

# RHODES UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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## R U C E NEWSLETTER

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### INSIDE THIS EDITION:

- Addresses by Dr Badat, Dr Mabizela, Dr Clayton, Dr Maistry, Prof Boughey
- Service Learning: Rewarding experiences of Community Engagement

The Community Engagement directorate is a recent initiative and currently being established at Rhodes University. In the past, Rhodes University CE activities were managed by the Centre for Social Development. Following national policy on higher education community engagement, CE is located as a core function of Rhodes University and integral to teaching, learning and research.

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## VISION

Community Engagement at Rhodes University is recognized and respected nationally and internationally as a leader in community engagement; and for its commitment to social and individual transformation, sustainable community development, student civic responsibility and scholarship of engagement.

## MISSION

In pursuit of its vision and that of Rhodes University, the Community Engagement directorate will endeavour to promote a reciprocal process of knowledge construction and dissemination, develop and channel the civic and social responsibility of all students, student organisations and staff of Rhodes University through various community engagement activities, thereby contributing to individual transformation and sustainable human and community development in Grahamstown and the Eastern Cape as a whole.

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## Address by Dr Badat (Vice-Chancellor)



From modest beginnings, the continuing development of our Community Engagement (CE) programme, including service learning, community social development and the student volunteer programme, is a source of great pride for Rhodes University.

Rhodes' mission proclaims that we shall strive 'through community service to contribute to the development of the Eastern Cape', and that we shall 'foster the all-round development of our students'. Our CE policy commits us to draw on our knowledge and expertise to work 'actively to improve the quality of life of individuals in Grahamstown and Eastern Cape communities'. It also charges us to foster 'an ethos of voluntary community service' among our staff and students, 'leading to well-rounded graduate citizens who will be active agents for positive social change'.

CE provides the opportunity to exemplify our values through deeds and action and to translate our commitments into practice. It seeks to harness the social commitment, knowledge, expertise and skills of our staff and students and to put them to work in a way that forges mutually respectful, beneficial and reciprocal relationships with defined constituencies, institutions, organisations, groups and individuals.

We seek interactions that meaningfully support specific institutions, social groups and individuals, and also contribute, through volunteering, discovery and understanding, to our own development as individuals and citizens, and as a University. As one of our student volunteers, Cassidy Parker, has commented, 'volunteering has taught me about myself and my relationship to people and the world around me in ways that no text book on philosophy or economics ever could'.

As necessary and invaluable as academic disciplines and formal study are, there is a limit to how much you can learn, develop, and discover yourself through books, lectures and essays alone. For acquiring more knowledge, greater understanding of the world, and enhancing one's skills and competencies there is no substitute for involvement in community organisations and development projects.

At the same time, CE is a necessary and welcome engage-

ment on the part of students, staff and the University with the economic and social problems and development challenges of iRhini/Grahamstown our town and a demonstration of our commitment to address these.

It also helps us as a University to give expression to the idea of universities promoting critical and democratic citizenship, contributing to widening educational and social opportunities and local economic and social development, and to advancing the public good.

We are fortunate to have at Rhodes, apart from the CE Office, the Centre for Social Development. The CSD has long been a vital force for educational, community and social development, and equity and justice in iRhini/Grahamstown and the wider Eastern Cape. Its expertise and experience contributes invaluable to our CE efforts.

In recent years our CE programme has made great strides. For one, we have begun more rigorously conceptualise CE at Rhodes and its implications for our practices. For another, we now have in place an Office and a Director of Community Engagement to spearhead our community initiatives.

Alongside the Vice-Chancellor's awards for book publishing, for research and for teaching, we now also have a Vice-Chancellor's award for CE. The contribution to CE is publicly acknowledged at one of our graduation ceremonies.

The Rhodes motto is Truth, Virtue, Strength, and our slogan proclaims that we aspire to be a place Where Leaders Learn. Our CE programme participants give expression to the idea of engaged and selfless leadership and service to community. They pursue the Truth that derives from knowledge, understanding and reason; practice the Virtue of social commitment, compassion and giving, and possess the Strength of courage and boldness to strive to remake our society so that all may possess the social, economic and human rights and opportunities that are fundamental to living full, decent, productive, rich and rewarding lives.

