



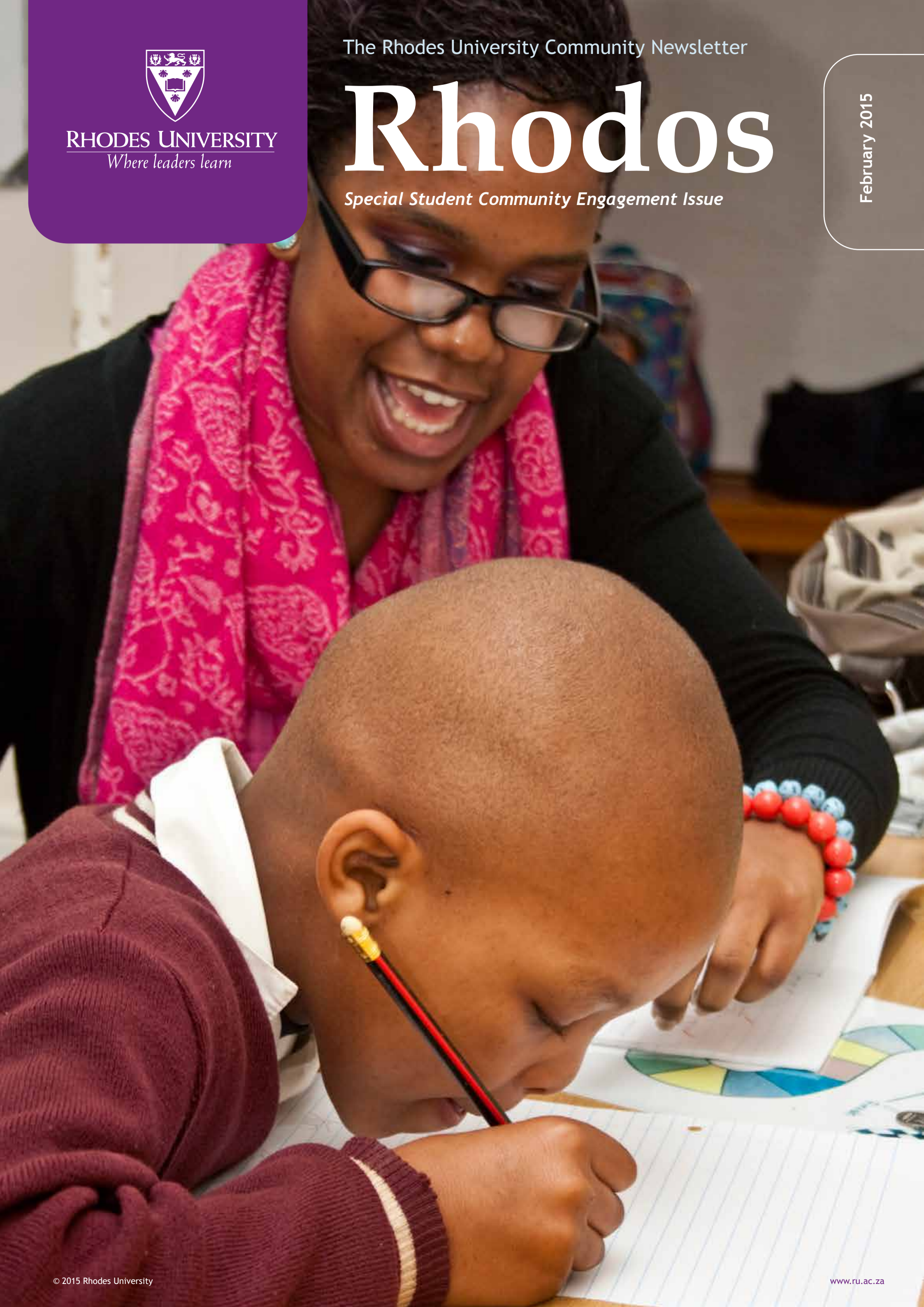
RHODES UNIVERSITY  
*Where leaders learn*

The Rhodes University Community Newsletter

# Rhodos

*Special Student Community Engagement Issue*

February 2015



## Rhodos:

Special Student Community  
Engagement Edition 2015

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Community Engagement  
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express their gratitude to  
everyone who supplied us  
with pictures.

Visit [www.ru.ac.za/  
communityengagement](http://www.ru.ac.za/communityengagement) to  
view detailed profiles of  
the editorial team.

Welcome to Rhodes University, a small university with a big heart! We live in challenging but exciting times. As a country we achieved what no one else thought we could achieve – we had a peaceful transition to democracy. In view of the conflict unfolding in countries across the world today, we are reminded that this was an extraordinary feat. However, this does not mean that the job is done and that South Africans can sit back and relax. As students, you become a part of the Grahamstown community, and your time here you will be offered the opportunity to positively contribute to the development of this town, which in many ways is a microcosm of South Africa. The challenges in Grahamstown offer all residents a unique opportunity to play our part in reshaping and re-imagining a more equitable society. As university students and our country's next generation of leaders, you have an important role to play co-creating the kind of society you want to live in.

## Community Engagement at Rhodes: More than just 'good deeds'

Universities have been called upon to become more responsive to local communities, and Rhodes is serious about embracing this challenge. At Rhodes, community engagement is seen as a critical pillar alongside teaching and research. This means that community engagement initiatives at Rhodes go beyond the traditional 'good deed' approach, to occupy a more critical social justice approach and strategic role of enhancing scholarship, development, social cohesion and transformation.

