the farm according to the Management, Environment, Nutrition, Disease (MEND) guidelines and the PORK 360 (Pig farm standards) objectives. PORK 360 is a private quality assurance system that aims to standardize the welfare, traceability, and quality of pig products in South Africa. The

students were encouraged to ask questions about the farm and make recommendations based on their findings. Community engagement is an essential service for small-scale farmers who cannot afford to pay a local private veterinarian for a herd health package. This article aims to highlight and evaluate the mutual benefit of such community engagement between small-scale farmers and students.

It became increasingly clear that there was a disconnect between what we learned in the classroom and the needs of emerging rural farmers. In other words, having 'book

knowledge is one thing, but being able to effectively communicate that knowledge to rural farmers in the language they understand and persuade them to apply your advice can be problematic. We are taught that the key to giving advice is to be realistic and justify your argument. We, therefore, combined our advice with an explanation of the importance of combining our suggestions with existing practices. We identify areas of improvement as either short or long-term goals, depending on the farmer's current ability to change their management practices and upgrade their facilities, and the impact of the intervention on the production system.

Some of the short-term interventions we recommended included vaccination of sows and gilts before farrowing and breeding, the removal of construction rubble from the farrowing pens, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of facilities, with the bending away of rusty metal fences, and the removal of scrap metal from the pens. Such improvements are quick and easy to implement as they require mainly effective management oversight of labour.

In the long term, we would like to see the renovation of the pen facilities to include higher walls with proper drainage and adequate shade for all the pigs, but this will require a

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significant financial investment. Short-term recommendations included treating the sarcoptic mange outbreak among the adult pigs with Ivermectin, and the suspected *Streptococcus suis* cases in their grower pigs with penicillin and a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. We also recommended the keeping of written records of all pigs to assist in making managerial decisions, avoiding overusing boars and double treating pigs, and strictly keeping to withdrawal periods for marketed finisher pigs.

We also encouraged the securing of feed stores and pig pens from rats as rodents 'eat into' a small-scale farmer's profit margin and free access to pig food means that rat bait poisoning is largely ineffective in controlling the rodent problem. Although emerging pig farmers in South Africa face significant challenges, their willingness to improve is inspiring and we believe that community outreach can have a significant impact on their circumstances.

During our tour of the farm, we learned that in the highly competitive local pig sector South African small-scale farmers with limited resources

are struggling to survive, rather than striving for excellence. We realised that there is a critical need for more veterinary visits to teach and provide oversight to our small-scale farmers. This is essential if they are to be enabled to grow and be successful in a market flooded with intensively managed larger-scale farmers.

Although our local market for pig products is significant and lucrative, the industry favours larger-scale farmers who are supported by the tides of the economics of scale. Due to their limited resources, small-scale farmers find it difficult to keep up a regular relationship with veterinarians to obtain essential farm-related advice.

Our farm tour showed us that small-scale farmers can start small with few resources, raising only a handful of marketable pigs per month, while at the same time having the drive and ambition to expand their farms into larger-scale operations, but it was clear that this would be impossible without veterinary oversight. The pig industry needs to inspire future veterinarians who can counsel prospective farmers with confidence and encourage wise investment in porcine production.

In conclusion, there is a mutually beneficial opportunity for students and small-scale farmers during these community outreaches.

On the one hand, farmers will receive free recommendations on how to improve infrastructure and the welfare and health of their pigs, which will ensure better production, while on the other hand the students, who are taught all the necessary management, environment, nutritional, and disease standards that will guarantee a successful, profitability of the farm, will gain exposure to real-life veterinary practice and can learn valuable lessons about the feasibility of the recommendations they suggest.

They learn that small changes over a long period are more feasible and will be met with better compliance, cooperation, and communication. We believe that this professional confidence and inspiration are what we will take away from this experience.

The farm visit was conducted under the supervision of Dr Japhta Mokoale, Senior Lecturer and Pig Veterinary Specialist, based at the University of Pretoria Campus.

Access and support for independent learning communities

Rikus du Preez

In 2017, MathU embarked on its first corporate social outreach. Contributions by its sponsors have enabled MathU to reach students in arid communities by enhancing their learning with an Android-enabled device and connection to top-tier educators via its connect-to-tutor function. Up to this point, JCP students have been doing quality control and producing content that is made

available to these students, as well as to others who also search for additional open-source learning material. By using data that is generated by CSI candidates, MathU is able to find and fill critical knowledge gaps for each individual learner by generating unique learning pathways using artificial intelligence. By 2021, students who are sponsored via the CSI program have improved their marks by up to

30% and the system is providing top candidates from across the country. The vision is to continue working with JCP students on the learner-facing side. MathU continuously searches for ways to keep the project as cost-effective as possible and making use of initiatives such as JCP will assist in making a bigger impact in the future of education for learners who have been given these amazing opportunities. We look forward to the 2023 academic year, and to continue driving the success of these projects with the University of Pretoria and its JCP students.

Driving change in townships through community engagement

Thabang Ngwenya (Lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering and Director of Keep That Gold Shining)

Keep That Gold Shining (KTG) is a South African-based non-profit organisation established in 2014. The organisation's founding model was the result of a successful community-based module (JCP) completed by second-year students from the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) at the University of Pretoria. KTG's mandate is to liberate the minds of young South Africans by unleashing their hidden potential. The organisation believes that South Africa has a generation of innovative thinkers who need a platform to show their true potential. KTG identified education as the main driving force to sustain a lifetime change for the South African youth and believes that it is

the youth's responsibility to search for opportunities and resources to which they had unfortunately not previously had access.

KTG, in partnership with the JCP programme, addresses various educational gaps which include, but are not limited to low pass rates in basic education, lack of access to information and communication technology, and limited financial literacy. Our projects for 2022 were the MAP (Mathematics Accounting and Physical Sciences) Project, the Robotics Project and Building Victorious Women.

The MAP project focused on mentorship and involved offering career guidance, tutoring and

hosting in-person motivational events. The aim was to create an environment in which JCP students could pass on their experience and knowledge, specifically in the field of mathematics, to high school learners in communities where learning opportunities are limited. The robotics project was centred on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and involved exposing learners to the basics of coding through Tangible Africa Tanks and Rangers games and computer literacy. Our third project, Building Victorious Women, was aimed at the empowerment of women. The purpose of the Building Victorious Women event was to expose young girls in high school to successful women in the corporate world and academia. Sanitary pads were also distributed among the girls who needed them.