The CE programme is a great ambassador for what Rhodes, alongside its outstanding academic reputation, also wishes to be renowned. Its continuing development is an integral part of the goal of being a small great University.

Address by Dr Mabizela (DVC Student Affairs)



## Community engagement: a nexus of knowledge generation, knowledge application and learning

“Serving society is only one of higher education’s functions, but it is surely among the most important. At a time when the nation has its full share of difficulties...the question is not whether universities need to concern themselves with society’s problems but whether they are discharging this responsibility as well as they should.” – Derek Bok, President Emeritus, Harvard University.

In its most rudimentary form, Community Engagement, more precisely, community outreach/service, has been part of Rhodes University and other public higher education institutions in South Africa for a very long time. This kind of interaction with local communities is usually characterised by a donor-recipient, paternalist, altruistic, charitable and one-way relationship, where the University is seen as a benevolent donor of goods and services and the community a passive recipient of the same without much to give in return. This approach to Community Engagement creates a culture of psychological and material dependence and deprives local communities of opportunities to take full ownership of and responsibility for their own socio-economic development and advancement.

The 1997 White Paper on Higher Education elevated Community Engagement to one of the three core functions, alongside with Teaching & Learning and Research, of any higher education institution in South Africa. One critical role of a public higher education institution like Rhodes University is to serve the educational, economic, social and cultural needs and well-being of its society. It does so by,

inter alia, bringing knowledge, innovation, expertise and experience to bear in helping citizens become agents of their own emancipation and advancement. The term “engagement” is used advisedly in this context. It underscores the importance of the nature of a relationship that must undergird the interaction between a higher education institution and its local community. Community Engagement is a partnership of equals – one that seeks to foster mutually beneficial and reciprocal interaction between the University and the local community. Community Engagement contributes to the elimination of artificial boundaries between the academe and the local community.

Many higher education institutions are still grappling with the challenge of defining Community Engagement in their contexts. Even the notion of “community” varies from one institution to the next. The Directorate of Community Engagement has recently begun working on a concept document on Community Engagement at Rhodes University.

Our starting point is that one of the primary roles of a higher education institution in a society is that of knowledge generation and knowledge dissemination. Knowledge is therefore the main asset that we, as a public higher education institution, bring to bear into any kind of part-

Address by Dr Mabizela (DVC Student Affairs)

nership in which we engage. Through Community Engagement, this knowledge is put at the service of local community. In the process, the community benefits and the quality of University’s research and teaching and learning is enhanced and enriched. This symbiotic relationship is, in my view, at the heart of effective and strategic Community Engagement. Also, in this sense, Community Engagement becomes a nexus between research, knowledge application and learning.

Rhodes University’s approach to Community Engagement is shaped by and conditioned on the University’s mission and vision statement and the values of democratic citizenship enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Among other things, the University’s vision statement commits it to “democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility”. The University sees it as its mission to “produce graduates that are critical, capable, and balanced and are aware of their social responsibilities”. Community Engagement provides us with an ideal vehicle and opportunity to give expression, meaning and substance to the University’s mission and vision statement and to cultivate the constitutional values and advance the national quest to construct a just and equitable society. Through Community Engagement, we endeavour to expose our students and staff to the social realities of our local community. It is hoped that, in the process, our staff and students will be able to interrogate, deconstruct and reconstruct “text-book” theoretical knowledge and assumptions on which it rests in light of the objective realities and lived experiences in our local community. In line with our mission statement, Community Engagement has a vital role to play in ensuring that we educate a student as a whole person; that we graduate students with a heightened sense of social consciousness and are able to serve as agents of and for social

change and societal transformation; that our graduates are imbued with the attitude, spirit and values of ubuntu and human solidarity.

Deliberate, meaningful and structured integration of Community in the research and teaching and learning activities of the University remains one of the main challenges. This is partly due to a lack of shared understanding of the role, place and value of Community Engagement in research and teaching and learning. There are Departments that have made significant strides towards integrating Community Engagement in their activities. Every effort should be made to support these Departments and encourage others to do the same. Many of our students are volunteering and have taken the challenge of using our local community as a site for a kind of education that is different to what takes place in a formal classroom. They have had opportunities to explore the interplay between theory and practice and have, in the process, enhanced their holistic education and development. Some have even discovered something special in themselves that they never knew existed. Many have experienced positive transformation and have gained a different perspective and insights to some aspects of life. We need to encourage many more to get involved in Community Engagement activities.