## What is special about the Rhodes approach?

Community Engagement at Rhodes has gained international recognition by moving away from the deficit model to an asset-based approach with a strong focus on social justice. The emphasis is on building mutually beneficial and reciprocal partnerships with our community, working closely with community partners to co-create programmes and accelerate development and at the same time create opportunities for the personal and academic growth of our students. This publication created by volunteers offers an introduction to community engagement at Rhodes, within it you will find out more about RUC's principles and approach to community engagement, how you can be a part of community engagement programmes and hear stories from volunteers about their volunteering experiences. We look forward to seeing you at our next training and community engagement programmes





## Who's Who at RUCES



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## CE and Scholarship

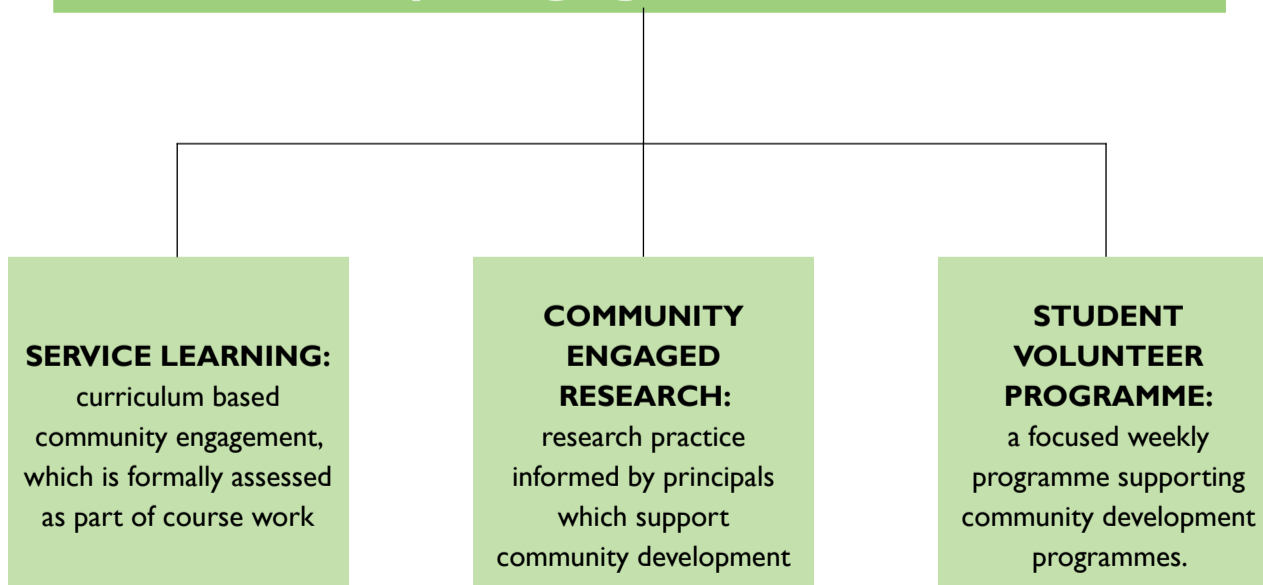
By Di Hornby

Rhodes University is one of the country's leaders when it comes to community engaged scholarship with extensive engagement initiatives being run across all faculties through our academic departments. Departmental engagement initiatives provide a rigorous platform for students to put what they learn in their courses into practice, in partnership with our community. Students are encouraged to get involved in faculty-engaged research, service learning and volunteering initiatives and to contribute to CE Scholarship at Rhodes.

### What is the relationship between CE and what I am studying?

The CE office co-ordinates the Student Volunteer Programme (SVP). The SVP gives students the opportunity to choose between 34 Community Partner sites in Grahamstown. Students are encouraged to choose a site closely related to their discipline in order to enhance their own scholarship through their volunteering, and to bring what they learn on campus out into our community. The CE supports students by offering relevant training before moving into a site as well as assisting them with their choice of site. Ask your lecturers about service learning opportunities available in your department.

## Community Engagement at Rhodes:



## Get involved today! Contact the Rhodes CE office at:

5 Prince Alfred (right next to Prince Alfred Residence, on the same road as the Steve Biko Student Union Building)

Phone: 046 603 7229

Website: [www.ru.ac.za/community-engagement](http://www.ru.ac.za/community-engagement)



Rhodes University  
Community Engagement\_  
Student Volunteer  
Programme



@RUCESVP



# Leaders connecting with their communities

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SRC) IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Mapula Maponya

Community engagement is a key focus of the SRC and the University as it is central to producing well-rounded graduates who are ready to take on and contribute to the world.

The SRC is founded by the students, for the students, to address the needs of the University's student population. The SRC has 15 councillors who are tasked to represent students in various spheres, such as activism and transformation, societies and community engagement. These councillors are the active voice of the student body, and have a key role to play in the workings and transformation of the institution.

Rhodes' motto is "Where leaders learn" and in order to lead you have to learn how to serve.

The SRC supports the vision of well-rounded leaders who will make a positive change to any environment and community in which they find themselves.

Community engagement develops servant leaders who show compassion, love, humility and perseverance. Therefore students are encouraged to join the Student Volunteer programme and get involved in the different community engagement projects at residences and societies.

The SRC community engagement councillor is always ready to help students with community engagement projects and to motivate students to make a change by getting involved in community engagement projects.

The roles of the community engagement councillor include:

- Co-ordinating SRC Community Engagement programmes
- Representing the SRC in Community Engagement Programmes
- Initiating and sustaining Community Engagement Programmes
- Liaising between the SRC, the Centre for Social Development (CSD), Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) and hall community engagement representatives.

(Mapula Maponya: SRC 2014 Community Engagement Councillor).

## Residences engage with Grahamstown Community

By Andile Hlanti

Each residence at Rhodes University voluntarily participates in community engagement. There are various community engagement activities that are planned by the Community Engagement representative of each residence, together with the students. These activities are a great way of bonding with fellow residents and having fun, whilst contributing positively to the larger Grahamstown community.

Besides being able to help others by participating in community engagement activities, you also benefit from the opportunity of becoming a community engagement representative in your residence. It builds you as an individual and helps you understand the world better.

## Student Leaders: The facilitating visionaries

By Lethukuthula Kumalo

The student leaders are individuals who facilitate activities at their volunteer sites. They manage the basic administration such as the attendance register and doing an inventory of resources and materials at the site. They attend regular meetings with the coordinator to monitor progress and discuss issues that need to be addressed.

Theirs is a challenging role as they have to manage the sites from the community engagement perspective in a manner that serves the greater good of the Grahamstown community. This is demonstrated in the approach they take in handling problems that arise- and that risk negatively affecting their sites, which can happen at any of the sites.

