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1. University Social Responsibility Network photo competition

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



The University of Pretoria (UP) annually presents a University Social Responsibility (USR) photography competition. Every October, USR Month is celebrated globally under the guidance of the University Social Responsibility Network.

During this time, the member institutions from around the world demonstrate their dedication to social responsibility through various activities and initiatives.

At UP, the annual USR Month campaign features a photography competition inviting students to share images representing social responsibility projects they participate in. This year, the prizes were sponsored by the Mamelodi Campus and the three winners were chosen from the submissions, each receiving UP Shop vouchers valued between R1 000 and R2 000. The three winners listed below are

those whose entries showcased their dedication to community involvement. The winning photo was taken by Mantibile Mohale, a postgraduate student at the Faculty of Law; he took the photo as part of Mandela Day outreach, where the students assisted the Sungarden Hospice employees in cleaning their store room.

He indicated: 'An individual's environment, their social responsibility within a community, is to keep it clean and reduce pollution.'

The solution is to raise awareness of collective learning through collecting litter, keeping the environment clean, planting trees and understanding how important sustainability is within the community.

This is to integrate it with higher learning and to find economical solutions like recycling material and making money from reusable

material, which will impact the University of Pretoria and its relevant department to teach individuals about the environment.'

The second prize went to Monde Mzamani, a final-year veterinary student who took the photo at the Melusi Holistic Primary Health Care Centre. He indicated: 'The One Health project at the Melusi community demonstrated the power of a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare.'

The impact of this outreach was evident in the positive feedback received from the students and the community. They appreciated the opportunity to receive healthcare and education addressing human and animal needs in a single setting. Meanwhile, the students gained hands-on experience and a greater appreciation for the collaborative efforts, fostering a collaborative spirit among future healthcare and veterinary professionals.'

The third prize went to Tidimalo Mdhlane, a student from the Faculty of Law. The photo was taken as part of a visit to Mamelodi, where the students provided residents with soup. Tidimalo indicated: 'The picture shows the constitutional right in Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution that everyone has the right to access sufficient food. As a UP citizen, I consider it my constitutional obligation to contribute to the betterment of society by ensuring food security.'

The contributions illustrate UP's positive impact on communities and reaffirm that our students embody the UP WAY.

2. Matters of interest

Meetings and conferences

- Community Engagement Seminar I: 'Anchoring conversations: Connection, collaboration and co-creation for the future'. 10th IRSPBL, 7th SASEE and 5th SoTL in the South conference (<https://irspl2025.org.za/call-for-papers/>), 16–21 November 2025.
- The 11th Flexible Futures Conference: 'Navigating the Gen AI revolution in teaching and learning', 27 August 2025.
- Education conference running in 2025: [Click here](#)

Newsletters

- Community engagement newsletter, *Lentsu la sechaba* [Call for articles](#).
- *Teaching Matters*. Bi-annual teaching and learning publication with editions scheduled for April and September each year. This publication serves as a platform to celebrate and highlight excellence, learning analytics, SoTL, HIMs, Mastercard, learning (ULTRA), tutoring, SFTS, innovation and impactful advancements in teaching and learning across our institution. Submission link: <https://forms.gle/3AgHhdKPMYrqzDek8>.

Recommended journals

- Journal for Applied Research in Higher Education: <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jarhe>
- *The Learner* journals: <https://thelearner.com/journals>
- *Community Development*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod20>
- *Journal for Community Practice*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/wcom20>
- *Journal of the Community Development Society*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod19>

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From left: Mr Albert Matlheketha, Ms Kanye Rampa, Dr Eugene Machimana and Ms Londiwe Mahlangu

3. Empowering our community: Insights from the colorectal cancer engagement initiative

Chanté Le Roux (Student: BRad in Diagnostics, Faculty of Health Sciences)



As radiography students, we interact with various cancer types daily and our recent focus on colorectal cancer has highlighted the importance of awareness and education. Colorectal cancer is a leading cause of cancer-related morbidity worldwide. Understanding this disease is crucial, not just for future healthcare professionals but for our communities at large.

Understanding colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer affects the colon and rectum, often starting as benign growths known as polyps. While most polyps remain harmless, some can become malignant tumours. This progression can occur without noticeable symptoms, underscoring the need for regular screenings. Imaging techniques like X-rays, ultrasounds, computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) are essential tools that radiographers use to detect abnormalities, monitor polyps and assess the progression of the disease.

Engagement initiative

The initiative on the Hatfield Campus aimed to educate fellow students about colorectal cancer. We set out to share knowledge on the anatomy of the colon, the nature of colorectal cancer, treatment options, signs and symptoms, causes, prevention strategies, risk factors and the various imaging modalities used in diagnosis.

The interactive nature of our engagement was key. After our presentations, students participated in a game called Spot the Cancer, where they analysed X-ray images to identify abnormalities.

This hands-on approach proved effective; students were engaged and could accurately identify cancerous areas in the images, demonstrating a solid understanding of the material.

Impact and takeaways

The initiative exceeded our expectations. It fostered open discussions about a sensitive

topic, allowing participants to ask questions and express their concerns. Our feedback indicated that students felt more informed and empowered regarding colorectal cancer. Many students expressed a desire to share what they learned with others.

Our experience reaffirmed the importance of community engagement in health education. By demystifying colorectal cancer and showcasing how radiographic imaging plays a crucial role in detection and treatment, we contributed to building a more informed and proactive community.

Through this initiative, we educated our peers and strengthened our skills as future healthcare providers, emphasising our critical role in cancer detection and patient care. Together, we can continue raising awareness and promoting early detection, ultimately working towards better outcomes for colorectal cancer patients.

4. University-community expectations

**Dr Eugene Machimana (Head: Unit for Curricular Community Engagement,
Department for Education Innovation)**

The University of Pretoria collaborates with local communities to effectively use resources and expertise in teaching, learning and research for the benefit of all partners involved. It is essential that all partners clearly communicate their expectations, as

these can either advance or hinder the partnership. The partnership between the University and communities is built on principles of mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation and shared conventions and expectations. To ensure that partnerships meet these outlined

expectations, the Unit for Community Engagement is committed to preparing staff, students and community partners. Please refer to the Table below for a summary of these expectations, as the nature and stability of the partnership rely on the expectations set by each partner.