Community Engagement, as a field of academic scholarship, is relatively pristine. There is therefore an exciting challenge of theorising and advancing the scholarship of Community Engagement.

Significant progress has also been made in recognising and rewarding Community Engagement. The Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Community Engagement Award and the inclusion of Community Engagement in the academic promotions criteria are two such efforts.

## Address by Dr Clayton (DVC Research and Development)



Community engagement is an activity that cuts across the core purposes of Rhodes University, and intersects on several levels with research. There are both scholarly and social reasons for engaging with external research partners that include communities and civil society, and this approach has long been present as a legitimate component of scholarly inquiry in several disciplines.

A key principle is that the engagement between researchers and community members needs to be mutually respectful and reciprocal. Integrating research and community engagement provides data collection and field trial opportunities to researchers, and assists Rhodes in endeavoring to produce socially responsible graduates. There needs also to be visible benefits for community partners for this approach to be sustainable; co-creation of knowledge, capacity improvement, bi-directional transfer of information, visible contributions to policy, or improvements in service delivery at field sites, might be examples of positive spin-offs for community participants.

Opportunities exist for research into the field of community engagement, and for community engagement which is embedded within research programmes. The former is a relatively under-addressed line of inquiry, but has been taken up to some extent by the National Research Foundation (NRF) through a call for grant proposals in the arena of Community Engagement research in 2009. A second call is expected from the NRF later this year.

Instances at Rhodes of research into community engagement include an investigation into the area of Social Entrepreneurship by Mr Peter Midgley, an MComm student in the department of Management, and a thesis in the area of Service Learning by Ms Mandy Hlengwa, a PhD candidate in CHERTL. I am aware of relatively few cases.

There are abundant examples of where various aspects of community engagement are embedded within research projects. One such example is a multi-disciplinary project which encompasses Computer Science, Information Systems and Anthropology researchers from both Rhodes and Fort Hare Universities, called the Siyakhula living lab. This project focuses primarily on ICT for development, and comprises a field trial of experimental systems and

approaches within the communities living around Dwesa and Nkwadini, a marginalized area of the Eastern Cape. At a recent conference in Gauteng, a researcher and a community member working together on this project jointly presented a report, highlighting the possibilities of research with community partners being reciprocal and collaborative – in this case through reporting on co-created knowledge.

The Carnegie Rise Project within the Institute for Water Research has collaborators in several Southern African countries. It is a capacity building programme at the postgraduate level, with localized community engagement projects as a study context.

The Department of Education engages broadly with the community throughout their postgraduate and research initiatives. Notable examples are the Environmental Education and Sustainability Unit, which has a strong grass roots engagement approach, and the FRF Chair of Mathematics Education, which is specifically mandated to undertake research in conjunction with school classroom interventions.

The faculty of Pharmacy is a service learning champion, and students from 3rd year upwards are involved in community projects. Law lends itself to socially engaged research, notably through the Legal Aid Clinic; Psychology through the Psychology Clinic & Child Community Project; Journalism and Media Studies through the Mobile Media and the Citizen Journalism projects, amongst several community engagement activities in that area of the university; similar examples can be found in the departments of the Environmental Science and Geography.

The areas of Management, Economics, RIBS and the Center for Entrepreneurship are involved in community based projects around topics such as entrepreneurship and local economic development. Engagement with NGOs is also a possibility, such as one with the Umthathi Training Project, which encompasses input from Pharmacy, the ISER, Environmental Education, and Entomology. Social Science research lends itself to engagement outside of the university, where there are examples such as Social Policy and Integrated Development, amongst others.

The list is longer. I feel sure that those I have not yet mentioned will e-mail me to set the record straight for the next Community Engagement newsletter.

## Address by Prof Boughey (Director: CHERTL and Dean of Teaching and Learning)



# Community Engagement & Teaching & Learning

One of the most common ways for university teachers to view the relationship between community engagement and teaching and learning is to think of communities as spaces where learning can be applied.