Community Arts in practice: BMus students engage with children with disabilities

Dr Andrea Kayser-Mitas (School of the Arts: Music) and Second-year BMus students (SOA 210)

The SOA 210 (Community arts in practice: Music) module requires second-year BMus students to engage in music activities in the wider community. Community music engagement dates back to the mid-nineteenth century when the community arts movement was seen as an expression of 'cultural democracy' and a tool for stimulating music-focused activities beyond the barriers of traditional scholastic organisations (Higgins, 2007).

It is strongly perceived that community music aides in building strong social connections and positive emotional and cognitive attributes when tertiary music students and participants in various communities have opportunities to engage musically (Hallam & MacDonald, 2008).

The Sunshine Association is a non-profit organisation that aims to provide a 'dynamic', 'progressive' and 'innovative' environment and early intervention and stimulation for children with intellectual and physical disabilities. It was established in 1976 by a group of mothers who needed a playgroup for their children, which would serve as a support

structure for them and other parents who had children with disabilities. Several services are offered at varying levels, according to the needs identified in the community. There are three early intervention centres.¹ Our students visited the Craighall Centre, where they had the opportunity to observe the daily functioning of the school. They were requested to prepare music activities, which they then facilitated the week after their initial visit to Sunshine. Mixed emotions were present on the day.

'I was unsure of the class we chose and a little afraid of how the children would respond to what we would be presenting to them'.

'I was apprehensive at first, but seeing their excitement put me at ease. The kids were eager to learn and participate. We had a lot of fun!'

'It was a very enlightening experience and allowed a better understanding of music engagement with the "neurodiverse" community'.

'It helped me to see the value of community music—being inclusive, accepting and interacting with each child'.

The BMus students were divided into three groups, each working with a group of children with varied ability to interact. Movement and rhythmic improvisation were incorporated into the activities done with the children.

The students found the experience both educational and emotionally stimulating and emphasised their need for more engagements of this nature.

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Embracing mental health: we embrace our journeys towards individual and collective mental health

Khethiwe Margaret Sethole (Department of Radiography), Margaret Kgodane (Department of Nursing), Phumudzo Tshiambara (Department of Human Nutrition), Dr Nontembiso Magida (Department of Physiotherapy) and Dr Heather Legodi (Department of Human Nutrition)

INTRODUCTION

The School of Health Care Sciences (SoHCS) in the Faculty of Health Sciences hosted a campaign focusing on raising awareness and empowering staff and students with lifestyle tools aimed at embracing mental health. The School Community Engagement Committee, in collaboration with the Faculty Marketing Department, implemented activities with staff and students from the Departments of Human Nutrition, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Radiography.

The campaign started on the 5 August 2022 at the Prinshof Campus, at the HW Snyman North Building. Activities such as bracelet making with the focus on colours linked to different mental health conditions, storytelling through painting of pictures and uplifting messages, promotion of support for breastfeeding staff and students, Pilates classes and aerobics exercises were facilitated by both staff and students.

Registered participants were given University of Pretoria (UP) branded caps as an incentive for the day. All registered participants were assembled for a lecture presentation and a poem. The entire day was packed with activities that focused on mental health embracement and ways to find solace.

ACTIVITIES

A radiography student, Kudakwashe Meja, recited one of his original poems, *“Still thoughts”*, which deals with the difficulties encountered when fighting one’s own thoughts, anxiety and depression.

STILL THOUGHTS

*Calving slits upon our conscious
While chasing dreams
Tied by the hearts on our sleeves.
So as these are the nightmares
Creeping in our night drives
Planned to set the pace for our
future selves.*

Psychiatrist, Dr Amanda Sibanyoni, gave a presentation on the models of mental health disorders.

BRACELET MAKING

Beading is considered a form of art therapy that can help to lower the stress experienced by people struggling with mental health issues by helping them to focus on something outside of their heads and even create a stream of income.

Students who were involved in the activity had to first educate the participants about the colours linked to different mental health conditions.



Schizophrenia is gold, bipolar disorder is silver, anorexia is red and bulimia is purple. Eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) are pink, depression is blue, self-harm is orange, fasting at the time is green, suicidal is yellow, obesity is turquoise and anxiety/panic disorder/obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is teal.

Participants made their bracelets using different colour combinations. During bracelet making participants around the tables exchanged stories about their mental health struggles.

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PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Exercise is a scientifically proven mood booster that decreases symptoms of both depression and anxiety. Physical activity increases endorphin levels by releasing what is referred to as the 'happy hormones' that are responsible for feelings of pleasure and well-being and inhibiting pain.

Exercise increases noradrenaline and dopamine levels, which can lead to an enhanced mood. Exercise occupies the mind and can serve as a coping mechanism as it provides a diversion and a good time-out from the stressors of daily life. A regular exercise regime can therefore lead to improved self-esteem!

Aerobics classes were conducted outdoors on the western parking soccer field and Pilates classes were presented in the Physiotherapy Gym Hall.

BREASTFEEDING AWARENESS

While embracing mental health issues, a group of students and staff had the opportunity to raise awareness about sustainable breastfeeding and the creation of a supportive environment. This activity was included since the first week of August is Breastfeeding Week.



Topics that were covered included the benefits of breastfeeding, and the essential elements that cannot be found in formula milk but are present only in breastmilk, such as growth factors and enzymes that help to protect babies from certain infectious illnesses and also promote brain growth and general development.

Breastfeeding is more convenient in the middle of the night or when travelling, lowers the risk of mothers getting certain cancers and promotes bonding between mothers and their babies.

During breastfeeding, the best position is the tummy-to-tummy position, which releases a happy hormone called oxytocin and stimulates milk flow.

The day was well spent with 89 registered attendees whose feedback indicated that they had enjoyed taking part in the different activities, but regretted that there was not enough time to take part in them all.

A suggestion for future plans is to reduce the number of activities per day. We concluded with a quote from Demi Lovato: 'You can live well with a mental health condition as long as you open up to somebody about it, share your experience with people so that you can get the help that you need'.

Another Mental Health campaign was held on 2 September 2022.

Reflections of a Social Worker working with homeless men

Sukholuhle Tshuma (Social worker: Community-Oriented Substance Use Programme [COSUP])



We take life for granted. Waking upon a comfortable bed, saying a short prayer, taking a hot shower, grabbing a cup of coffee and picking up your handbag, laptop and car keys is a routine few people think about or appreciate. It is the norm, a daily occurrence.

