



NEWS RELEASE

World Hearing Day event brings hearing healthcare to Atteridgeville community



A resident from Atteridgeville reaping the benefits of hearing healthcare services provided at the World Hearing Day event.

PRETORIA - The collaborative efforts of the University of Pretoria, [hearX Foundation](#), [Clinton Health Access Initiative \(CHAI\)](#), and [hearX Group](#) brought about a highly successful [World Hearing Day](#) event in Atteridgeville, marking a significant milestone in community health involvement.

Drawing over 500 community members, including over 200 young children who received hearing screenings, the event underscored the critical necessity for accessible ear and hearing care. It also showcased the power of collaborative effort in addressing global health challenges.

Prof De Wet Swanepoel from the University of Pretoria, alongside Tersia de Kock from the hearX Foundation, set the stage with insightful addresses that emphasized the importance of healthy hearing and its foundational role in fostering communication, relationships, and overall quality of life. The high participation rate mirrored WHO's concerning estimates that one in five people are currently affected by hearing loss, a figure expected to rise to one in four by 2050. This stark reality underscores the urgency of scaling up ear and hearing care services globally, especially in underserved communities like Atteridgeville.

The University of Pretoria students, supported by volunteers from the hearX Group, were instrumental in the day's success, providing screenings that not only identified those with potential hearing loss but also offered a gateway to further care and support. This initiative not only served as an educational platform for the

students involved but also as a testament to the impactful outcomes that can be achieved through the synergy of academic knowledge and practical application.

Tucker Bbosa from CHAI illuminated the significance of the new partnership project aimed at integrating hearing screenings in early childhood development centres, highlighting the critical role of early detection in mitigating the long-term effects of hearing loss. This initiative, among others presented during the day, illustrates a forward-thinking approach to healthcare, where prevention and early intervention are prioritized.

The event centred on the theme "Changing Mindsets" with the aimed to dismantle the stigma around hearing aids and promote a more inclusive understanding of hearing care. In highlighting the reluctance commonly linked with hearing aids and comparing it to the more readily accepted use of glasses, the speakers advocated for a shift in perception that recognizes hearing aids as essential tools for enhancing life quality.

The involvement of key stakeholders, including representatives from the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Kalafong Hospital Audiology Department, further emphasized the collaborative approach to healthcare advocacy and service provision. Their presence was not just ceremonial but a pledge of ongoing support and commitment to hearing health initiatives.

Reflecting on the event's success, it was evident that the concerted efforts of the University of Pretoria, hearX Foundation, CHAI, and the hearX Group have not only raised awareness about the importance of ear and hearing care but also laid the groundwork for sustainable health interventions in the community. The overwhelming turnout and the proactive engagement of the community members served as a powerful reminder of the latent demand for such essential health services.

Looking to the future, the Atteridgeville event on World Hearing Day has set a benchmark for community-driven health initiatives, proving that with the right partnerships and community involvement, it's possible to overcome the barriers to accessible healthcare. This model of collaboration, education, and action provides a blueprint for addressing not only hearing health but also other pressing global health challenges, demonstrating that change is possible when communities, professionals, and organizations unite towards a common goal.

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

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