All the research on this idea shows that the concept of 'application' is much more complex than many would think, however. Layton (1993) one of the most cited authors in this area shows, for example, that application of knowledge gained in the university to areas outside it is not a matter of simple application but rather that the knowledge the student brings to the practical context needs to be reinterpreted if it is to be used. This process of reinterpretation requires students to reflect on the knowledge itself and on the practical context in which it is to be applied so that a new kind of knowledge is produced – knowledge which has been reworked to make it ready for practice.

In a country such as South Africa, this process of reworking academic knowledge to make it ready for practice forces students and their teachers to engage with other 'ways of being' in the world and, in order to do this, they need to engage with the academic knowledge more rigorously than they might otherwise have done. The process then promotes the criticality so prized in higher education – the ability to be critical of theories, to identify their shortcomings and so on. 'Reworking' academic knowledge to make it ready for practice also allows other ways of knowing and being to be brought into the university – a process which involves challenging the idea that the academy is an 'ivory tower'.

In another university, I once worked with a lecturer teaching a course on nutrition to first year student physiotherapists who were about to begin visiting a day centre for elderly people in a black working class community. Before their first visit, the class had learned about nutrition for the elderly in a fairly standard lecture which outlined the various food groups and provided examples of each. On one of their visits to the day centre, the students were then asked to observe what had been provided for lunch, to classify it into the various groups, to try to see whether people eating the meal were enjoying it and to make a judgment about the nutrition provided. In the day centre, cheap forms of protein

were included in the meal and many of the students in the class failed to identify these mostly because their experience of eating protein had been limited to the examples the lecturer had provided and to the pictures on wall chart illustrating food groups. In the follow up session back at the university, not only was students' understanding of the protein food group expanded but also their entire understanding of what it means to eat well was challenged and linked to affordability. This then led to students being critical of theory saying what we should eat and which didn't take into account the contexts in which many people lived.

This is a very simple example of 'reworked' knowledge – and of learning becoming much more complex because students had been pushed into engaging with academic knowledge – knowledge which is typically codified and classified – in context. Importantly the learning also became more complex because students were pushed to link one kind of knowledge (i.e. of food groups) with other kinds of knowledge (i.e. knowledge about social class and the way this interacts with affordability).

At Rhodes, service learning – learning which involves students offering a service based on knowledge they have acquired in the university to the community and, at the same time, incorporating knowledge from the community into that learning – is increasingly being used as a form of community engagement. Some of this work has been written up and published (see, for example, Karakezi et al. (2007) and is well worth reading by anyone contemplating linking teaching to community engagement. CHERTL staff are, of course, always willing to offer advice and support in addition to this.

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Address by Dr Maistry (Director: Community Engagement)



The Council for Higher Education views community engagement as initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. While the production and dissemination of knowledge through teaching and research is still predominantly viewed as the main function of HEIs, we cannot ignore the post 1994 introduction of CE as a responsibility of higher education institutions, thereby positioning HEIs as a player in the transformation and development agenda of the country.

Community engagement can take many different forms such as service learning, community outreach and student volunteerism. Rhodes University community engagement takes place on many different levels, from involvement at government policy level to practical, effective intervention at a community level. Even though Rhodes University has a long history of community engagement, the establishment of the CE office to coordinate, manage and further develop community engagement as a core function at Rhodes University effectively began at the end of 2009.

Prior to this, community engagement and especially the student volunteer and student organisation programmes were contractually managed by the Centre for Social Development (CSD). The CSD had a significant role to play in the origins of the current SVP which was started by the then director of CSD in 2002 when a few students were placed as volunteers at CSD's Early Childhood Development Centres.

A programme that started with a handful of students as volunteers has grown to hundreds of students being placed annually with a variety of community based organisations. This is a laudable achievement for RU as it nurtures the spirit of volunteerism in contemporary South Africa. Some of the community partner organisations are the Raphael Centre, St Mary's Aftercare Centre, FAMSA, CSD Pre-schools and Multi-purpose Centre, Love Reading Clubs, Upstart and GHT Community Libraries.