It's not an easy task, and the care they show and effort that they put into ensuring the success of the mandate of development at their site, is a tribute to them.

Being Student Leader is about far more than just using that opportunity to develop one's curriculum vitae, give back to those in need or help the stranded. It is about

having the passion to notice the problems in society and to draw on one's ambition to want to make a change that positively affects the community to the greater good of everyone. Equally important is being able to render the service as a learning experience, working within the Rhodes University Community Engagement principles and vision.

A student leader is someone sociable with the ability to take the initiative forward, and the strength to work on the limitations affecting people. A student leader is someone who is able to assist volunteers, to coordinate activities at the site and build good relationships with community partners and fellow volunteers. A student leader is someone who is efficient and reliable, and who maintains good communication with the community engagement office. Rhodes University Community Engagement is exceptional in the manner in which they carry out community interaction and service, and student leaders are an important part of this. They are committed to ensuring that the community of Grahamstown is well cared for and that students use this opportunity as a learning curve about the diversity of life and people.



## Challenge yourself and choose placement

By Prudence Moselokgomo

One of the most terrifying things as a first year student is to take that first step and do something completely different. Even scarier is doing so without any experience or preparation. Fortunately, that is something you won't experience with Community Engagement. The Community Engagement Office provides mandatory training before students embark on one of their greatest life journeys.

The training is covered over two days and is an essential foundation which ensures that both volunteers and their sites benefit from their collaborative effort.

The training is set out in such a way that students are able to learn not only about the sites, but also how they can be effective at these sites. During training sessions students are exposed to various volunteer placements.

One of the placements opportunities for students is Care. Volunteers are required to work closely with organisations to assist the elderly at day care centres or persons with special physical and mental needs.

There are also mentoring programmes where students can offer guidance and support to one or more persons in an organisation. Early Childhood Education volunteers assist pre-school learners as they get ready for primary school. This is done by assisting teachers with vital learning areas for basic childhood education.

There is also Literacy and Homework, where volunteers work in libraries and primary schools to assist learners with primary education activities.

Lastly, there is High School Tutoring, where volunteers work with high school learners.

The Community Engagement Office will ensure that you are not only well prepared for this journey but also able to make an informed decision about the site that is best for you.

# Get involved: Join RUCE today!

By Sidwell Mashile

### Membership

First year students are advised to sign-up for RUCE in the second semester. It allows them to acclimatise to their new surroundings and study commitments. Membership lasts for a semester. As students you are welcome to sign up for more than one semester if you have time.

Posters are displayed all over campus at the beginning of each semester with details of dates and the venue where the sign-up is conducted. Also contact your community engagement representative in residence for any queries you might have on how to get involved.

### How to become a member

**Collect an application** form from Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) or download it from the RUCE website. Fill in the whole form.

**Hand in/email your application** form to RUCE no later than the date specified in the pamphlet. Once you have handed in your completed application form, you will need to choose a volunteer site to sign up for at training.

**Attend training sessions** which are designed to help you make the right decision for you. Please choose your volunteer site with care,

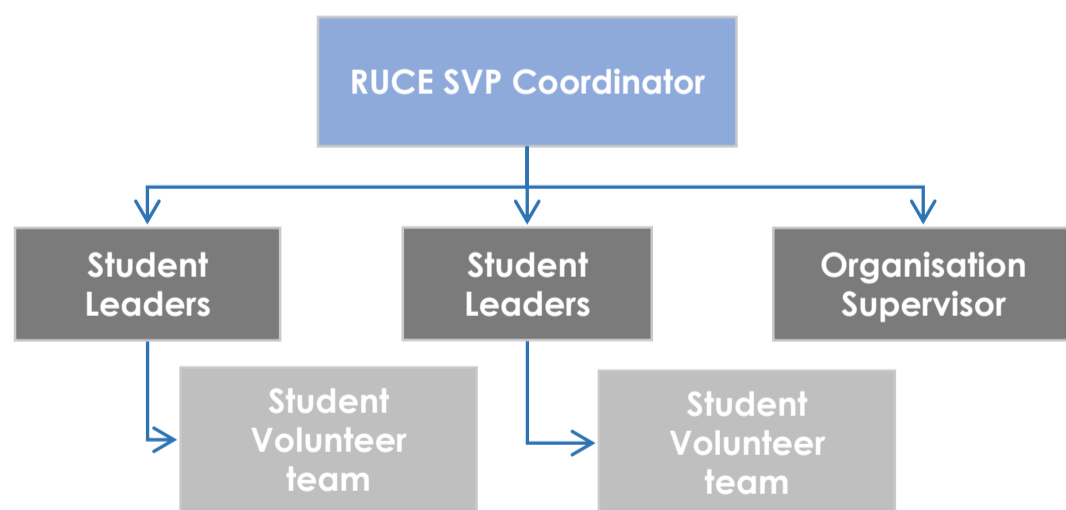
read project descriptions carefully in the RUCE student handbook and see where you think you will fit in best. At training you will be able to ask questions and learn more about the volunteer site where you would like to work. Volunteer site changes can be made in the first week of volunteering.

You are eligible for an Engaged Volunteer certificate if you attend over 80% of your volunteering commitments.

### Support (Where to go for help)

All student volunteers will be divided into small groups (student teams), with each group volunteering at a specific site once a week for a minimum of an hour per week. As each group of students will visit their community partner together, one student will be nominated to coordinate each group, this student will be the Student Leader (SL) of that group. The SL will meet regularly with the RUCE Student Volunteer Programme (SVP) Coordinator, who is an employee of the Community Engagement office.