University of Pretoria	Community partners
All partners are equally involved	Report to the assigned manager upon arrival each day
Students create PowerPoint presentations and convert them into YouTube videos for sharing with communities	To best prepare students for the challenges they may face when they begin teaching, we encourage advising students on options for participating in sport and cultural training courses e.g. athletics, rugby, netball, cricket, softball, hockey and public speaking. Assistance in connecting with relevant institutions for these activities would also be helpful
Livestock associations make farmers available for training	activities. For instance, if a group of students from the same year consistently visits the same households and asks the same research questions each year, communities may lose interest in participating. Certain research questions have also raised expectations within communities that their needs will be met by the research. Therefore, it is important to explain the purpose of research to participating community members so they understand that it does not offer an immediate resolution or solution to their shared challenges
Schools provide their teachers and learners for joint community engagement activities with university students	Students must book placements through the university and should not contact schools directly
Meet deadlines as agreed	If possible, students should share their community engagement curriculum before the meeting date to allow the organisation to prepare groups in advance

5. Driving societal impact through collaboration: Community engagement at the University of Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria

Ms Fiona Mahlori (Senior Manager: Community Engagement), Ms Tseleng Modjadji, Mr Tsepo Malele, Mr Andy Balaram and Ms Lebogang Ayobiojo (community engagement specialists) (Community Engagement: University Relations, University of Johannesburg)



The University of Johannesburg (UJ) and University of Pretoria (UP) community engagement departments and the UP Mamelodi Campus joined forces in a benchmarking engagement to share best practices and explore opportunities for collaboration. This initiative aimed to strengthen community development through shared learning, innovative strategies and promoting community engagement.

The UP delegation included Dr Eugene Machimana, Head: Curricular Community Engagement in the Department for Education Innovation; Ms Kanya Rampa, Education Consultant; and Dr Martina Jordaan, Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies at UP's Mamelodi Campus.

Ms Fiona Mahlori, Senior Manager for UJ Community Engagement (UJCE), presented an overview of UJCE's initiatives across the four

UJ campuses. She highlighted the university's three pillars and focus areas for community engagement: organised outreach, service learning and community-based research.

Among the prominent initiatives are the student volunteer programme, community-based organisation forums and capacity development programmes tailored to empowering and upskilling community members.

UJCE specialists Ms Lebogang Ayobiojo, Ms Tseleng Modjadji, Mr Andy Balaram and Mr Tsepo Malele provided further insights into impactful and sustainable community projects aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as the financial literacy project. This project capacitates burial societies, stokvels and investment groups with essential financial management skills and promotes economic sustainability within communities.

As part of the engagement, the UP team visited the UJ Centre for Ecological Intelligence's food garden to learn more about the urban agriculture, food systems and waste technology project. The visit to the food garden enabled a discussion on the importance of food gardening in addressing unemployment, food insecurity and poverty.

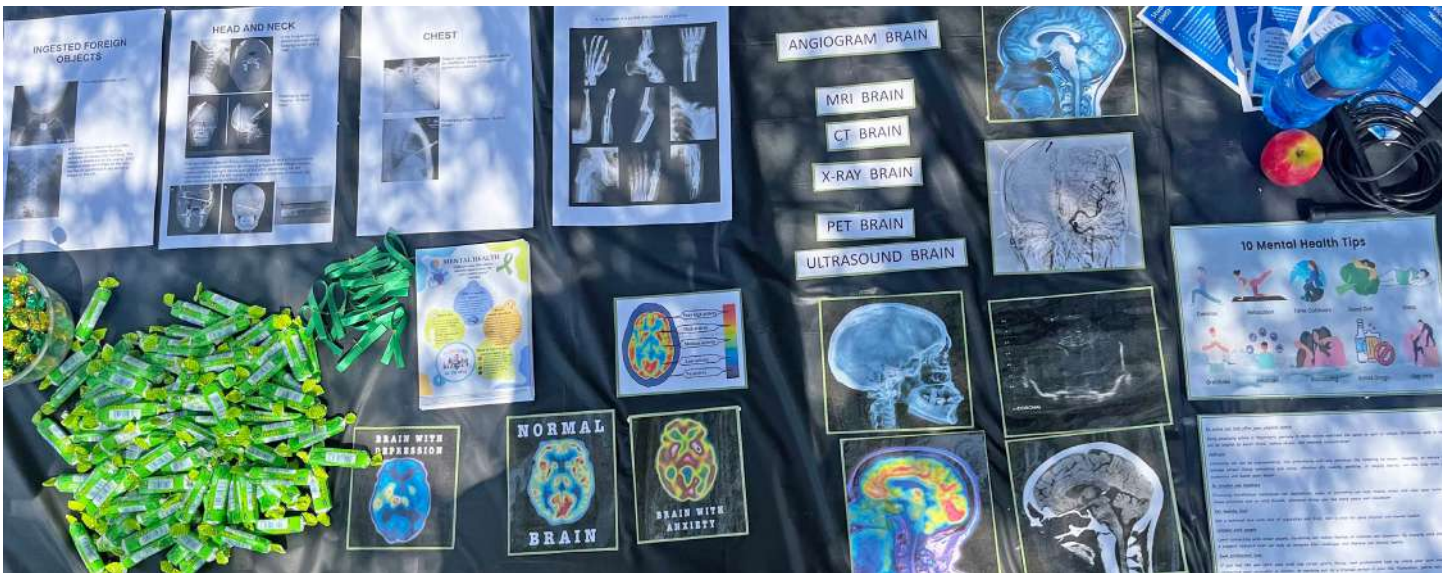
Furthermore, the engagement opened a discussion about the importance of community engagement in higher education, which includes knowledge sharing, enriching the students' experience through organised community outreach and building collaborative and beneficial partnerships between universities and the outside communities. Both UJCE and UP contended that the ultimate purpose of community engagement is to link the university to communities and help address societal challenges.

Looking ahead, both universities are committed to hosting joint workshops and seminars to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas. This collaboration marks a significant step in uniting resources and expertise to drive meaningful and sustainable community changes.

As emphasised by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, public higher education institutions may cooperate and collaborate to achieve the optimal performance of their functions. The collaboration between the UP and UJ community engagement offices is well on its way to achieving that.

6. Radiography community engagement project: Mental health awareness

Estè du Toit (Student: BRad in Diagnostics, Faculty of Health Sciences)



On 15 October 2024, a dedicated group of radiography students conducted a community engagement (CE) project focusing on a pressing mental health issue on the Hatfield Campus of the University of Pretoria (UP). Set up in the vibrant Piazza, our stall served as a hub for student interaction, education and awareness regarding mental health, an increasingly recognised non-communicable disease.