So is arriving at the office on Monday morning, being greeted by friendly colleagues enquiring about how you spent the weekend. Without thinking you say: 'It was too short.

I wish I could be sleeping right now. I am still so tired.' 'Do not worry sisters, soon it will be *tshayile* time and you go home', says a homeless person who knows about the comfort that a home offers, but does not have the luxury of one.

The workday starts. I think of John, a foreign national who is far from home with no family, no job and no money to return home after spending years in South Africa. Imagine what is going through his mind? I also think of Thabo. The COVID-19 pandemic helped him as he was linked to a shelter and did not have to go back to the streets. However, the pressure to return home mounts daily.

Just knowing that the shelter he calls a home is transitional must cause him to feel uncomfortable to be there for longer when he should have exited, but where to? Then there's Roy, who is strong and comes from a background where he always had a home. It must be hard to have to adjust to being homeless and sharing the little he has with everyone else.

He is managing a mental illness with medication.

Zipho just passed by the window. The street is the only home he has ever known. Growing up without parents he learnt to fend for himself at a young age. Here is someone who has only two choices: either leave the shelter through independent living, if he can find a job and earn a living, which is not very likely, or back to the streets.

He has no one to turn to. Then there is the youngest man in the house who has just turned 18 and has already been living on the streets. With no education, his future is bleak, he has no starting point. The way the

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system is failing vulnerable children makes me angry. How is it possible to have children growing up and being homeless in 2022? Gert is another man living in the shelter. He has two children who he hasn't seen in years and mentions them every time he sees me.

It is killing him to have to be helpless and unable to support them, let alone spend time with them. He is afraid that they will grow up and see him as a failure. Every day he remains jobless and homeless he loses hope of ever playing his role as a provider.

Then we have Rod, a man who chooses not to let his mother know about his substance use and homelessness. He argues that it is enough that she worries about the fact that he has no job, and feels that knowing that he is homeless and using substances would kill her.

All these human beings have at some point slept under the stars and have faced all the challenges of being street dwellers before they knocked on the door of Reliable House. They are still

homeless, but at least they have a shelter, access to basic hygiene and health care services.

Now imagine having to live like Thulani, a man who had both legs amputated, uses a wheelchair, is homeless, uses substances and has a chronic illness. This is a man whose already difficult life is further complicated by homelessness.

Imagine how he had to navigate through life daily, and how his food, toilet, hygiene and medication needs were met. How did he keep appointments for his medication at the clinic? Living on the streets between Hatfield, Brooklyn and Menlyn, how did he get to Skinner Clinic in town to get health care services? Of course, he did not, he could not.

Fortunately, this man was found on the streets by Community-Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) outreach workers and immediately brought to the COSUP Reliable House where he now has accommodation and his health care needs are being

met. I dread to think that there may be many Thulani's out there—people who are physically or mentally challenged and homeless, with no access to basic services. I wonder how they are coping!

October 10 was World Homelessness Day. It came, it was commemorated, and it passed. Do we wait until 10 October 2023 to talk about homelessness again? Do we leave the dialogue on homelessness to organisations and stakeholders like COSUP, the Tshwane Homelessness Forum, Reliable House, the University of Pretoria's Unit for Street Homelessness and the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, or do we all make homelessness our burden and start the conversation in all circles?

Homelessness is not a choice. *'Before you ignore another homeless person on the street, just remember that that could be someone's father or someone's mother and they have a story'* Syesha Mercado.

Life beyond brain injury – It takes a village

Cindy Holtzhausen (Speech Therapist and Brainlife Manager)

On an ordinary day, just like any other, 19-year-old Gert Helberg ran an errand for his father, and Aron Takalani, a 21-year-old Information Technology (IT) student accepted a lift from a friend. Unfortunately, it was not just another day for these two young men as both were involved in serious motor vehicle accidents that led to brain injury and changed the course of their lives forever.



Gert Helberg, a motor vehicle accident survivor

We think about brain injury as something that happens to other people, but the reality is that it can happen to anyone at any a time. A recent review of traumatic brain injury figures from 29 countries

around the world found the South African incidence rate to be the fifth highest at 316 per 100 000 of the population per year. This translates to approximately 191 496 traumatic brain injuries in South Africa each year. We also have a high incidence of strokes, calculated to be about 100 000 cases per year.

With regard to other causes of brain injury, we have to consider the possibility that the COVID-19 epidemic may have severe lifelong consequences for both survivors and their loved ones. Unfortunately, there is often no help, and very little long-term help available to these families.

As if the immediate trauma of a brain injury is not enough, survivors and their families face a future that will require them to deal with the devastating consequences. While a physical injury affects what a person can do, a brain injury also affects who the person is. Personality changes, aggression and behavioural problems are very common after brain injury and become ever more difficult to deal with when children are involved.

Another stark reality faced by the families of victims is financial hardship. Most people are not prepared for the disability that a brain injury can cause, especially if the breadwinner is the one injured. It is not uncommon for families to have to cope with a brain injured spouse,

the demands of children and trying to hold down more than one job to make ends meet. These families are also faced with social isolation.

The help and support given to the families of patients with brain injuries often dry up in the longer term as friends and family continue with their daily lives. Many of our families become completely isolated and must navigate this difficult path alone.

Brainlife aims to be a beacon of hope. The cornerstone of our organisation is a group therapy programme offered in Wilgers and Mamelodi. Our members join us weekly for a day of physical, cognitive and music therapy, as well as arts and crafts. The aim is for survivors to acquire new skills and to become as independent as possible.

Being part of a supportive group and making new friends also decreases their isolation and improves their overall mental health and well-being. As a bonus, family members get a much-needed break from the exhausting burden of caring for a person with brain injury.

Brainlife also provides counselling support for survivors and their loved ones, and our skills development and income-generation project allows members to earn an income as part of our arts and crafts and second-hand goods businesses.

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Fourth-year speech therapy students helping our Mamelodi members during a cognition group

During the past few years we have been delighted to welcome students from the University of Pretoria (UP). Students from the Departments of Speech Therapy and Physiotherapy regularly join us to complete part of their practical assignments.

Our members enjoy sharing their stories and hard-won experience and knowledge. This is essential not only to educate future therapists about the field of neurology, but also to help our members to move from being victims to becoming survivors.