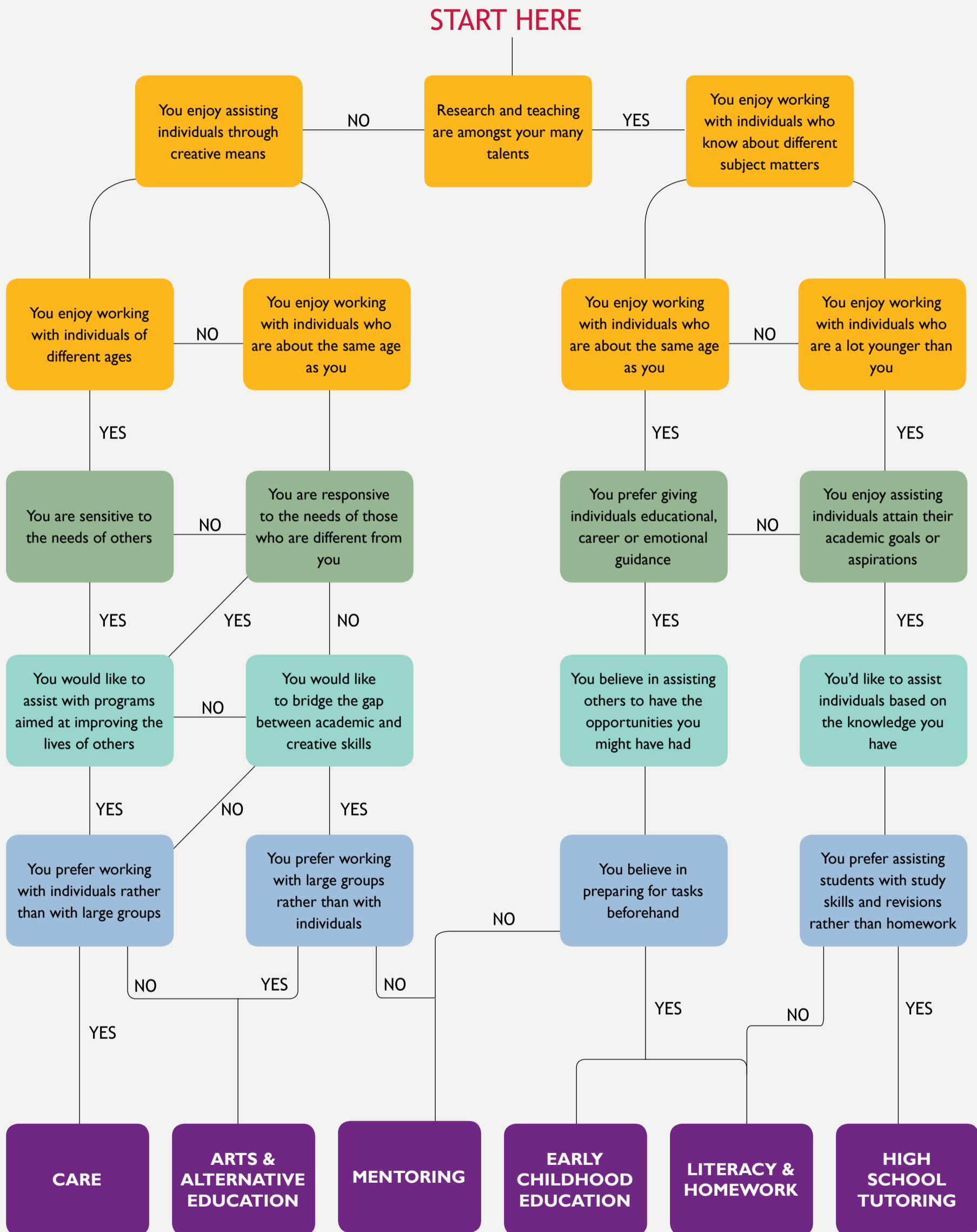
For help students can contact the student leaders at any of their sites. Where a student leader is unable to help with problems, students can go directly to the RUCE office and speak with the SVP coordinator for any community engagement related queries. Below is the structure of the SVP team.



### RUCE Student Volunteer Programme (SVP) structure

The volunteer experience is a team experience, promoting civic consciousness and critical engagement that assist students to gain a better understanding of their social environment. All student volunteers work in small groups (student teams), with each group volunteering at a specific site once a week for a minimum of an hour per week. As each group of students will visit their community partner together, one student will be nominated to coordinate each group, this student will be the Student Leader (SL) of that group. The SL will meet regularly with the RUCE Student Volunteer Program (SVP) Coordinator, who is an employee of the Community Engagement office. Student leaders and student teams are integral to well-planned and focused community engagement interventions.

# Which placement option is best for you?



# Volunteer Placements

By Kendra-Leigh Van Wyk

The Rhodes Community Engagement offers students a variety of options from which to choose with regards to their volunteer placements. Every student is able to find a site that suits his or her timetable and resonates with his or her passion, skills and capabilities through the following categories (listed below). Students are advised to read the Student Community Engagement Handbook to find out more information about each listed site.

**CARE** Organisations working with the elderly, day care centres or persons with special physical and mental needs. Volunteers offer support to participants through engaging in appropriate recreational or educational activities.

- Home of Joy
- Ethembini Centre for the Elderly
- Kuyasa Special needs school
- Jabez AIDS Health Centre
- Gadra Advice and Community Centre

## ARTS AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Extracurricular education related activities, including art, drama and IT literacy projects. These projects require creative engagement with extracurricular activities, bridging academic and creative skills.

- Access Music
- Upstart Youth
- Grahamstown Field Band Foundation
- AwareNet

**MENTORING** Programmes where students offer guidance and support to one or more persons in an organisation. Volunteers in such sites build relationships of trust with mentees, to whom they offer educational, career or emotional support guidance.

- GADRA Education
- St Marys DCC
- Eluxolweni
- Amasango Career School

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Volunteers assist pre-school learners to get ready for primary school by assisting teachers with vital learning areas for basic early childhood education (ECE). Early childhood education is not the same as the work done in day care centres, volunteers in ECE have a more academic focus to their work.

**LITERACY AND HOMEWORK** Volunteers work in libraries and primary schools to assist learners with primary education activities. Volunteers engage creatively to encourage research skills, IT skills and improve learners' literacy levels.