The primary aim of the CE project was to raise awareness about mental health and provide a suicide prevention resource for students. With a clear purpose in mind, we outlined four specific objectives:

- **Education.** We sought to educate students on the definitions and implications of mental health, anxiety and depression.
- **Support strategies.** We provided practical tips and tricks for maintaining good mental health, equipping students with tools they could use daily.
- **Visual learning.** To enhance understanding, we showcased various brain images taken by all the different modalities through an interactive game.

Participants could see how brain activity appears under different conditions, including normal functioning compared to cases affected by depression and anxiety.

- **Awareness of consequences.** Lastly, we presented X-rays of patients who had attempted suicide but survived to students who gave consent after reading the trigger warning on the images, emphasising the critical need for early intervention and support, particularly with exams approaching.

The collaboration between our group and the University resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes. UP gained insight into the healthcare knowledge of its radiography students, reinforcing the importance of practical education.

Simultaneously, the community benefited from expanded awareness and knowledge about mental health, equipping students with essential information and resources for support.

Like any project, we faced challenges along the way. Initially, we could

not secure a gazebo for our stall, but we adapted by setting up our table under a tree, which provided sufficient shade. Moreover, strong winds threatened our printed flyers, causing them to scatter, but we secured the flyers with paperweights, ensuring that the crucial information remained accessible to students.

Our CE project embodies the University's commitment to community engagement, as defined by its mission to apply resources and expertise in teaching, learning and research to benefit the external community.

This initiative, conducted by radiography students in the Faculty of Health Sciences, exemplifies our goal to engage meaningfully with the community, fostering understanding and support around mental health issues.

Our efforts raised awareness and opened up important conversations about mental health, empowering students to seek help and support when needed. We hope to continue these efforts, reinforcing the importance of mental well-being in our University community.

7. HospiVision: Touching lives and giving hope in healthcare

Dr Annemarie E Oberholzer (CEO: HospiVision)



For patients navigating illness and hospitalisation, often without emotional or material support, HospiVision stands as a beacon of hope. Operating in Gauteng and the Western Cape, this compassionate organisation brings spiritual care, counselling and skills development to some of the most vulnerable individuals in public healthcare.

Founded in 1997 by faith-based organisations in the Moot area of Pretoria, HospiVision began by supporting patients at what is now the Tshwane District Hospital. It was officially registered as a Section 21 non-profit Company in 1999. Since then, it has expanded its reach and impact, bringing holistic care that restores dignity, confidence and purpose to those facing trauma, illness and social exclusion.

At the heart of HospiVision's mission is compassionate spiritual and emotional care for the sick and their families and caregivers. Through its Oasis Centre at Tshwane District Hospital, HospiVision offers skills training in sewing, crochet, baking, gardening and computer literacy.

Computer literacy classes open a whole new world to people who previously could not use a computer. They are also taught how to compile and send CVs to potential employers.

High unemployment rates and economic challenges are prevalent in the community we serve. These programmes help people regain agency over their lives and build new pathways to employment.

Services provided include:

- counselling and trauma debriefing for patients, families and hospital staff;
- volunteer training and coordination;
- socioeconomic empowerment for people living with HIV/AIDS, chronic illness and disability;
- daily meal support for outpatients;
- children's programmes and donation distribution (toys, clothing, toiletries);
- employee assistance services for hospital staff;
- weekly faith-based broadcasting via Radio Pulpit/Radiokansel;
- accredited training in counselling and spiritual care.

Despite these achievements, HospiVision continues to face significant challenges, most notably high unemployment and a lack of basic resources for many of its patients. The organisation frequently receives patients who have lost everything, including their clothing, in the incident that led to their hospitalisation.

UP students are invited to assist with renovating HospiVision's training centre, helping expand the reach of in-person training. Additionally, donations of tables and chairs, toiletries and clothing for discharged patients are urgently needed.

HospiVision maintains strong ties with the Centre for Faith and Community (Faculty of Theology and Religion) and the Department of Family Medicine (Faculty of Health Sciences). It also works with various non-profit and private sector donors to provide much-needed support during outreach efforts.

HospiVision continues to inspire healing and transformation through its holistic approach to care. Every form of support, whether time, skill, or resources, helps someone reclaim their dignity and find hope again.

Contact details:

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8. Rabies awareness at the domestic wildlife interface between Bushbuckridge and Manyeleti (rabies endemic area) by University of Pretoria postgraduate students

Rorisang Malatji, Kenneth Malatji (Production Animals, Faculty of Veterinary Science) and Jeanette Wentzel (Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station, Orpen, Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences)

'Rabies ya dlaya, tlhavela timbyana na tikati ta wena.' (Rabies kills; vaccinate your dogs and cats.)

Rabies is a zoonotic disease, which means that people can become infected by an infected animal. The virus is shed in saliva and spread mainly by an infected animal's bite, scratch, or lick. Rabies is a significant disease because it affects domesticated animals such as dogs and cats.

These animals are man's best friend, but they pose a danger to society if the community does not know enough about rabies. Rabies can be prevented by vaccinating all dogs and cats.

In rural areas, most households have a dog and/or a cat (SV Mpumalanga). Ensuring that people are well-educated about rabies and that their animals are vaccinated is imperative. The state vet in Bushbuckridge has rabies campaigns because rabies is endemic.

In April 2024, we visited one crèche in Utha and one high school in Gottenburg in Bushbuckridge, where rabies is endemic. Experience has taught us that the easiest and fastest way to get the message across to the community is through young minds.

The main message for the day was 'Rabies kills; vaccinate your dogs and cats.' Kids were also encouraged not to play with dogs they did not know (eg, stray dogs). Rabies campaigns



are run regularly in the area and an animal health clinic is available where pets can be vaccinated.

The most crucial, possibly lifesaving actions after contact with a suspected rabid dog or cat are washing the area with running water and rushing to the clinic for post-exposure treatment. Let us continue to spread awareness and be safe.

References

Bishop, GC; Durrheim, DN; Kloock, PE; Godlonton, JD; Bingham, J; Speare, R; and the Rabies Advisory Group. 2003. *Rabies guide for the medical, veterinary and allied professions*. Rabies Advisory Group, South African Department of Agriculture and Health, Pretoria.

9. Reliable House: Promoting social responsibility

Miss Khethokuhle Mbonani, Mr John Siteo (Students: Faculty of Theology and Religion)
and Mr Bakang Sentle (Reliable House)



Third-year theology students had a few engagement sessions with Reliable House as part of their Community Engagement module. Reliable House is a community-driven organisation founded in 2016 through an initiative by the University of Pretoria (UP).

The organisation was established to address the issue of homelessness, which was recognised as critical in Hatfield in Pretoria, where the University is situated.