Aron experiences language difficulty (aphasia) following his injury and finds it very difficult to express himself and to understand others. It has taken him years to muster the courage to try and it is only during the past couple of years that he really started to say more than his name or 'yes' and 'no'. Now he enjoys chatting with our students and we know that this helps them to understand the reality of living with aphasia.



Aron Takalani, a brain injury survivor

Gert spent six years trying to walk before he was able to take his first steps. Though walking is still strenuous and slow, it is a reminder of what can be done if you keep trying and never give up.

These two men are just two of the approximately 140 brain injury survivors and families that Brainlife supports at any given time. We celebrated Brainlife's 10th birthday in July 2022.

As time goes by we hope to continue increasing the number of people we support and it will be a privilege to share this journey with the UP students.

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Travel is rich with learning opportunities: An international albinism project

Success Mdluli



Lecturers, Dr Raita Steyn and Ms Alexia Vouvoura, actor Arthur Molepo and students from the University of Pretoria and the University of Thessaloniki in Greece

After having visited Greece on the Albinism Project, I finally understood Rick Stevens' statement: 'Travel is rich with learning opportunities, and the ultimate souvenir is a broader perspective.' This project has taught me that even though I live with albinism, I do not know everything about the condition and I have discovered aspects of my personality of which I would probably have remained unaware had I not participated.

When Dr Raita Steyn from the Department of Humanities Education contacted me about this project I was thrilled as it would be my first visit to another country. Furthermore, the project would add to my disability advocacy campaigns, specifically with regard to albinism.

As a participant, my role was to share my experiences of living with albinism in Africa at a colloquium held at the University of Thessaloniki.

I recounted threatening situations I have been faced with, but also told the audience that I was brought up by parents with albinism who offered me all the necessary care and protection my condition required. I also spoke about how my own experiences and observations had motivated me to become an advocate for persons with disabilities.

The artistic aspect of the project was covered by another participant, the distinguished South African dramatist Arthur Molepo. Through this encounter, I have learned how effectively arts and drama can be used to raise awareness of social issues affecting the world.

We watched *Mama I want the black that you are*, a stage drama by Arthur Molepo that visualises how Africans, typically family members, react to and co-exist with persons with albinism. The compelling ability of drama to communicate a message became clear during the follow-up discussions when people asked questions that reflected their limited awareness of existing prejudices against and killing of people with albinism in Africa.

I was amazed by the way the Greeks responded to the South African team and our aims, and also the positive response to my story. I realised that people in Europe are unaware of the atrocities to which people with albinism are exposed in Africa.

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UP student Success Mdluli voices his thoughts on human rights in the University of Thessaloniki's Department of Drama

When I talk about my experiences of living with albinism in Africa, people show an exaggerated sense of pity and generally fixate on albinism as if that defines me. In contrast, I felt that Greek people wanted to know me as a normal person, and this made me feel accepted, comfortable and weirdly safe among strangers now turned valued acquaintances.

Something else I enjoyed in Greece was letting people guess where I came from, and many not even thinking that I could be African. An exciting interaction occurred when I visited a saloon run by an Albanian lady who remarked that she would receive more luck because I had walked into her shop, which reminded me of the popular African myths associating good fortune with people with albinism. My hypothesis is that myths

like that are amplified and receive more attention in underdeveloped or developing countries.

I have learnt many things from this project, such as the stark differences between how people in Greece and people in South Africa react to homeless people; how differently governments treat albinism; and how South Africans perceives albinism compared to the Greek perception.

This project has shown me that partnerships with civil society can accomplish awareness and achieve constructive results. I have gained more understanding about albinism, which will have a positive impact on my advocacy campaigns, learnt about different cultures and met welcoming people, which is more than I expected and hoped for.

About the project

The exchange project between the two universities has offered an excellent opportunity to students from Greece and South Africa to consider further international collaboration and to promote the policy of elimination of all discriminatory expressions through education.

The above-mentioned endeavour was undertaken by a group of volunteer UP students and art professionals who were invited to participate in an international university exchange programme. The South African participants in the cultural and educational exchange programme worked together with the students of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki from 26 September to 7 October 2022.

Special thanks go to the Unit for Community Engagement (UP), Prof Stergios Proios, the UP Disability Unit, Department of Humanities Education and Dr Raita Steyn who contributed towards making this project possible.

Community-Oriented Primary Care (COPC) in mine host communities: A case study in the Mapela local area, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Ms Sinothando S. Dlamini (clinical associate), Mr Tshiko F. Matlala (clinical associate)
and Dr L. Mori Boshomane (supervising medical doctor)
COPC Research Unit, University of Pretoria, South Africa



Primary health care outcomes are optimal when carried out as a team activity. This improves the quality of care and helps to meet individual and community health care needs and expectations. Working in a team improves the effectiveness of care and raises the standards of performance. In resource-limited communities, it is key to look outside of the healthcare team to other disciplines such as education, housing and infrastructure, traditional leadership and faith-based organisations. This expands the reach of assistance and fosters helpful networks with whom to collaborate in future. This case showcases how the community-oriented primary care (COPC) approach to collaborating in multi-disciplinary teams can facilitate care coordination not only between health care facilities, but also among available resources within the local community.

It demonstrates the COPC principles of analysing local health and other institutions, practicing comprehensive care with science and service integration around the user, and highlights the role of clinical associates in coordinating care between different primary healthcare facilities. During the winter of 2021, a community healthcare worker (CHW) travelling in a taxi on her

way to the clinic overheard a concerning conversation between three children. The siblings, a heavily pregnant female aged 20 years, an 18-year-old male and a 16-year-old female, had been forced out of their home by their biological mother.

The CHW immediately offered to assist them. She also alerted the clinical associate assigned to their clinic, who straight away joined her on the case. The children's maternal grandmother could not accommodate them as she feared their mother who had reportedly previously threatened her with harm when she had found her children there. The children's biological father was unemployed and lived in a single-roomed shack in the same community.

A subsequent conversation with the mother revealed that she was convinced that her eldest daughter had seduced her own partner and that he was the father of her daughter's unborn child. According to the three siblings their mother had always been physically and emotionally abusive towards them, for example, by withholding

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food and locking them in the house for days. The CHW approached the children's paternal grandparents for help, and although they were initially reluctant because of limited space and lack of food, they eventually agreed to take the children in. However, the situation proved to be unresolved as the family was unable to provide food or blankets during the cold weather. Meanwhile the clinical associate had referred the case to a social worker who called a family meeting with the mother and her children to encourage reconciliation. The mother refused to take them back, saying 'they should rather be homeless'.