- Curries Street Library
- Fingo Library
- The Grahamstown Public Library

**HIGH SCHOOL TUTORING** Volunteers work with learners beginning from grade 8 to grade 12. Volunteers must be proficient in the current curriculum and keep up with relevant material for each term in order to adequately engage with learners' tutoring needs. Volunteers are not to play the role of replacement teacher but rather offer support to learners by assisting in studying skills and revision.

- Gadra Matric
- Ikamva Youth
- St Andrews Academic Extension



*When signing up for Community Engagement It is very important to choose your volunteer site with care, since you will be working with that particular site for a semester.*

## How to choose your volunteer site

By Trecia Makhubele

Student volunteering is a great way to put your knowledge and skills into action while making a difference in the Grahamstown community. The Community Engagement Office provides volunteers with an opportunity to meet new people and learn new skills.

As exciting as volunteering sounds it is not often easy for students to choose a site since Rhodes University provides a vast number of opportunities.

When signing up for Community Engagement It is very important to choose your volunteer site with care, since you will be working with that particular site for a semester. Below are the tips that can help you to choose a site that is best suited for you and you will enjoy working there.

Read project descriptions carefully. They will provide you with enough

information to spark your interests and to help you decide where you will fit in best.

**2** You will notice that there are a number of sites available, choose one that you're passionate about.

**3** Look for an activity or site that matches your skills, interests, and timetable.

**4** Look for an environment you are comfortable in or one that you want to explore. Once again, this is important since you will be spending quite a bit of time at the sites.

**5** Sign up for a project site during training.

**6** If you think you've made a mistake by choosing a specific site do not worry, it's not a train smash, volunteer site changes can be made during the first week of volunteering.

# WHY SHOULD MORE STUDENTS VOLUNTEER?

Student volunteer vox pop compiled by  
Tsholofelo Tselaemang and  
Kendra-Leigh Van Wyk

THE STUDENTS  
PERSPECTIVE

Because there is nothing more fulfilling than seeing the impact your existence has made.

Prudence Moselakgoma  
(Kuyasa and Little Flower)

It promotes social responsibility.

Megan (St Marus)

To enrich your university experience and also experience the community beyond Rhodes campus

Manthipe Moila (Little Flower)

To be exposed to things that are outside our comfort zone. It is a mutual benefit because you get to learn from each other and also build a positive relationship. It speaks to the idea of being a unified nation.

Isabella Bengu (Home of Jou)

It helps you grow as a person in all aspects of life and you also feel good about helping the community.

Charlotte Mapfumo (Home of Jou)

It is a great opportunity to give back to the community and learn how to work with others.

Sarah Williams (Lebone Centre)

I believe that it is very important to get involved with the community around you and be a helping hand because we all need each other.

Tafadzwa Fari (Home of Jou)

Students should get involved with volunteering because the children you work with appreciate the work that you do.

Janine Vespermann (Shaw Hall)



Students should get involved with volunteering because it challenges them and opens them up to new experiences and perspectives. It develops a naturally beneficial relationship between the student and the people at the volunteering site.

Hannah Collins (Kuyasa School)

To give back to the community and also to gain experience in working with others.

Sinaza Sobekwa (Joza Youth Hub)

So that they can be part of the community's growth and development, by helping the community to make things happen for themselves and not wait upon the government to do things for them.

Happiness (Ikamva)

It contributes towards making you a well-rounded graduate.

Sergi Human (St Marus)

To help those who are in need.

Sibusiso Klaas (Noncedo Preschool)

It is a great way to give back and to get involved with the community. It not only helps others but yourself as well. Because you get to grow and learn as a person.

Yonela Thole (Joza Youth Hub)

To contribute to children's education, to give children the opportunity that you already have and to serve God in the process.

Samkelo Mngadi (Archie Mbobeka School)

# YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU!

## THE COMMUNITY PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

We need volunteers as they bring different teachings and knowledge to the centre. Most of our children do not often get the attention they deserve, be it at home or at the centre. The volunteers assist us in that regard by offering educational and emotional support that is so needed by our children.

The coordinator at St Maru's DCC



# Engaged in my community

by Buhle Marinda Mhlongo

I am a former Courtney Latimer Hall community engagement representative for the hall and last year we won the hall of the year.

I was one of the community engagement reps who focused mainly on tutoring at Mary Waters Senior Secondary School. I was tutoring biology because I am a BSC student, I love it and my motto is 'where there is a will there is always a way'.

I also ran my own programme on Saturdays called the "Lil-sis Big-sis" project that fell under the GENX NGO.

A lot of planning, dedication, time, focus and commitment is what made us stand out because you can just imagine the impact of three community engagements reps, each one with different projects coming together and making it work.

The Lil-sis Big-sis programme was for teenagers – where we dealt with issues that young girls go through, including self-esteem issues, sex, dating, alcohol abuse. We share our own experiences as girls. We had sessions where we played games and held quizzes for fun, to make our meetings not too formal. It's always good to have that fun element to our programmes and mix it with issues that girls encounter.

Why am I so engaged to community? In a nutshell, I get refreshed by stimulating others. I do not only give my time, I also use my talent to mold and transform lives when given the platform. In return, I also get refreshed and grow and mature into a beautiful person from the inside outwards.



## Community Engagement finds you friends forever

For some individuals a new environment may symbolise change and perhaps a new start in life. For others this new-found freedom is a symbol of the start of many challenges, including long periods away from home, which can leave you feeling lonely.

Fortunately, the Community Engagement Office has a solution to this as you will find that Rhodes University Community Engagement can be a great way to form long-lasting friendships.

A fine example of friendships formed at Community Engagement is that of Sinazo Sobekwe. Sinazo is a first year student who, through her volunteer work met students she can relate to on a social level.

She says that it was through community engagement that she developed many of the qualities that make for good friendships, including patience and listening skills.

International exchange student, Kristine Micheletti speaks fondly of her volunteer experience.

She believes that her volunteer work not only exposed her to new possibilities but also assisted in her integration within the University.

She says with a smile on her face that she thoroughly enjoyed spending time at her site with the children.

Not only did these children help her grow as an individual, but that they also helped her learn a few Xhosa words – a language she hopes to teach her friends back home.