Through the student organisations community engagement (SOCE) programme, we see students

participating in community engagement activities through their halls and residences, service societies or sports clubs and through academic departments such as Chemistry, Pharmacy, Drama, Economics and Computer Science.

What is referred to as outreach programmes include outstanding community engagement programmes such as the Legal Aid Clinics in Grahamstown and Queenstown as well as the work being done by that the Rhodes Mobile Biology Laboratory and the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project.

Service learning and the scholarship of engagement are two areas that need support for growth in the community engagement arena of Rhodes University. The former requires the development of a close partnership relationship between CHERTL and CE to promote service learning and the latter entails raising awareness on community engagement scholarship in the various academic departments of Rhodes University.

While the fairly well established programmes of community engagement such as the SVP and SOCE are ongoing, the main priorities/activities identified by the directorate of Community Engagement for 2010-2011 are as follows:

- Establishing the office of Community Engagement at Rhodes University as a separate entity.
- Preparing a concept document on Community Engagement as a core function of Rhodes University
- Establishing systems that will assist in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating community engagement activities as required for audit purposes and for staff and students to be aware of and work within the guidelines/principles of sustainable community development
- Reviewing and revising current policy on community engagement
- Development of a database on Community Engagement activities and projects

The concept document is considered a work in progress and a draft of the document will be circulated for comments and discussion in the near future.

# STUDENT ORGANISATIONS COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES IN 2010

by Vuyani Zondani

## Student Organisations Community Engagement (SOCE)

By student organisations community engagement we mean activities / projects done by organised group of students like residence committees, clubs, societies etc.

It is important for student organisations and individual students to act with concern and sensitivity, and to be constantly aware of the impact of their actions on others, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised. Community engagement is a reciprocal process of learning between students and community members.

For the first time this year, RUC has developed a monitoring and evaluation tool for SOCE in the form of a proposal format. The intention is to ensure that student interventions are well-planned, focussed and contributes to the socio-economic development of Grahamstown and the broader community.

## The Project Proposal Format

For the first time, a project proposal format was developed for both students and staff who intend to be involved in community activities or projects. This is intended to provide a guideline for setting clear objectives and also assist with coordination so that duplication of activities may be avoided. We need to remember that in helping others who are vulnerable and in need and in sharing knowledge and skills we also learn about ourselves as human beings and expand on our existing knowledge. The benefits of community engagement, if conducted according to community development principles such as participation, sustainability and learning is a two process-the students and staff of RU and community members gain from the initiative. The proposal format should be viewed as a tool for monitoring/evaluation and quality management.

The project proposal format will be reviewed on an annual basis.



Galela Amanzi's primary activity is the installation of rainwater tanks in water scarce areas in the Grahamstown community – particularly those that suffer from poor and erratic municipal services and are vulnerable to cut-offs and shortages. The project is community based and is working with community partners like Umthathi (promoting vegetable and medicinal gardens) and other community partners to select site like schools, community centres and clinics. The project then works with the beneficiary site, and its community.



SERVICE LEARNING

# Rewarding Experiences of Community Engagement

by Prof Sunitha C Srinivas



The Faculty of Pharmacy at Rhodes University has initiated and maintained service-learning as an integral part of pharmacy education. Association with the Community Experience Program for final year pharmacy students in visiting and counselling hypertensive and diabetic patients provided the rich experience of understanding challenges faced by low literate patients in linking diet, life-style and chronic health conditions such as hypertension. This experience led to working with a colleague in designing a new elective based on a health promotion exercise employing a service-learning course. This course was offered to final year pharmacy students who prepared a pilot-tested computer-based quiz using a pre- and post- test design along with other learning materials such as interactive models, posters and information leaflets to explain prevention and management of chronic conditions such as Hypertension, Diabetes, etc. This was designed especially for school learners who attended the 2007 and 2009 Sasol National Festival of Science and Technology (SciFest). Service-learning courses such as these are invaluable for future pharmacists in playing a proactive role in health promotion.