The 16-year-old remained at her grandmother's house, assisted by a Child Support Grant. The 18-year-old, who was still in school, moved into an abandoned shack where he lived alone without food or water. He depended on food from his friends at school and any donations he could get. After failing to find accommodation for the pregnant 20-year-old, the CHW took her into her own home, even though she herself was under great financial strain as the sole breadwinner supporting a family of nine.

Following discussions with the various stakeholders, the three children received the following assistance:

- Food parcels from a local mine's socio-economic development team
- A series of family meetings with the mother and other relatives arranged by the social worker
- Land issued by the village Indunas (tribal heads), as well as a letter of protection for the CHW and a donation request letter which was distributed in the community, local supermarkets and clothing stores
- Approval for an emergency Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) house from the mayor at the request of the community development worker and the social worker
- Placement on a construction company's waiting list to receive food parcels and shelter
- Donations of school uniforms and clothes for the two younger siblings from the CHW and two non-profit organisations (NPOs)
- Counselling of the two younger siblings by staff at their school
- Donations of food parcels, blankets, utensils, toiletries and a paraffin stove for the 18-year-old brother received from the COPC Research Unit staff, the community and the social worker at his school
- Temporary accommodation for the 20-year-old pregnant daughter until she gave birth, provided by the CHW worker despite personal financial challenges and risk
- Donations of baby clothes, nappies, baby food, a baby bath and food for the mother from two NPOs

- Regular antenatal care for the 20-year-old by the local clinic
- Once the child was born, a birth certificate was issued to assist with applying for a Child Support Grant to help with living expenses.

In November 2021, the 20-year-old daughter gave birth at the local clinic. The CHW was no longer able to accommodate her as her own daughter had also recently given birth. Due to her relatives' refusal to intervene and lack of shelters for homeless and vulnerable people in the community, the social worker convinced the mother to accommodate her daughter and granddaughter while the construction of the RDP house was being completed. The clinic's community outreach team scheduled regular household visits in order to monitor the situation, and the police were also alerted. The mother agreed to attend counselling sessions at the clinic.

At the time of writing this article the 20-year-old and her baby were still living with the mother, who regularly attends therapy sessions. A CHW has been assigned to support and monitor the family. The social worker has regular sessions with them and does home visits to evaluate progress, and so far, there have been no complaints. The 18-year-old is still at school and still lives in a shack. The social worker gives him food parcels when available and teachers at the school offer him food during lunch breaks. Community members and other stakeholders continue to donate various items.

The 16-year-old girl has moved to her maternal grandparents' house where she will stay until she completes high school. The mother has agreed not to interfere with this arrangement. The multi- and interdisciplinary team that assisted in this case comprised of the local clinic, the mine's socio-economic development (SED) team, the COPC Research Unit, NPOs and community stakeholders, with the clinical associate and CHW as coordinators of all activities.

We recommend the establishment of regular care coordination and multidisciplinary team engagements in each local area to discuss and manage common health challenges while also addressing barriers preventing access to health care. The many negative social determinants that often prevent or hinder patients from accessing or following up at health care facilities can be addressed by other stakeholders. The presence of clinical associates in rural and remote areas provides a central clinician who coordinates care for patients between household and clinic level, and even into referral hospitals in areas where family physicians and general practitioners are scarce.



The Career Services staff actually do not sleep!

Tando Tyakume (Project Coordinator: Employer Engagement and Career Fair Events)

In 2022, Career Services hosted eight career fairs that were attended by more than 200 employers. Career fairs are hosted annually for the following fields of study: Law, Accounting Science, Actuarial Science, Veterinary Science, General, Theology and Religion, Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) and Economic Management Sciences.

Introduction

A joke that is oftentimes shared around the office was inspired by a viral tweet that stated that the Career Services office does not sleep. Although this tweet referred to the large number of emails with job postings and advertisements that we send out to students daily, it is in fact true, and sending emails is not all we do.

At Career Services we aim to:

- prepare University of Pretoria (UP) students for the workplace;
- empower UP students with the employability skills needed to secure employment;
- establish relationships with recruiters and employers; and
- ensure that UP students have access to mentors, internships and other employment opportunities.

To achieve the above, we have four main project portfolios, namely career fairs and employer relations, internships and graduate placements, mentorship and employability.

Career fairs and employer relations

The aim of this portfolio is to ensure that the Career Services office has a strong relationship with employers and recruiters looking to hire students from the University. This entails understanding employers' recruitment needs and the skills required by employers, and sharing opportunities offered by recruiters through vacancy advertisements. Career Services facilitate these engagements to benefit UP students. The annual career fair events offer students a chance to introduce themselves to employers, network and apply for available positions. Career fairs offer a perfect moment to give an 'elevator pitch' and to find out what opportunities are available for students and graduates. This portfolio is tasked with looking after employers and ensuring that students receive communications to make their job search much easier by making sure that there is a link between prospective employers and the University.

Internship and graduate placements

Through the internship portfolio, Career Services offer unemployed graduates an opportunity for practical exposure or relevant work experience and create a pool of talented UP graduates who are then equipped with the skills and attributes needed to adapt to the world of work.

Through various partnerships this portfolio seeks funding from government Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) agencies. At the beginning of the year, students who have not yet secured employment are invited to apply and send their CVs to this portfolio, which organises valuable work experience for graduates which they can use as a stepping stone to secure future employment. About 240 interns were appointed and placed at the University in 2022.

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Mentorship

The Career Services Mentorship Programme aims to give final-year students an idea of the realities of the working environment. This portfolio links students to industry experts to ensure that they have exposure to the world of work. Students are paired with established mentors in their respective industries to receive practical career guidance and are given opportunities to interface with their mentors over several sessions. This extends beyond the job search and not only provides students with guiding experts, but also exposes them to the ins and outs of the industry and gives them an idea on what it takes to excel in their careers.

The advantages of the programme for students include:

- Dedicated one-to-one support from an experienced professional
- An opportunity to network and build contacts within an industry
- Gaining insight into a chosen industry or career
- Helping students to recognise their abilities and limitations concerning their career ideas and highlighting areas requiring development
- Development of specialist and employability skills
- Practical advice on job search techniques and skills

Employability

This portfolio seeks to guide students to ensure that they become employable. It includes training and guidance on how to write a proper CV and tips on how to present themselves for interviews. Career Services consultants are readily available to guide students throughout the process of compiling a CV that is in line with industry standards.