The UP handed the management of Reliable House over to Tshimologo Care Centre, as they specialise in issues of homelessness.



This arrangement allows the University to focus on the core business of Curricular Community Engagement (CCE). Reliable House remains steadfast in its mission to provide sustainable support to those experiencing homelessness. We are currently seeking local business and community stakeholders to join us in this vital cause,' says Bakang Sentle.

With Hatfield being a vibrant urban hub, home to students and businesses, beneath lies an issue of homelessness, which is driven by unemployment, poverty and inadequate access to affordable housing. Since the pandemic, these social challenges have deepened.

Reliable House believes that homelessness is not an isolated issue, but a societal challenge that demands a collaborative response.

The aim is to bring the private sector into the fight against homelessness through Corporate Social Investment (CSI), offering them a chance to contribute directly to the betterment of our society.

Reliable House invites companies and organisations based in Pretoria, particularly those in Hatfield. The collaboration will assist through:

- financial assistance
- resources for the shelter
- combating unemployment
- workshops and skill development programmes that prepare homeless individuals for job opportunities and
- promoting social responsibility by encouraging businesses to participate in community upliftment and outreach programmes

So far, Reliable House has provided temporary shelter and meals to many individuals without homes. The programmes have restored people's dignity and given them hope to rebuild their lives.

Reliable House cannot do it alone. They need help from businesses and organisations that deal with uplifting vulnerable people. Together, we will build a future where no one is left without a home, so everyone can live with dignity.

10. Welcoming visitors from the University of Leeds and the University of Pretoria

Caroline Agnew (Placement and Development Officer: Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust), Vicky Search (Clinical Operations Manager: Community Forensics, Allied Health Professional (AHP) and Physical Health) and Lucy Garwood (Senior Occupational Therapist)



The Voluntary Services Department has enjoyed a strong partnership with the University of Leeds for many years.

We have supported numerous University volunteers in most areas of the trust and we were pleased to welcome visitors on 16 October 2024 from the University of Leeds and the University of Pretoria to the Newsam Centre, which hosts the Volunteer Sports project.

The visit to the Newsam Centre Forensics Unit proved to be valuable.

Vicky Search and Lucy Garwood from the Newsam Centre discussed the collaboration with external services, which include third-sector organisations, a wider secure network within West Yorkshire and voluntary services where the volunteers can engage in individual or group volunteering with the service users.

The guests from the University of Pretoria were Prof Vanessa Steenkamp, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, Dr Eugene Machimana, Head: Curricular Community Engagement and Dr Neeraj Mistry, Deputy Director of Future Africa.

It was interesting to hear how mental health is embedded in UP's units and the challenges faced when managing this in remote areas. All present were able to share ideas around innovative practice, which was extremely helpful and interesting.

11. Green revolution: The best solution to arrest pollution

Ms Mantibile Mohale (LLM, Intellectual Property Law)



University Social Responsibility (USR) Month is celebrated globally each October through the University Social Responsibility Network (USRN). In Autumn 2022, I demonstrated my commitment to social responsibility by engaging with secondary school learners on environmental issues.

This community engagement initiative, conducted in partnership with the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association, aimed to foster awareness through collaborative learning around the environmental challenges faced by local communities. The initiative also sought to propose sustainable solutions and promote the collection of reusable materials from the environment.

The Green Revolution Project was conceptualised to emphasise the significance of environmental stewardship, individual responsibility within a community and practical strategies to maintain cleanliness and reduce pollution.



This aligns with Section 24 of the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which guarantees every person the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being.

This constitutional right underscores the importance of living conditions that support physical and emotional well-being. However, rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights also entail responsibilities. Specifically, individuals must take proactive steps to ensure that the environment remains clean, sustainable and conducive to human flourishing. The objective of this campaign was to promote social responsibility through practical engagement. This began with approaching a local school, engaging with learners and

educating them on environmental conservation. Learners were encouraged to actively participate in waste collection and suggest sustainable solutions, such as placing additional waste bins.

They were taught that addressing pollution requires individual commitment and that each person can serve as part of the solution. As a culminating activity, the learners were encouraged to extend their efforts into their communities by identifying and collecting various types of waste, particularly biodegradable materials like food scraps, green waste, paper and biodegradable plastics and sorting them appropriately.

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By cultivating environmental awareness among learners, the project aimed to sow seeds of sustainability that will benefit future generations. The broader vision is to integrate social sustainability principles within community contexts and link them to the mandate of higher education. An essential outcome of the initiative was exploring economically sustainable methods for transforming recyclable waste into reusable materials, yielding broader community benefits. Dr Martina Jordaan, Head: Community Engagement, Research and Postgraduate Studies at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi

Campus, congratulated the winners of the annual USR Month photo competition. I was delighted to learn, via email and social media, that I had secured first place, earning a R2 000 gift voucher redeemable at the UP Shop. While the award brought immense joy, the true reward lay in the affirmation that meaningful work rooted in social responsibility can inspire change. This recognition was less about accolades and more about the conviction that transformation begins with individual action. It affirms that being a catalyst for change, through intentional and compassionate acts toward nature, does not go unnoticed.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Ms Kanye Rampa, Education Consultant: Curricular Community Engagement in the Department for Education Innovation's Unit for Community Engagement and to Dr Eugene Machimana, Head: Curricular Community Engagement, for encouraging me to document and share this experience.

I also extend heartfelt thanks to Mr Albert Matlheketha for presenting me with the award. I remain deeply grateful to the Mamelodi Campus and the Department for Education Innovation for their support and look forward to continued collaboration.

12. Bridging the gap: One Health Project 2024

Monde Mzamani (VetSCO) and Lungile Mkhabela (Health House)



In July 2024, the Melusi community in Pretoria West welcomed a comprehensive healthcare outreach initiative like no other. Hosted by Health House, the Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VetSCO) group, the Onderstepoort Veterinary Student Committee (OPVSC) and the

Tuks Friends of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), a student society representing Doctors Without Borders, the annual One Health Project took a significant leap forward this year by incorporating a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare. This initiative provided the local community with basic human health screenings, veterinary care for pets and educational resources.

The One Health concept emphasises the interconnectedness of human, animal and environmental health. Traditionally, this project involved medical students providing primary health screenings to community members while veterinary students screened and vaccinated pets. However, recognising the need for a more holistic approach, this year's project expanded to include students from various health sciences disciplines, mirroring the multidisciplinary environment in

which healthcare professionals operate in real-world settings. Therefore, the 2024 project saw the involvement of students from dentistry, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, sports science, nursing, clinical associate programmes, dietetics, radiography and medicine. Each discipline brought its unique expertise, offering comprehensive services at different stations set up for community members.