## Other activities that involve Community engagement are:

**Association with Umthathi Training Project (UTP):** By associating with a NGO such as UTP, it was feasible to run a workshop for community members on the topic “Eating for Health” which was a part of series of seminars/workshops UTP organised in their nursery located in Extension 7, for the local community. This interactive workshop employed models and posters to show the effects of hypertension as well as the link between diet, physical activity and conditions such as obesity, hypertension and diabetes. This workshop was also attended by the new facilitators at UTP, which enhances the goals of reaching out to the community as well as sustaining it through the facilitators who will continue reaching out to wider and more rural communities they work with. While pursuing community engagement as an academic, it is rewarding to engage with a NGO and facilitate their goals in sustaining and scaling up their project.

**Association with Upstart:** Being a part of community engagement and being associated with the bigger goals of Upstart project was a gratifying experience. Upstart provides an excellent platform to equip school learners in producing their own newspaper and in promoting a culture of reading and writing. Working with Mrs. Shireen Badat, Upstart project Manager, provided opportunities to interact with approximately 30 Upstart project participants from Grades 8, 9 or 10 in Nathaniel Nyaluza Secondary School and Grades 8 or 9 in Ntahba Maria Higher Primary School, for an eight week health promotion programme conducted in 2010. This activity was based on diet and physical activity health promotion. The facilitator (Prof. Sunitha C Srinivas) conducted these workshops as an hour long session held once a week. Topics ranging from “Health as a human right”, “Food pyramid and junk food trap”, “Need for physical activity”, “Link between diet, physical activity and chronic conditions such as hypertension”, “Alcohol and tobacco abuse” were discussed with the learners. Role plays performed by the learners was part of the interactive sessions. This activity was followed through with three more sessions on designing posters for topics such as “Hypertension in South Africa”, “Diabetes in South Africa” and “Alcohol Abuse”. Learners were assisted with collection of information for the posters as well as designing their posters which was exhibited during the National Science Week (NSW) 2010. It was very rewarding to participate in the development of Upstarters, assist them develop their posters in the area of health promotion but most importantly to watch them speak with confidence about Hypertension and Diabetes, when they interacted with Minister Naledi Pandor during the NSW.

**Health Promotion Exhibit at National Science Week inauguration:** The “Health Promotion Exhibit” of Faculty of Pharmacy, Rhodes University was a part of the National Science Week 2010. This interactive platform was coordinated and facilitated by Scifest Director, Mrs. Vera Adams. The opportunity to reach out to school learners and visitors to discuss the massive increase in obesity, hypertension and diabetes in South Africa was a welcome opportunity to create more awareness of these serious health issues. It was also an excellent opportunity to interact with Minister Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Science and Technology, and highlight activities undertaken in the area of health promotion at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Rhodes University.

Health is a fundamental right and asset to every human being. Currently, the increased globalisation, urbanisation and industrialisation have their consequences on health. Chronic conditions such as obesity and hypertension, previously misunderstood to affect only rich countries are now affecting developing countries which are already heavily burdened by infectious diseases such as TB and HIV/AIDS. South Africa is one of the 23 developing countries that contribute to 80% mortality from chronic conditions. To overcome these serious health challenges, initiating a bottoms-up, participatory approach to engage with the community in creating awareness is critical to increase knowledge, change in attitude and finally improved practices for the community. If we have to transform our society into an equitable one, the key role higher education institutions play in community engagement is crucial. This involves initiating, maintaining and monitoring service-learning programs and also initiating community engagement programs that can develop into collaborations with other NGOs and organisations while “sustainability” is built into the entire project from the beginning. The three pillars recognised by Rhodes University- teaching/learning, research and Community Engagement- enrich and intertwine to provide rewarding experiences for academics and students while addressing transformational issues for individuals and communities in the local and national context.





# Student (SVP) Volunteer Programme

by Nomfundo Sobukwe



Volunteerism and volunteer activities can no longer be seen solely as extra-curricular. Volunteerism provides students with skills that are necessary for the production of well-rounded graduates and good citizens. Volunteering provides students with the soft skills that they need in order to be prepared for their work and social environments. The screening and placing of students has to be done with care as it should attempt to match the student to the needs of the placement. Suitable training and orientation is necessary so that volunteers are able to contribute productively to their placements. Equally important is the development of Community Partners so that they are able to make effective use of the volunteers. Currently there are 252 students registered as volunteers in the SVP and 146 students have been placed with 22 community partners in the first semester of 2010. Of the 252 registered student volunteers, 36 are post-graduate students and the rest are at the undergraduate level.