Apart from CV-writing tips, this portfolio also offers lessons in cover

letter writing, interview preparation tips, job search campaigns, a digital profile and LinkedIn training. All these services are offered to ensure that UP students not only exit the University with a qualification, but are also equipped with the necessary skills to ensure that they will stand out.

We emphasise the need for employability skills to our students since employers value those skills and regard them as indicators of how a person is likely to get along with other team members and customers, and how efficiently a person will be able to handle job performance and career success.

More than 40 CV-writing and cover letter workshops are hosted monthly. Mock interviews and job search campaigns can be made available on request. Sessions can be held either in person or virtually.

The dreaded emails...

We understand that emails are constantly being sent out, but this is our way of informing students who are actively seeking jobs of the available opportunities. This is how we communicate with students and remind them of how they can access our services before it is too late. Our emails contain information on how to book for employability assistance, job adverts for employers and on-campus job opportunities, mentorship applications, recruitment events taking place on campus, career fair events and information on how to enrol for the Ready for Work programme. With so much to share we really cannot afford to sleep!

Please allow Career Services help you get ready for work!

Succeeding in a workforce that is constantly changing requires a career plan. Through our engagement with industry employers we have learnt

that employers want to attract, hire and retain employees who offer the best value. Changes in employers' expectations means that the University also has to make changes to provide training that places students ahead in the workplace, and that is why graduates 'need more than a degree'.

To ensure that UP graduates are Ready for Work, the Career Services office, in collaboration with Enterprises UP, offers a free online course to assist the students with the transition from university to the workplace. The programme has four online packages designed to address the following:

- Career planning
- Power skills
- Job preparation
- Your career

You can access the programme by clicking [here](#).

Thank goodness we do not sleep!

Employees in the Career Services office work very hard to make the job search easier for UP students. At the end of the day, our task is to ensure that all UP graduates are world class and suitably prepared for life after university since 'your success matters'. How would we obtain information on all these awesome opportunities for our students if we actually took time off to sleep? We urge all UP students to take advantage of this unique offer and make use of our services.

You can look at available vacancies and appointment bookings by visiting [TuksCareers](#), TuksCareer Hub, <https://upnet.up.ac.za/CareerHub/students/login>. If you have any issues or questions, feel free to send us an email at careerservices@up.ac.za. There is a team ready to assist. We look forward to helping you build a strong career!

The Importance of the constructive use of time for mental healthcare users in a residential facility


Mamello Mokhele, Nomusawenkosi Mathenjwa, Anzeret Scheepers (Fourth-year occupational therapy students, University of Pretoria) and Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg (Senior researcher, Community-Oriented Primary Care [COPC] Research Unit, University of Pretoria)

The Xihlovo Care Centre, situated in Saulsville, a peri-urban area in Pretoria West, Tshwane, is a centre assisting people with mental health challenges and developmental disability. The Centre provides safe, long-term residential care for around 15 chronic, stable mental health care users, some of whom have been discharged from psychiatric hospital care, but have no place to return to and are unable to live independently.

During the past year, the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Pretoria established a relationship with the Xihlovo Care Centre. This partnership allows final-year occupational therapy students to provide intervention to the residents at the centre as part of their academic service and work-integrated learning.

Three times during the year, pairs of students were placed at the facility, where they provided occupational therapy twice a week for six weeks at a time. The intervention provided at the Centre focused on the de-institutionalisation of the residents and their reintegration into the surrounding community.

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Occupational therapy students
and Xihlovo Care Centre staff

The role of the occupational therapist in a community setting is to enhance participation in occupations (those things that have meaning, including activities of daily living such as self-care, social interaction and the constructive use of time) for individuals and/or groups, thus facilitating optimal functioning. Physical and mental conditions, as well social and systemic factors affect participation in occupations. The occupational therapy contribution is important and relevant in communities and offers a unique perspective and human-centred approach.

Despite the efforts of the staff, residents were typically seated in the dark dining room and seemed to play the same board games all day, every day. Due to financial constraints and a lack of knowledge, the Centre was unable to provide the residents with more meaningful activities to participate in during the day, and once lockdown was enforced, they were no longer allowed to participate in any outdoor activities in the community.

Each pair of occupational therapy students performed a needs analysis and conducted interviews with the staff members at the Centre. True to the occupational therapy tenet of the importance of activities for therapeutic intervention, the students made use of group activities to engage the residents and provide needs-based therapeutic intervention.

Students brainstormed with the staff for possible solutions and together they came up with appropriate activities that could lead to the constructive use of time.

Some examples included decorating pot-plant holders and planting succulents for residents to care for; physical activities such as obstacle courses and breathing exercises; arts and crafts activities; executive functioning tasks such as problem-solving activities and puzzles; and

team-building activities, such as bingo and team-based sports and games. The students used recycled and repurposed materials and resources made available by the Centre.

Participation in socially supported physical activities and recreational groups has been shown to decrease stress, depression and anxiety, and also creates a sense of belonging, value and attachment.¹ Therefore, if the mental health care users at the Centre continue to participate constructively in recreational activities, it will assist in improving and stabilising their overall mental health and quality of life.

The residents enjoyed the leisure activities and the group sessions, which they said were better than playing the same board games every day. They were always willing to participate in the activities, were positive and friendly, and expressed their gratitude for the occupational therapy services.

Community-based occupational therapy emphasises the importance of utilising community resources to achieve intervention goals. It was important to ensure sustainability so that intervention can be continued when the students are no longer there. To equip the caregivers with information and the basic skills needed to continue implementing



Low-cost pot-plant holders made by residents

therapeutic activities, the students provided them with training in mental health conditions, developmental disability and the therapeutic use of activities. One of the challenges faced at the Centre is the high caregiver turnover. To mitigate this the students tried to concretise the knowledge and information developed during their placement by compiling a book containing basic information on mental health conditions.

They also compiled an activity book with multiple activities that utilise low-cost materials, the community's resources and items that were donated to the Centre. To assist staff and residents with generating ideas for activities, the purpose of each activity and the reason for its inclusion are explained. The books were handed to the manager of the Centre who is always at the facility, and digital versions were shared to ensure that the information is always available.