Upon arrival, community members were registered and had their demographics recorded. Nursing students then took and interpreted vital signs, providing an essential baseline for further assessments.

Clinical associate students conducted extensive medical history interviews, followed by thorough physical examinations by medical students.

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The Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) provided awareness and screening for illegal substances, while South African Population Research Infrastructure Network (SAPRIN) fieldworkers educated the community members about the upcoming trimester home visits in Melusi. Veterinary students had a similar set-up, with stations for registration, history-taking and physical examinations.

Moreover, there was a station for deworming and tick control and another for rabies vaccinations. All these veterinary activities were performed under the strict supervision of qualified veterinarians, Dr Jean-Pierre Chitter and Dr Elizna Boag (Montego Pet Nutrition). At the last station, pet owners were given free pet food donated by Montego Pet Food and dog beds.

Dental hygiene and dental students provided oral screenings and education on maintaining oral health, with each participant receiving toothpaste to take home. The dietetics station focused on nutritional assessments and offered practical advice on maintaining a healthy diet on a limited budget, which was especially pertinent given Melusi's low-income status. This station empowered community members with knowledge on improving their diet to manage chronic conditions like hypertension. Occupational therapy students demonstrated the use of assisted living devices and taught emergency splinting techniques using everyday items.

Meanwhile, sports science students ran a kiddie station, keeping the children engaged with games promoting wellness. Radiography students facilitated a cancer awareness station, educating

participants about the warning signs of common cancers, including breast and prostate cancer. They demonstrated self-breast exams and highlighted urinary symptoms as potential indicators of prostate cancer. An HIV testing station, facilitated by a professional nurse alongside nursing and medical students, provided confidential and essential health services to those in attendance.

Community engagement and impact

The project was hosted at Melusi Holistic Health Care Clinic, an ideal setting to promote healthcare knowledge among community members. This event was crucial in a community where general health screenings are not a common practice, mainly due to the demands of work and the misconception that 'ignorance is bliss'.

Many community members only seek medical attention when sick, missing the preventive benefits of regular health screenings. This also applies to pets; most pet owners do not take preventative measures for their pets (eg, vaccination and parasite control) and only seek veterinary care when their animals are severely sick, which can take a toll on their finances. The One Health Project allowed them to access these basic services on a Saturday, when most could attend without conflicting with work obligations.

The project also addressed a significant concern: the fear of discovering health issues, which often leads to avoidance of screenings. The event emphasised the importance of prevention and early detection, educating the community on how proactive health management can prevent future complications.

This was particularly evident in the cancer awareness station, where self-examination techniques were taught to empower individuals to take charge of their health.

All red flags identified during the screenings were followed up with referral letters to nearby hospitals and clinics, ensuring participants could take the necessary steps to address potential health issues. On the veterinary side, severely sick animals were referred to the nearest veterinary clinic or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

Looking ahead: Opportunities for improvement

While the One Health Project was a resounding success, growth opportunities exist. Future projects could benefit from including a psychosocial station, where community members could receive psychological assessments from social workers or psychologists.

The 2024 One Health Project at the Melusi community was a resounding success, demonstrating the power of a multidisciplinary approach to healthcare. The impact of this outreach was evident in the positive feedback received from the students and the community.

They appreciated the opportunity to receive healthcare and education addressing human and animal needs in a single setting. Meanwhile, the students gained hands-on experience and a greater appreciation for the collaborative efforts, fostering a collaborative spirit among future healthcare and veterinary professionals. This initiative serves as a model for holistic community outreach that truly embodies the One Health concept.

13. Lesedi Foundation's mission: Uplifting Mamelodi's youth

Lindi Mashabane (Chairperson: Lesedi Foundation)

In the heart of Mamelodi and beyond, Lesedi Foundation stands as a beacon of hope and transformation. Founded on a shared passion for empowering communities, this non-profit organisation has served individuals, families, schools, prisons and hospitals for nearly a decade.

Officially registered in 2014, Lesedi Foundation's roots run deep, formed through the unity of individuals who believe in the power of purpose-driven community work.

With a clear vision to empower children and youth academically, socially, spiritually and economically, Lesedi Foundation fosters personal growth while shaping impactful leaders and problem solvers. Its mission is to create a balanced society where individuals discover their identity, talents and abilities, ultimately becoming agents of change in their communities.

Lesedi Foundation provides a variety of programmes tailored to the needs of its beneficiaries, including:

- talent shows, offering artistic youth in Mamelodi East a platform to shine and receive mentorship from seasoned performers;
- a Literacy and Tutor Club for learners in Phase 2, Mamelodi East;
- the 'Sponsor to Embrace a Child' initiative, which supplies school shoes, stationery, toiletries and food parcels to needy learners and
- career expos and counselling for high school learners.



Lesedi Foundation has grown from a humble literacy initiative into a vibrant network of support that now reaches multiple schools and orphanages. The organisation has adopted Mogale Primary School to ensure foundation-phase learners receive essential support. All of this has been accomplished through self-funding and the unwavering dedication of its founders and volunteers.

Lesedi Foundation is deeply aware of the challenges faced by youth today: rising poverty, declining literacy and limited access to talent development opportunities. Young people often lack the guidance to align their aspirations with real-world career paths. To counter this, the foundation calls for greater access to books, educational materials and necessities to ensure every learner can thrive.

Lesedi Foundation has collaborated with a fourth-year occupational therapy student from the University of Pretoria, hosting an awareness

session for Grade 10 to 12 learners at Tsako Thabo Secondary School. Many of these learners come from homes affected by abuse and substance dependency and the intervention brought a message of hope and practical support.

Other partners include Mvela Phanda, which provides venue support for literacy sessions and has worked with the Stanza Bopape Development Centre to help youth with entrepreneurial aspirations.

Contact details:

Organisation name:
Lesedi Foundation
Area: Mamelodi and surrounding areas
Contact person:
Lindi Mashabane or
Co-founder: Ivy Khambana
Tel: 073 843 2433
Cell: 073 843 2433
Email: Lesedi.foundation00@gmail.com

14. Get to know UP RAG

Ms Nokwazi Nxumalo (SRC Ex Officio: Reach out And Give)



University of Pretoria (UP) Reach out And Give (RAG) operates as the official student-driven, non-profit fundraising and community engagement (CE) committee of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of Pretoria.

UP RAG has grown from strength to strength over the past 93 years, encouraging students to join in the fun of serving and educating the larger community.