Volunteering started on 01 March 2010 for returning students and on 08 March for new students. All volunteers at-

tended a compulsory preparation and training session prior to placement. An evaluation revealed that most students found the session valuable and encouraging towards volunteerism.

One of the popular programmes with student volunteers is St Mary's Day Care Centre. Roger Domingo from St Mary's is pleased to be able to retain and strengthen their relationship with RUCCE and is very thankful for the number of volunteers they received during the first semester.

Some of the volunteering activities that took place during the first semester included drama, dance, computer literacy, arts and crafts, homework supervision and sports. Feedback from community partners showed that volunteers were performing well in their placements.

One of the student volunteers said; "volunteering at St Mary's gives me a sense of pride. I am contributing back to the community, educating the children and providing them with skills. Volunteering has afforded me the opportunity to work with new people of different races and culture that I would not normally do".



"Knowledge is not only found in lecture rooms or the library, it is found in the community."



## Reach out a hand

We often find ourselves forgetting that Community Engagement is not about us. We fail to consider that life is a pilgrimage, only made pleasant or wretched by the way we react to our circumstances. For some life is a one-way street filled with me, myself and I, all goals and responsibilities revolve around oneself. We are content to do community engagement so we can please self, we do only that which feels good, that which is easy and does not take time. RUCCE has brought a face lift to the idea of community engagement. It is all about going the extra mile to promote civic responsibility. Love for our fellow human

beings is important and student volunteers are encouraged to use the talents they have for the benefit of others. While community engagement may involve charitable acts it is however, more about sustainable development of local communities. Knowledge is not only found in lecture rooms or the library. Knowledge of self and wisdom springs from taking on new challenges, and doing things for others without the expectation of being rewarded. There is a joy in giving of oneself and community engagement provides the opportunity to learn about oneself.

*Rutendo Urenje, student volunteer*

The Tower Rehabilitation and Psychiatric Centre in Fort Beaufort is the only rehabilitation Centre in the Eastern Cape catering for patients suffering from long term psychoses. Since October last year an Art Project initiated by Mark Hipper of the Fine Art Department has been taking place involving patients at Tower Hospital in Fort Beaufort.

The project involves running an art group with inpatient psychiatric patients at Tower Hospital. The art group, which currently runs weekly in Tower Hospital, consist of approximately 8-16 patients and is facilitated by Mark Hipper with the assistance of post-graduate students in the Fine Art Department such as Dotun Makun. The project has grown into an interdepartmental initiative with Jan Knoetze and Dr Trudy Meehan of the Psychology Department more recently joining this initiative with enthusiasm, the know-how and support to tap into the great potential for research that his project offers. This project, as well as Dr. Meehan's own research proposal, has recently been passed by the ethics committee of the Psychology Department. In addition, the clinical staff at Tower Hospital play a fundamental role in supporting and facilitating the group.

The aim of this project is to not only provide occupational therapy for, and support the rehabilitation of, these patients, but also hopes to offer the long term means to change public perceptions of patients being treated in facilities such as Tower Hospital. It is hoped that an initiative such as this can go a long way towards breaking down the stigma associated with mental disorders and disabilities.

A long term aim of this project is to exhibit the works produced by the participating patients, offering the public the opportunity to not only view and appreciate the art, but also to gain a greater understanding and insight into each patient. It is planned therefore to supplement the presentation of the art work with some pertinent biographical information about the individual artist. This is understood as a necessary and even important way of acknowledging the individual responsible for producing the work and indeed an important means to establishing a deeper understanding of the work produced and the personal struggle and situation affecting these individuals. At the same time, participants are encouraged to express themselves in a non-judgemental, non-directive situation/environment. The aim is to give patients a sense of achievement and through this raise their self-esteem and confidence. Participants are encouraged and helped in their interactions with other participants and the people around them thereby further enhancing and supporting the restitution and self-healing of patients.

Mark Hipper (Lecturer, Fine Art Department) passed away on 12th of August. Mr Hipper was a senior lecturer in the Fine Art Department. One of the projects Hipper was involved in is The Tower Rehabilitation and Psychiatric Centre in Fort Beaufort.