There are many more examples of students who through their work as volunteers have developed friendship along the way.

In a true sign of solidarity new friends are now able to call on each other in times of need.

The Community Engagement Office is living proof that you do not need to go to great lengths to find a sense of belonging. It is proof that you just need to make a start where you are and work with what you have.

## Student volunteering a balancing act

By Thandeka Mcoke

**Be wise** – choose a less academically busy day to volunteer.

**Be aware** – always know the amount of academic work you have.

**Be smart** – plan ahead and do your work in advance. Don't wait until it's close to submission dates.

**Balance** – live a balanced life.

**Manage** – manage your time well and note down on your calendar all your important dates such as assignments submission dates and test dates.

**Prioritise** – know what is more important in your student life and prioritise your academic responsibilities.

**Remember** – never panic, stay calm.



## Community engagement journey from volunteering to passion

By Angel Ancha Lindelwa Bulunga

**M**y passion of working with young people was formally ignited and guided in 2011. As part of my studies in Botswana, where I enrolled for the International Baccalaureate Diploma we were expected to do 100 hours of community engagement related work in two years.

When I went to Waterford Kamhlaba United World College of Southern Africa in Swaziland, where I am from, I started off by doing community service as required. But things changed when I realised that I have a social responsibility to contribute to the communities in which I live. I realised that my purpose in life is to live everyday playing my part in creating the world that I envision, one where people care for each other and human agency is harnessed.

I then started doing community service differently, always keen to go the extra mile and arrange my own sessions with young people outside of my school volunteering hours. In 2011, I started an initiative called People Empowering People to motivate and mentor young people in Swaziland. I am always humbled by their receptiveness and the teachers' enthusiasm.

When I arrived at Rhodes University in 2013, I seized every opportunity to be involved in community engagement. Through the Inkwenkwezi

*"Things changed when I realised that I have a social responsibility to contribute to the communities in which I live."*

reading programme for grade 2 learners, I learned how to be patient.

At Home of Joy, where I am a student leader, I was taught to love unconditionally. I learned to be accountable for my actions as the children that I mentor always challenge me and see me as their big sister.

My love for young people is kept alive by inspiring individuals and I am privileged to engage with them. Through existential conversation at Ntsika Secondary school, I have been reminded that perseverance in the face of challenges allows an individual to develop a different perspective and to be stronger.

I am grateful for every opportunity that I get to participate in community engagement work and I cannot imagine my life without it.

*Angel Ancha Lindelwa Bulungwa is the recipient of the 2014 Community Engagement Award.*

TALKING WITH RUCE ALUMNUS  
SANDISWE DIAL

## Giving of your time, not your money

By Trecia Makhubele

**When were you a member of RUCE and what was your involvement?**

I was a member from 2011-2013. During this time, I was a student leader at St Andrews High School, tutoring accounting from 2011 to 2012. In 2013 I was a volunteer at Ikamva.

**What was your experience of volunteering?**

My experience was amazing. I got the chance to be part of something good, developmental and uplifting while changing the lives of others for the better and most importantly showing people that money is not all you can give to help people who are facing challenges. Being a volunteer taught me how to be a leader, how to engage with others, how to be a role model and a beacon of hope to those who think that university is only for certain people.

It also introduced me to people who have played an important role in grooming me to be the person that I am today. I also had the privilege of being awarded a gold award for the most engaged student, which I had never imagined receiving at Rhodes.

My experience with RUCE will always be an engine that drives me to do the best I can wherever I am.

**What did you gain from being involved in RUCE?**

I learned to be responsible, to know how to be part of a team, how to work with people you lead, how to conduct yourself as a leader, do what you can and do it wholeheartedly, and be yourself when helping others.

**How has your experience in the programme impacted on your life at university?**

It has impacted on my life ever since I started volunteering, I constantly use what I have learnt through RUCE in other leadership positions and I know that it will have a great impact on me in my future.

*"I felt like I was doing something meaningful, I was making a difference in people's lives, and that made it all worth it."*

## Connecting people, and making a difference

TALKING WITH RUCE ALUMNUS **LAUREN CLIFFORD-HOLMES**

By Inge Schrijver

Community Engagement (CE) writer, Inge Schrijver interviewed former Rhodes University Community Engagement volunteer and current multimedia journalist at the Mail & Guardian, Lauren Clifford-Holmes about her CE experience

### When were you a member of RUCE?

I was involved throughout my Rhodes degree - 2004 to 2007, with increasingly bigger roles and deeper involvement as the years went on. I was nominated as Student Volunteer of the Year award in 2006/ 2007. Back then the department was known as the Centre for Social Development (CSD).

### What was your involvement?

I started out as a student volunteer, volunteering weekly at the Siyazama pre-school and multipurpose community centre. I became involved in the Eluxolweni children shelter and became the volunteer programme co-ordinator overseeing student volunteering at both the shelters - for boys and girls.

I was part of a small committee we formed which fundraised R200 000 through events and by garnering individual and corporate sponsorships to build a safehouse for abused children for Child Welfare in Grahamstown - we did this through the CSD and with their support.

In 2007 I founded and ran Ibali Lefoto, a training and community development project in the Eastern Cape which provided cameras and photographic training to school children and community workers. Each course ended in an exhibition. The community workers were people linked to the CSD – Community Development Practitioners as they were known. These were women who worked in the communities

in which they lived - much like social workers, trained by the CSD. Their exhibition was particularly powerful as they were able to tell the story of the communities from an intimate perspective.

In addition to my involvement with the CSD I was a committee member for Amnesty International's Rhodes University chapter in 2005 & 2006. I was also a member of the Student HIV/Aids Resistance Campaign and an HIV/Aids peer-educator for first year university students for two years. The organisation was responsible for re-drafting the university's official HIV/Aids policy during my time there.

I also co-founded the African Drum Society where we focused strongly on putting on music events to fundraise for worthy causes. Our main project was putting two children from Joza through school for two years – this included school fees, buying uniforms and stationary.