The contagious RAG spirit has a reputation for turning fundraising and community outreach projects into worthwhile memories. Our mission is to develop students at the University of Pretoria by channelling their energy and their continuous search for fun into fundraising and community service projects.

All proceeds collected by UP RAG are then invested in community engagement projects at the University

throughout the year and donated to various beneficiaries associated with the organisation. We aim to develop students at the University of Pretoria through exposure to community engagement, add to a wholesome, organised student life experience and allow them to get actively involved in these projects.

Most importantly, we aim to provide help with the social and financial needs of individuals, groups and families through tangible contributions to their spiritual, health and social needs and the welfare of the community.

RAG embodies the spirit of UP's commitment to making a difference. UP RAG is where we, as students, turn our energy outward, focusing on the community around us. The heart of RAG is made up of both the theoretical (Kagiso) and practical (Thusho) parts.

The UP RAG events portfolio seeks to execute events that facilitate civic and community engagement and fundraising while emphasising the importance of active citizenship among the student community. UP RAG aims to empower surrounding communities by using and sharing

our privileged positions as student leaders to empower others.

UP RAG also provides a platform for students at the University to experience student life and culture. UP RAG presents RAG of Hope Day, the Cansa Shavathon (cancer awareness), Kagiso trainings, a transformation seminar on sexual health and mental health and the Face of UP RAG.

How to join UP RAG: Apply to be a General Committee member or be part of the RAG sub-council by being a community engagement, outreach, or RAG officer in your respective structure.

UP RAG believes that the future is a product of our present actions.

**For more information
and our upcoming events,
follow us on our social media
pages:**

Facebook:

@RAG University of Pretoria

Twitter: @up_rag

Instagram: @up_rag

TikTok: @up_rag

Website: <https://www.up.ac.za/up-rag>

15. Healthy weight, healthy life: Enabling Eersterust through nutrition and active living

Ms Natasha Moolman, Ms Dione Maas, Ms Sabrina Pereira (Students: Faculty of Health Science, School of HealthCare Sciences, Department of Human Nutrition) and Dr Phumudzo Tshiambara (Supervisor: Faculty of Health Science, School of HealthCare Sciences, Department of Human Nutrition)

Overweight and obesity are characterised by excessive fat accumulation in the body (Gebrie et al, 2018). They are severe lifestyle disorders that can cause further health problems and are associated with several chronic illnesses, including diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cancer and cardiovascular diseases (Safaei et al, 2021).

In 2022, 2,5 billion adults worldwide were classified as overweight, with 980 million of them being obese (World Health Organisation, 2024). In South Africa, half of the population was categorised as overweight or obese in 2022, with the World Obesity Federation predicting a 10% rise in adult obesity by 2030 (The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg).

Nutrition education, including healthy eating and portion size control, is a cost-effective strategy to prevent overweight and obesity; therefore, this strategy was very important to be utilised at the Eersterust community in Tshwane, where 55% of the community members (n=40). coming to the Community Health Centre (CHC) for health services were overweight and obese between July-August 2024.

An intervention day was held on 20 August 2024 in the Eersterust CHC to meet the community's needs. A workshop titled 'Plated for health' was conducted to enable the Eersterust community with the knowledge and skills necessary to combat overweight and obesity through education on



healthy eating, balanced meal preparation, portion control and the importance of physical activity. By educating community members, the intervention aimed to foster a comprehensive understanding of the health risks associated with overweight and obesity and to also provide practical tools for maintaining a healthy body weight. The initiative was designed to create sustainable behaviour changes that will promote long-term health and well-being within the community to combat the epidemic of overweight and obesity.

The day began with an introduction by the health promoter (Ms Mosidi Mametse) at Eersterust CHC, with support from the facility head sister (Ms Emelda September). The IV dietetic interns then led the workshop, discussing the burden of overweight and obesity and introducing the concepts of macro- and micronutrients. As participants entered the venue and signed the attendance register, they were given

paddles with green and red sides. An icebreaker followed, where participants used the paddles to answer true or false questions on micro- and macronutrients, raising the green side for true and the red side for false. The event focused on macronutrients, fruits, vegetables and healthy snacks. Participants learned about the MyPlate model and participated in food modelling activities.

Question-and-answer sessions and physical activity sessions were also held, promoting an integrated approach to health and wellness. Effective communication with the CHC staff is crucial for recruiting suitable participants, enhancing engagement and maintaining intervention effectiveness. Time management and buffering for unexpected delays ensure smooth execution. Ensuring precise and timely communication with all collaborators, such as the nursing staff, is essential. This can

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aid in properly marketing events and ensuring that individuals, including community members and staff members such as ward-based outreach teams (WBOT), will attend the event. Special thanks to the Eersterust CHC dietitian, Ms Bongiwe Nkondo; health promoter, Ms Mosidi Mametse; professional nurse, Ms Emelda September; the Block 2 dietetics community nutrition intern students; lecturer, Dr Phumudzo Tshiambara; part-time lecturers, Ms Betty Mohlala and Ms Marion Beeforth; the physiotherapy students; and the community members.

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16. Growing minds: Creative strategies for early childhood development

Koketso Kekana, Nduvho Tshidumo and Mahlatse Shai (Interns: Sci-Enza)

Have you ever wondered how the first few years of children's lives shape their future? Well, the way early childhood development (ECD) is approached is crucial because this can shape how the child will learn going forward.

Sci-Enza hosted its first ECD workshop for pre-school teachers in collaboration with the community engagement initiative of the University of Pretoria on the Mamelodi Campus. Over 20 ECD teachers attended a session led by Puleng Tsie, manager of Sci-Enza, along with the dedicated Sci-Enza team.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness and spark excitement about science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) and empower teachers to integrate or reinforce STEAM into their teaching practices in creative ways. One exciting approach discussed was storytelling and engaging hands-on experiments to make learning enjoyable and



impactful. Puleng shared a story about a young girl on an adventure titled Buyi's adventures, which will soon be published, so stay tuned! The storyline of Buyi's adventures includes practical, hands-on activities so that the listeners are a part of the story instead of just the audience.

On the day of the workshop, the listeners were the teachers, so with

excitement and cooperation, they participated in the activities to see the practical demonstration of how they could integrate the activities into the story. One of the activities involved making a nature bracelet, where the teachers went out into the Mamelodi Campus garden and collected flowers and leaves that they then attached to clear sticky tape and wore.

Storytelling is a technique that builds personal emotional attachment and enhances information retention and comprehension, which helps children make connections between activities and the real world.