## AN ART PROJECT AT TOWER HOSPITAL IN FORT BEAUFORT



## The Masincedane Soup Kitchen Society

RUCE enables and assists many student societies to initiate community projects and activities together with community partners. Orientation workshops were conducted at the beginning of 2010 to provide a support framework for the planning of these activities. Issues such as preventing cycles of dependency and having a measurable impact within the community were discussed. The Masincedane Soup Kitchen Society helps to run a soup kitchen together with Ms Belwana, a Xolani resident, and the soup kitchen manager. Emily Jones, a student committee member of the Masincedane Soup Kitchen Society, says, "the guidance provided by RUCE has been invaluable. RUCE has helped us negotiate ways in which to make the project empowering for all participants".

## Relationship with Community Partners

I believe that year after year the relationship between Rhodes University and the wider community is growing from strength to strength. Student volunteers have certainly been making their presence felt in the wider community and particularly among the poor and deprived of Grahamstown.

St Mary's DCC, one of Grahamstown's oldest Community Based Organisations, was established in 1982 to provide care and regular meals to some of the most desperately impoverished and vulnerable school-going children in our town. From the day that our doors opened, it has been very important to us not just be a feeding scheme but also be able to provide the boys and girls in our care with meaningful and worthwhile programmes that can complement their regular schooling, contribute to their overall growth and also enhance their future prospects. Some of the activities that we currently have include homework supervision, computer literacy lessons, drama workshops, karate classes, various sport codes, arts and crafts, needlework and cook-

ing and baking skills. None of this is possible without the help of the student volunteers. At St Mary's we are indeed very fortunate to receive between 40 and 60 volunteers annually through RUCE.

One of the most notable things about these volunteers is that they come to us so well prepared and ready to deal with any challenges that may (and inevitably do) arise. The training and orientation provided by RUCE in collaboration with us, the Community Partners, is certainly key to this, and a huge part of the success that most of them experience in the various projects around Grahamstown in which they are placed.

It has become so much more evident to the local community the emphasis that Rhodes University places on their role as a well-resourced institution that is able to make a difference in the lives of Grahamstown residents. In a town where injustices such as poverty, unemployment, under-resourced schools and inadequate service delivery are rife, the role of various NGOs, Community and Faith Based Organisations and other development

institutions is very important and intervention opportunities are abundant in Grahamstown. You would have to search long and hard these days to find any of these organisations, including our government schools, that do not have at least one volunteer from Rhodes University assisting in some way or another.

As a Community Partner I am in the privileged position to witness on a daily basis the remarkable role that students play as volunteers in organisations like ours. Their diligence, commitment and work ethic are just some of the qualities to be commended; what stands out most of all for me, however, is the genuine care and compassion that they display at all times. I cannot speak more highly of the students that I have been fortunate enough to work with and I certainly cannot say enough about the value of Rhodes University's Community Engagement.

St Mary's DCC is proud to be a RUCE Community Partner!

*Roger Domingo, Manager, St Mary's Day Care Centre*

# Mandela Day

## at Ethembeni Service Centre

Staff of RUCE and a few student volunteers spent time with senior citizens at Ethembeni Day Care Centre. Meals were prepared and served. Staff also assisted with a bit of gardening. The activity took place on Friday, 30th July 2010. The senior citizens were happy to be pampered for the day.



“Where there is poverty and sickness, where human beings are being oppressed, there is more work to be done. Our work is for freedom for all. After 90 years of life, it is time for new hands to lift the burdens. It is in your hands now”

(Mandela, Hyde Park, London, 2008)

Throughout the world, people were encouraged to devote 67 minutes of their day to public service to honour Madiba’s contribution to global politics and development. Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) was responded by devoting a day at Ethembeni Old Age Service Centre. The staff of RUCE and student volunteers were involved in gardening, cleaning and cooking under the leadership of Mrs Grace Ngcete, the director of the centre.

Although the day was fulfilling, there were certain issues which needed urgent attention like the lack of water at the centre. RUCE would encourage students to assist with some of the hurdles facing the Centre.

Let’s MAKE EVERY DAY A MANDELA DAY.