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According to the Centre manager (a retired psychiatric nurse), another challenge is the stigmatisation of the Centre's residents by community members. Per definition, stigma happens when people are perceived in a negative way because they appear to have characteristics that are thought to be, or actually are, a disadvantage.² In the case of the Xihlovo Care Centre, stigmatisation has led to prejudice and discrimination from the surrounding community.³ This all stems from a lack of education, misinformation and false assumptions by community members.⁴

Self-stigmatisation has also occurred among Xihlovo residents. This happens when mental health care users start to internalise prejudice, which leads to involuntary institutionalisation.^{3,4} Because of the misconceptions surrounding mental health and developmental disability, the members of Xihlovo do not have a strong support system in the community. Family abandonment, community rejection and isolation, unemployment, sparse sponsorships and few donations create the perfect conditions for stigmatisation.

In general, community members have not shown much interest in offering the Centre either donations, or physical and emotional support. To help address this challenge, the students assisted with a staff initiative to address stigma through activities such as awareness raising by using posters made by the residents, and promoting interaction between residents and the community. Small steps were made towards this, despite challenges.

As occupational therapy students working in the community, we saw the importance of the constructive use of time in people's lives. The first time we interacted with the



residents of the Xihlovo Care Centre they were extremely lethargic and lacked internal motivation, but after we had conducted group sessions and facilitated participation in activities, they became more active and motivated to participate, and we witnessed a change in their energy and drive.

The constructive use of time should be of the utmost importance in care environments as it allows residents to participate in activities that encourage exploration, engagement and freedom. We also experienced the value of education around mental health and developmental disability. Creating awareness is the most important step to take in facilitating understanding.⁵

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The University of Pretoria opened my eyes to the world

Nozibusiso Sibiya



Hein Badenhorst, founder of the Lifting Dreams programme, is a former student of the University of Pretoria (UP) and gives this institution credit for opening his eyes to the world. As part of the programme, Higher Certificate in Sports Sciences students tutor primary and high school learners in Thusang Primary School in Soweto.

'I grew up in a small town in North West where all the people we knew worked either on farms or on the mines. When I enrolled at UP, I was surprised to discover how many different career possibilities there actually were in the different industries.

I studied Biokinetics and after my graduation I went to work in Europe. I lived and worked in Italy for two years. The University of Pretoria prepared me for the world and played a major role in expanding my mind,' Badenhorst said.

He works with children and hopes to instil in them everything he has learned while traveling the world. 'I have been to 42 countries through my work and sports. It has taught me to think bigger about the world and to realise that there's a place for everyone.

That may sound very cliché, but if you are a sports scientist working in South Africa job opportunities are scarce. I want to inspire the children we work with to think about working outside of South Africa. Sometimes you find that there are not many opportunities for children who want to study music or art, so what I am trying to do is to expand their thinking so that when international opportunities come knocking at their doors they will be better equipped to embrace those opportunities,' he explained. Research done at UP involving Grade 4 learners in South Africa suggests that with regard to reading literacy in their language of learning almost 80% of those learners fall below the lowest internationally

recognised level. UP researchers are of the opinion that learners need more books and reading activities at home and in school to improve their reading literacy, and Badenhorst agrees.

'The gap is massive when it comes to reading. In our weekly class we normally read a piece together, so everyone says the words. However, although they can follow the lines and make the correct sounds, they do not know what the words mean.

They are taught to read, but not to read with understanding. We give them short stories every week and they can read them, but only a few can tell us what happened in the stories. Due to the importance of the ability to read, we have partnered with a learning programme that is based in KwaZulu-Natal and as a result a library was built at our school,' he added.

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The Lifting Dreams programme has helped many learners to improve their language and mathematical skills. By helping learners to improve their English, they are being enabled to make use of more opportunities in the future.

He continued: 'Last year and we saw a 24,7% increase in Mathematics grades. However, we do not take all the credit for the improvement as we know that the teachers also work very hard. We can definitely say that the learners' English has improved as that is the only language we speak when teaching them so as to prepare them for the workplace, or for university, where English is likely to be the language of teaching and learning.'

According to Badenhorst, their high school learners generally struggle with Science, which may be because they do not have a science lab at school and only know about scientific experiments through textbooks and theory. 'The high school project is headed by Kevin and the structure there is very different. They bring their own books and we have engineering, medical and accounting students,

as well as people from many other professions who come here to help the learners with the subjects they are struggling with.

High school learners in our programme struggle mainly with Science and Biology. I have not yet come across a township school with a science lab. Although the school that I attended wasn't that great, we did have a lab and I found that actually doing the experiments helped me understand what I was reading in the textbook.'

Tshepo Mofoko, who has been a Lifting Dreams volunteer for the past three years, is a Soweto resident whose love for children inspired him to join the programme. He said: 'I joined Lifting Dreams to help children. This was after many children in the townships had become hooked on drugs and stopped attending school.

Their families naturally are worried, but even if they are taken to rehab they find a way to escape. When I heard about this programme I decided to join it so I could at least lend a helping hand to save those who could still be saved.' He said that his experience of working with children has shown him

that being involved in a programme like Lifting Dreams helps them to become more social. 'Children, even the shy ones, love being exposed to different people.

You will find that children who were reluctant to join the programme because they did not have any friends there soon made friends and after a week or so were excited to come. Some are progressing in every area of their lives,' he said.

Mofoko also said that he wished that township children could receive adequate career guidance at a younger age. With proper guidance, parents can focus on guiding them to become whatever they want to be instead of forcing them at a later stage to choose careers that make their parents look good.

'The township can produce many successful people if we teach children about different careers. Some kids are regarded as being less intelligent because they do not understand Maths, but are good at drawing. If those children are encouraged to develop their talents from a young age they can become successful artists,' he concluded.

Teaching advancements at universities (TAU) 4 Birchwood Hotel Gauteng: 2022

**Dr Eugene Machimana (Acting Manager:
Community Engagement)**

During the TAU 4 session, Prof Nadine Petersen, Dr Eugene Machimana and Prof Jacqueline Batchelor facilitated an interactive workshop titled *An engaged university: Being engaged with the community*. The workshop was attended by more than 50 TAU fellows (Senior academic staff) from higher education institutions in South Africa.

A stimulus discussion was held to highlight the importance of diverse scholars' involvement in transdisciplinary research. The importance of facilitating community engagement in the innovative participatory methodology, which is mainly concerned with issues of power relations, inequality and social justice, was emphasised. In the context of social justice, community engagement develops human capital and advances the social and economic activities of local communities. The presence of senior academic staff helps to take the engaged university discussion further into various institutions at both the strategic and administrative levels.