A segment of the workshop allowed the teachers to share their teaching experiences and most were surprised to realise that they taught science but were unaware of it. The workshop highlighted the importance of fostering curiosity in children by encouraging observation, critical thinking and self-expression

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without fear of failure. The teachers were also urged to embrace failure as a natural part of learning and to model resilience for their learners. The shared objective to nurture these young minds through science is what

drives these teachers and drives Sci-Enza. Through these collaborations, we can continue raising STEAM awareness and laying a good foundation for children's learning.

This is what the Sci-Enza interns had to say: Mahlatse was impressed with how this collaboration aims to make the science content memorable; Nduvho expressed how this initiative should be ongoing, as boosting the teachers' confidence and continuing to inspire them to teach science in their classrooms is paramount;

Koketso was inspired by the passion these individuals have as she believes these are the teachers she needed as a child.

As entities and organisations, we need to join forces and form collaborative bodies that will continue to nurture our future generations.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child and we can do that. Together, we can build these young minds into extraordinary scientists, innovators, problem solvers, analysts and more.

17. Wel-come to the table

**Joan Ndaba, Jackson Kgosi, Reginald Magolela, Benjamin Makhafola and
Lehlohonolo Tsotetsi (Urban Studio Mamelodi East)**

The Urban Studio Mamelodi East hosted its annual Mamelodi Expo on 16 August 2024 at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus. This engaging event featured the participation of over 40 community-based organisations (CBOs). The journey started earlier in the year with a reflective evaluation of the previous year's expo, followed by strategic planning and execution of the current event.

Under the banner 'Wel-come to the table', the thematic essence revolved around marginalised communities reclaiming their right to access resources. The metaphorical notion of tables symbolises opportunities to dialogue and societal structures where specific individuals are excluded from participation, reinforcing disparities and hindering voices from being heard.

The theme underscores the importance of inclusivity and empowering those typically marginalised from such platforms. On the other hand, the theme invites those who have influence to come to communal tables with genuine intentions to bridge the gaps.



Moreover, the theme applauds city makers who actively create inclusive spaces for all individuals, acknowledging their efforts in promoting diversity and advocating for the rights of various marginalised groups such as children, the elderly, women, the homeless, individuals with disabilities and unemployed youths.

The expo is a tribute to these city makers, fostering collaboration among community organisations and offering a networking platform for non-profits to connect with potential partners. Simultaneously, it provides an avenue for public engagement with diverse stakeholders.

The expo has recently been part of the Feast of the Clowns Project. For more



information about the Feast of the Clowns, please visit their Facebook page, The Feast of the Clowns 2024.

Any department, company, or individual seeking to collaborate with CBOs in Mamelodi, Nellmapius and Eersterust is encouraged to reach out to the Urban Studio through the following contact information (Cell: 061 973 9398 or Email: joanndaba@gmail.com).

Heartfelt appreciation is extended to the generous organisations whose contributions in terms of time, skills, resources and dedication have significantly contributed to the success of the expo. Your invaluable support and commitment are truly commendable and deeply appreciated.



18. Shining the spotlight on Thabang Ngwenya: Balancing academia, community engagement and entrepreneurship

Thabang Ngwenya (Lecturer: Faculty of EBIT and Co-Founder of Keep That Gold Shining)

Academic background

Thabang Ngwenya has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to academic excellence. He completed his BEng in industrial engineering in 2019, followed by an honours degree in industrial engineering in 2020 and then an MEng in industrial engineering in 2021, all at the University of Pretoria. He is in the final year of his industrial and systems engineering doctorate.

Career trajectory

Thabang's career is a convergence of academia, community engagement and entrepreneurship. His academic journey began in 2020 as an assistant lecturer, progressing to his current role as a full-time lecturer. Alongside his academic pursuits, Thabang has been actively involved in community engagement and entrepreneurship since 2014, when he started university. His entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to societal development led to the founding of Keep That Gold Shining (KTG) and the entity Own and Manage. Balancing these multifaceted roles remains a key focus of his professional life.

Motivations and influences

Thabang's career choice was initially influenced more by his abilities than his personal desires. He recognised his passion for working with people

and academia during his first year at university, leading him to choose industrial and systems engineering. Despite a lack of career guidance early on, Thabang navigated through university by leveraging information from peers and teachers.

Community engagement impact

Community engagement has been pivotal in shaping Thabang's professional development. It has broadened his perspective and enriched his interpersonal skills, enabling him to communicate and empathise across diverse age groups and cultural backgrounds. Thabang's involvement in community projects has enhanced his ability to make meaningful contributions and foster impactful relationships.

Current community engagement

Thabang's decade-long involvement in community engagement projects has shaped his engineering perspective, merging technical skills with social considerations. He believes in the importance of balancing technical proficiency with societal understanding, which is essential for fostering innovation that benefits both South Africa and the broader African economy. This balanced approach has made Thabang a well-rounded individual, prepared to address complex social issues through engineering solutions.

Advice for students

Thabang advises current students to recognise the importance of observing and evaluating community transformation over time. He emphasises the need for youth involvement in decision-making processes and the significance

of maintaining the community engagement continuum to ensure its sustained relevance for future generations.

Notable projects

In 2014, Thabang co-founded KTG, an organisation that collaborates with UP's JCP module to engage students as role models in townships and rural communities. KTG focuses on four pillars: academic, personal, technological and community development. This partnership addresses gaps in education, information and communication technologies (ICT) access and financial literacy, empowering young people through leadership and personal development programmes.

Career milestones

In 2018, Thabang founded the Own and Manage entity to empower youth to become adept owners and managers of systems that intertwine community engagement, education and entrepreneurship. This initiative seeks to cultivate leaders who understand societal needs and the roles of entrepreneurship and education in sustainable change. Thabang also holds board member roles in companies like Marketplace Academy and Gamers Territory, contributing to South Africa's transformation and economic development.

Thabang Ngwenya's journey is a testament to his dedication to academia, community engagement and entrepreneurship. His balanced approach and commitment to societal transformation continue to inspire and impact the communities he serves.



19. My journey with Moja Gabedi

Mr Pontsho Masele (Assistant Site Manager)



My journey with Moja Gabedi began on 12 January 2020, when I joined as a volunteer. Today, I proudly serve as an Assistant Site Manager, witnessing the tremendous transformation of this once-forgotten space.

What began as an abandoned dumping ground has now blossomed into a vibrant, safe and welcoming community engagement hub. Thanks to the University of Pretoria's vision and commitment, over 3 000 tonnes of waste were removed. Since becoming part of this initiative, I have seen Moja Gabedi evolve into a beacon of transdisciplinary research. It

has provided a platform where students, academics and community members collaborate, creating real-world solutions and positive social impact.