### What was your experience like?

The experience of being involved in all of the above projects was hugely rewarding - I learnt so much about others and about myself. At times I was so busy I felt overwhelmed - making it to lectures, volunteering, running my own projects, being in committees, working as the photo editor of Activate and freelancing as a photographer!

I thought at times about cutting down on some of my commitments but I always felt like the CSD involvement and volunteering was such an important part of my experience as a university student that I pushed through. Above all, I felt like I was doing something meaningful, I was making a difference in people's lives, and that made it all worth it.



### What did you gain or learn from taking part in RUCE?

The experiences I had through the CSD and all my community projects have absolutely influenced my life after university. As a multimedia journalist at the Mail & Guardian, my interest in human rights, economic and social issues was fostered during my time at Rhodes and has continued to inspire me today in the work I do and the stories I choose to cover.

My interactions with people living in extremely impoverished conditions taught me to approach situations with empathy and sensitivity and understanding - all of which are key in my line of work.

The volunteering and the numerous projects listed above helped shape the person I am today and I'm incredibly grateful that I made this part of my life for four invaluable years.



# Engage in life beyond campus

*"I'm concerned about the state of education and being a teacher I may only be making a small difference in the bigger scheme of things and in the lives of the few students I teach..."*

## TALKING WITH RUCE ALUMNUS **ATHAMBILE MASOLA**

By Inge Schrijver

A former Mandela Rhodes Scholar and High School teacher in Cape Town had this to say about her experience...

### When were you a member of RUCE?

I became a member in my first year at Rhodes in 2006.

### What was your involvement?

I was first involved as an ad hoc volunteer because students were not allowed to be full-time volunteers in their first year so I did one day events. After that I was placed at the Trotter Street shelter for girls, then Raglan Road and finally Nombulelo High School reading club.

### What was your experience like?

Challenging. It exposed me to a side of Grahamstown I didn't know existed as a student. It was also challenging because I came face to face with what it means to be a privileged Rhodes student in Grahamstown and how the rest of

the community viewed students. It wasn't until I became a volunteer that I realised the two worlds that exist in such a small town.

### What did you gain or learn from taking part in RUCE?

So much. I learned about myself and the whole concept of community. There isn't one community, not even in a place like Grahamstown. There isn't one way of changing a community either. I was always left with questions and an uneasiness after my interactions with people where I volunteered.

Mostly, I couldn't understand why, after so many years of programmes and funders and do-gooders, why Grahamstown, eRhini, Grahamstown East, and the general township environment was in the position that it was in.

I grappled with those questions and continue volunteering even when I didn't have the answers. I also became quite evangelical about getting students involved beyond their experience of being a student on campus. I didn't always succeed but by talking to people about the importance of volunteering gave me a chance to work through



some of the strengths and weaknesses of the student volunteer programme for myself.

### Did your experience in the programme impact on your life after university?

Yes. Even while I was still studying, I became interested in literacy and did a Masters looking into literacy practices at two primary schools in the township. I am now a teacher and I constantly question my literacy practices as well as the literacy practices of the students I teach who come from various class backgrounds.

I'm concerned about the state of education and being a teacher I may only be making a small difference in the bigger scheme of things and in the lives of the few students I teach, but I'm okay with that because education is also about doing the unglamorous work behind the scenes. And volunteering is unglamorous work.





TALKING WITH RUCE ALUMNUS **JAI CLIFFORD-HOLMES**

# Volunteering inspires studies

By Inge Schrijver

PhD student in Water Resource Science, Jai Clifford-Holmes interviewed by Inge Schrijver

**When were you a member of RUCE and what was your involvement?**

My first experience with community engagement at Rhodes was through the Student Volunteer Programme (SVP) in 2007. I was inspired by my older sister, Lauren, and everything she had gained through community engagement. I began volunteering on a weekly basis at a pre-school.

In my Honours year in 2009, I became deeply involved with developing and growing the student water and sustainability project – Galela Amanzi – at the centre of which was the installation of rainwater harvesting tanks at strategic points in iRhini.

**What was your experience like?**

I was disappointed by my initial experiences of pre-school volunteering. I felt incapable of actually contributing other than by being present, and I was disturbed by the lack of two-way participation. This changed when I became involved in Galela Amanzi project, and later headed it. I learned about the difference between volunteering and community development.

**What did you gain or learn from taking part in RUCE?**

I think it is no coincidence that many of the top students academically (including those who win some of the most prestigious scholarships both locally and internationally) are also the most avid volunteers, or are the most intensely involved in community engagement initiatives.

Community engagement challenges students to shift the critical thinking faculties that they develop in their academic lives into a realm of human interaction that simultaneously offers intellectual and emotional growth, and carries the potential of being one of the richest experiences that a student can have at university.