From left: Prof Jacqueline Batchelor, Programme Manager: Initial Teacher Education: University of Johannesburg, Dr Eugene Machimana, Acting Manager: Community Engagement: University of Pretoria and Prof Nadine Petersen, Executive Dean: Faculty of Education: University of Johannesburg

Love circle senior club

Josina Tellie

Eersterust Football Association

Additions to the Executive has brought about a significant change in the popularity of football in the community and the number of football supporters are growing by the day. League games are played every Saturday and Sunday, with each of the 14 senior teams fighting for the top position on the log. Under 17 boys trials were held for the Annual Soncini Games. Two of the Eersterust boys made it into the team that will be representing the Tshwane Football Association.

Their first fundraiser, the first Miss Eersterust Football Association beauty pageant, was held on 4 November 2022. The funds that were raised will pay for the equipment needed for the football league.

House for All

House for All is an informal settlement with a population of more than 2 000 people. Among the challenges they face are children without birth certificates and children not attending school. Poverty is rife, and so are abuse and violations of human rights. Up to six people live in small shacks with only one bed and living conditions are often very unhealthy.

Although many community workers and churches have become involved in the area, psychological help is urgently needed as children grow up in a toxic environment and tend to think that it is okay to have a 'couldn't

care less' attitude as they cannot imagine anything good happening to them. In Eersterust smoking dagga and using drugs has become the new norm for girls and boys from the age of nine years.

Schools

Although some schools have patrollers, children are getting out of control and afterschool fights have become common. One of the primary schools was closed for a few weeks due to issues at the school that needed the attention of the Department of Education. Parents met with representatives of the Department to discuss burning issues, which seem to have been resolved. Parents are volunteering to assist at one primary school. Things are now back to normal, the learners have returned to school and plans have been put in place to catch up on work missed.

The Infinite Hope Foundation

Alisha Jawaharlal, Chloe Chellan, Danielle Whittle, Thanzila Noor Mohammed and Jamie Van Wyk (Honours students, Industrial and Organisational Psychology)



The team outside the Kloof Hospital



The Infinite Hope Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Pretoria, South Africa. The team comprises of five female Industrial and Organisational honours students from the University of Pretoria who aim to plant a seed of hope in the community, which they hope will spread to become a positive movement.

The motto of the foundation is *'Every act of kindness is charity'*. The team is passionate and dedicated to uplifting others and making a positive change in the Gauteng community, more specifically to encourage a positive attitude towards those who are struggling.

The team first visited a children's home in Pretoria on Mandela Day. The particular children's home was chosen based on the number of children that would be a part of the interaction. Since all the team members adore children, they

decided that instilling hope in small minds would eventually make a big difference to those children who had all been placed in this loving and welcoming home by the Children's Court due to various social factors.

The team hoped to have a stronger impact through spending time with the children to encourage a rapid spread of happiness while developing and educating them, and encouraging them to reach their full potential. The day began with pancake making and card games, which eventually progressed into a light-hearted talent show hosted by the children, followed by some team-building activities.

At around tea time, the children returned to the kitchen where they baked and decorated cupcakes. Not surprisingly, the children really enjoyed themselves and begged the students to return soon. The takeaway from the children's home was to be more grateful, tolerant and

patient when dealing with others. The children had a positive experience as they learnt how to make basic snacks, learnt the importance of good hygiene, became more accepting towards one another, gained self-confidence and were encouraged to think about their future.

Second, the team visited the Soweto Comprehensive Cancer Centre based at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. A family member of one of the team members had passed away from cancer and the day was dedicated to that person. The team used their knowledge of the disease to spread a little happiness at the Centre.

Homemade lunch boxes were handed out, followed by an educational talk focused on health education, maintaining a positive mindset and coping strategies in terms of trauma, negative feelings and emotions. Spending the day with people diagnosed with a terminal illness was truly touching and undoubtedly a humbling, satisfying and rewarding experience.

The team was moved by the way things are conducted at the Centre, for instance, when it is a patient's last day of chemotherapy the patient rings an orange bell and the nurses and staff all come together before the chemotherapy session and start singing, dancing and celebrating this proud and emotional moment. The team left the Centre with their

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hearts full and promised to return on 16 November for the annual Cancer Fun Day held to spread love, laughter and joy. Third, the team provided support at a hospital in Pretoria that had indicated a dire need for temporary support staff to help with administrative work. At the hospital, the team tidied up the current administration system, assisted with clients and engaged in conversations with patients. Volunteering to assist

the administration staff at the hospital was refreshing and reinforced the importance of good interpersonal and communication skills. The visit had a positive impact. Management assured the team that the clients had enjoyed having conversations with them and staff members assured them that they would not have been able to rearrange their systems had it not

been for their assistance. None of this would have been possible without the extra push from the team's lecturer, Ms Madelé Klinkerberg.

The Infinite Hope Foundation encourages all South African citizens to be catalysts for good. If you cannot do great things, do little things in a great way. We raise ourselves by uplifting others.

Matters of interest

- Visit the University of Pretoria's online Community Engagement Management System (CEMS) for updates on community project opportunities.
- The Unit for Community Engagement invites you to report on community engagement activities by submitting articles for publication in the next newsletter (Autumn 2023).

Contact person: Dr Eugene Machimana
Acting Manager: Community Engagement,
Department of Education Innovation

Email: eugene.machimana@up.ac.za or
Tel: 012 420 5199 (w)

Contact details for the Unit for Community Engagement

Prof Ana Naidoo, Acting Head:
Community Engagement:

ana.naidoo@up.ac.za; +27 (0) 82 786 9313

Dr Eugene Machimana, Acting Manager:

Community Engagement:

eugene.machimana@up.ac.za;

+27 (0) 12 420 5199; +27 (0) 83 687 0181

Albert Matlheketha, Project Coordinator:

albert.matlheketha@up.ac.za;

+27 (0) 12 420 4068; +27 (0) 82 908 3345

Londiwe Mahlangu, Community Engagement:
Senior Liaison Officer:

londiwe.mahlangu@up.ac.za;

+27 (0) 12 420 2826; +27 (0) 76 523 2619



From left: Londiwe Mahlangu, Prof Ana Naidoo, Dr Eugene Machimana and Albert Matlheketha