**Did your experience in the programme impact on your life after university?**

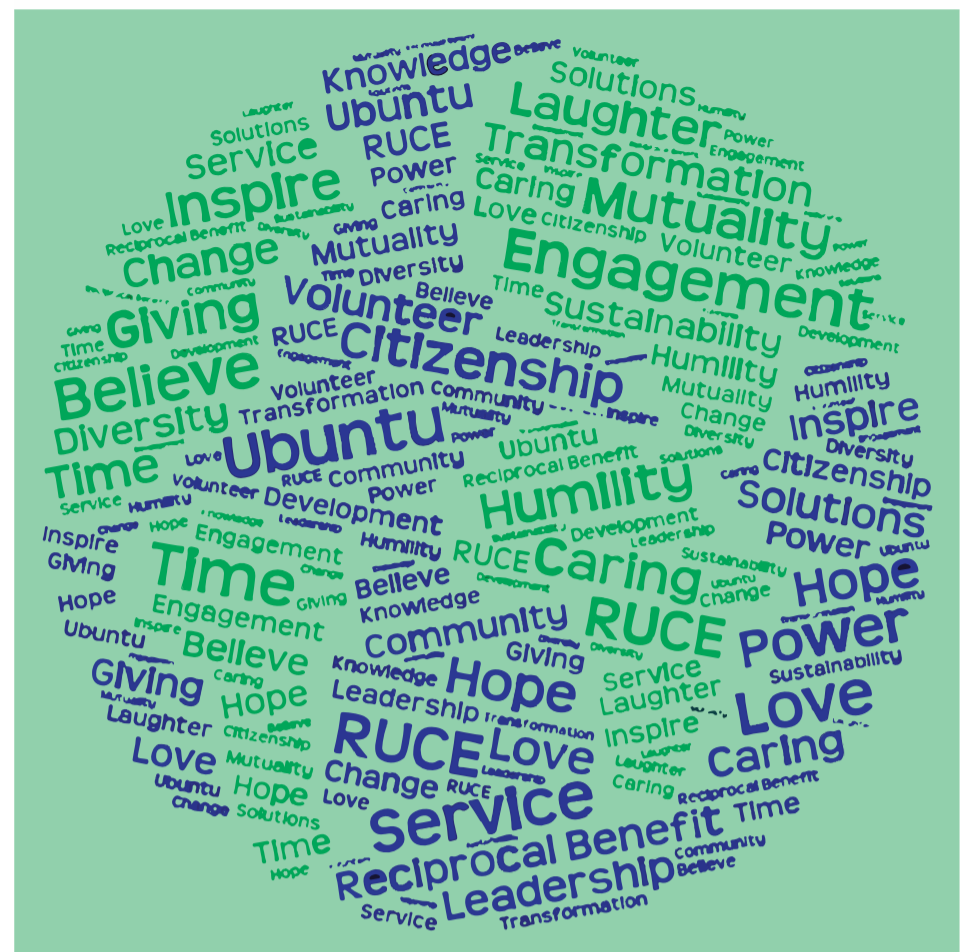
My experiences with RUCE have informed every aspect of the way in which I work, think, and interact. From a career perspective, through Galela Amanzi, I shifted from majoring in philosophy and history (for my undergrad) to becoming interested in the field of ‘integrated development’, to doing my PhD in Water Resource Science (which I’m currently completing).

Along the way, I’ve taken what I learned in RUCE into the action research and developmental projects that I work and study within. I feel incredibly privileged to have worked with, and learned from, such a diverse group of people in my community engagement activities at Rhodes, and remain grateful to RUCE for everything that it facilitated.

*“I’ve taken what I learned in RUCE into the action research and developmental projects that I work and study within.”*



# Get Involved!



## AN IMPORTANT FAQ

# What do I need to give?

Community Engagement can be tricky at times in terms of not knowing what to do or what is required of you at the site that you've chosen.

You may be wondering if you have the right skills, if you need to buy gifts, if the resources that you may need are within your reach and many more other things to make your time at the various sites a success. Well, don't despair because RUCE is about giving your time more than it

is about giving material things such as expensive gifts.

Volunteers are not required to use anything from their own pockets but can use materials that are available at the RUCE offices in a creative manner. You'll learn all about this during the two training sessions at the beginning of your volunteer experience. The different sites also have their own equipment and if you feel these are not enough then you can

suggest ways of acquiring the equipment, such as a fund-raising drive, but this needs to be done with the permission of the relevant site.

Community Engagement does not require any skills besides patience, love, humility and a friendly smile. This means that anybody can be part of RUCE and help serve and lead our community of Grahamstown to prosperity through social development.

# Frequently Asked RUCE Questions

By Felicia Ramafalo

**Q: How do I get to my site?**

A: RUCE provides transportation to and from the various sites. The Bus runs from 08:00 till 17:00 from Monday to Saturday.

**Q: How often do I need to go to my volunteer site?**

A: You are only required to go to your site once a week, but you can go more than once if you have time.

**Q: How long do I stay at my site?**

A: You are only required to be at your site for an hour, but you are welcome to be there for more than an hour if you have more time to give.

**Q: What activities do I do at my site?**

A: You can do any activity that you want as long as it complies with the rules and regulations of that particular site. Some sites do have specific things that they would want you to do.

**Q: How long am I supposed to be a member of Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE)?**

A: RUCE takes place over a period of a semester. You can sign up for one or two semesters a year.

**Q: When can I join RUCE as a first year student?**

A: First years are encouraged to join RUCE in the second semester so they can get used to their academic timetable. Experienced volunteers or first

years who are committed to balancing their work and social commitments are welcome to sign up in first semester.

**Q: Can I change my site?**

A: Yes, but you will need to discuss this with your student leader or the SVP coordinator first.

**Q: When can I change my site?**

A: At training you will be advised to select your volunteer site carefully. Community partner organisations put a great deal of effort in ensuring a welcoming learning environment for all volunteers, and so you need to respect their time and energy they invest in you as a volunteer. The relationship building process takes time, so site changes are allowed only under circumstances where you have a serious clash in academic and volunteering commitments. Before you change your volunteer site, you need to talk to your student leader and the SVP coordinator.

**Q: What time do I go to my site?**

A: The time that you can visit your site depends on your timetable and the operating times of the site that you have chosen.

**Q: What if I cannot make it to my placement?**

A: Well, generally you are not allowed to miss any of your placements but if you have to, then you must provide a Leave Of Absence (LOA) to the RUCE offices.



**Q: Where do I get LOA?**

A: You can pick up a Leave of Absence form from the RUCE offices or from the RUCE website: [www.ru.ac.za/communityengagement/student](http://www.ru.ac.za/communityengagement/student)

**Q: What is expected of me?**

A: Commitment, creativity, courtesy, communication and critical thinking. Students offered a wide range of opportunities to contribute to their sites, from volunteering in leadership roles to contributing innovating ideas and new approaches.

**Q: What if I miss my bus?**

A: The transport schedule is clear and the bus will not wait for you on campus if you are late. If you miss the bus, you will need to come up with a plan, missing the bus is not acceptable, so do prioritize your volunteering commitment and ensure you catch the bus on time. The bus will pick you up from your site, so ensure you manage your activities and if you need more than an hour at the site, let the driver know beforehand.

**Questions?** Email us on: [svp@ru.ac.za](mailto:svp@ru.ac.za)