The broader Hatfield precinct has also changed dramatically. The area is now cleaner, safer and more welcoming. The crime rates have dropped and the local community enjoys the fruits of the garden's success, including fresh produce and a more beautiful environment.

UP students have engaged with the site through Curricular Community Engagement (CCE) and its impact has inspired international visitors. Today, Moja Gabedi is more than

just a garden, it is a living example of what is possible when universities and communities unite to transform spaces, lives and futures.

Personally, one of my greatest highlights has been witnessing how this Community Engagement Hub has become a model of transdisciplinary collaboration, building bridges between students and the broader community.

Looking ahead, Moja Gabedi aims to expand its reach, mainly through education. We want to encourage even more CCE activities while inviting the wider UP community to engage, research, learn and grow here.

20. The role of boredom in the lives of clients attending COSUP

Lara Hirsch (Student: Occupational Therapy) and Dr Helga Lister
(Senior Lecturer: Occupational Therapy)



therapist in the multidisciplinary COSUP team, the students play a vital role in addressing this need. They provide clients with meaningful and purposeful activities.

The diagram below illustrates the cycle of how an occupational therapist can influence a client's habits and participation to replace unconstructive, harmful activities with meaningful activities or behaviours that would promote rehabilitation.



Cycle of consequences of boredom (This diagram was created based on the research by Killgore et al (2020).)

Imagine your mind is restless with idleness, thoughts that make you feel anxious, or an overwhelming void so profound it makes you want to scream. This is how boredom feels for many clients who are on the delicate path of reducing harm associated with substance use.

Boredom is linked to depression, anxiety, impulsivity, risk-taking behaviour and the potential to relapse. As such, it is a significant risk factor in the journey of clients involved in substance misuse.

During their community-situated work-integrated learning module, several fourth-year occupational therapy students work at various Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) sites across the city. COSUP is an organisation with harm reduction programmes that aim to prevent and manage

clients' substance use and reduce the health risks of drug users and the community. Through group intervention at these facilities, students have observed that many clients experience intense boredom at home.

They struggle to find productive activities to replace the time previously spent on drug use, face difficulties securing employment and experience stigma within their community.

This lack of engagement leads to social isolation, spending time indoors and limiting their access to resources and opportunities that could help them combat boredom and disengagement. As a result, many clients feel lost, unsure of how to occupy their time constructively without resorting to drug use. Without a permanent occupational

Occupational therapists can help clients participate in more meaningful activities during their free time by helping them discover new hobbies or explore self-employment opportunities, ultimately improving their occupational identity. As key team members, occupational therapy students facilitate exploratory activities that can help clients discover productive alternatives to replace harmful habits and combat boredom, ultimately enhancing their rehabilitation efforts and quality of life.

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21. The Tidimalo Mdhlane Foundation: Driving the constitutional obligation of access to sufficient food

Tidimalo Mdhlane (Founder)

High levels of hunger and food inadequacy destroy the livelihoods of individuals and households. South Africa faces challenges ranging from high unemployment to poverty.

Hence, I established the Tidimalo Mdhlane Foundation to tackle hunger and food inadequacy. It is based on Section 27 of the Constitution, which provides everyone the right to access sufficient food.

As a final-year student, I wanted to conduct a programme to finish my LLB at the University of Pretoria on a high note. The foundation embarked

on its first programme in August 2024 to confront hunger by providing meals to the people of Mamelodi. It involved volunteers whom I greatly appreciate.

We served 500 meals and an additional 200 for takeaway to consume later in the day. The meals, which included soup and bread, comprised only one-third of what an individual should consume in a day, per United Nations recommendations. In the future, we plan to provide at least three meals per person each day. We also want to improve our meals to include meat and vegetables. We

plan to register a society to partner with other organisations and the Unit for Community Engagement at the University of Pretoria. Our volunteers from the University wore UP-branded t-shirts, hats, jackets and hoodies.

This made an impression on the community we served, as expressed in their remark: 'Thank you, Tukkies'. The event was a success.

Our next project is to serve 1 000 meals and an additional 500 takeaways. The ultimate goal is to serve one million meals all over the country.

22. Food gardens at COSUP sites

Carla van den Berg (Student: Occupational Therapy, University of Pretoria)

Vegetable gardens have been crucial to human livelihood since the earliest days. Originally called 'war-gardens', this common method of survival dates back to as early as World War I, when American President Woodrow Wilson called on his people to plant vegetables to prevent possible food shortages after the war.

This method is now globally recognised as a successful way to sustain and provide food security to families and has the potential to empower communities.

In 2022, a group of people in the City of Tshwane came together to establish good practices and the sustainability of food gardens. Key partners included Dr Martin Bac from



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family medicine, Vaughan McTaggart from the international NPC called the ABBA Embrace Foundation, Richard Hay, chair of the Tshwane branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa and Sabeth Bapela, manager of the Oasis Garden.

As part of this group, the food security ABBA initiative offers training sessions on crop rotation, seasonal harvest and basic gardening skills. The success and transferability of this project have been noted by community members who now rely on their home-based food gardens for fresh produce and income generation.

Various Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) sites have initiated food gardens over the years. They

have been the combined efforts of the joint community projects (JCP), occupational therapy and integrated health care professional (IHL) students. The gardens have experienced various degrees of sustainability. One of the challenges has been the lack of seedlings. Through the partnership with ABBA Gardens, active gardens receive seedlings every six to eight weeks to enable food security and ongoing skills development.

The gardens are a food source for COSUP clients and are important for skills development. They have been used successfully by occupational therapy students for this purpose.

Occupational therapists are health professionals who use everyday activities as therapeutic treatment

modalities. These everyday activities, known as occupations, are used to rehabilitate and improve certain cognitive and physical abilities. Thus, the availability of functioning vegetable gardens at respective COSUP sites creates an excellent opportunity for occupational therapy students to utilise gardening as a therapeutic intervention.

Not only does gardening require physical body movements, but it also requires certain cognitive aspects such as planning, teamwork and communication. Thus, involving COSUP members in gardening activities and projects is not only therapeutic in that it ensures a sense of achievement; it also allows attending members to develop crucial pre-vocational and vocational skills.

23. The impact of culture on students' experience during community engagement and service learning

Bianka Botes and Katleho Nkomo (Students: Occupational Therapy, University of Pretoria)



Culture can be compared to a river, ever-changing, far-reaching, combining different streams, affecting the biodiversity of fauna and flora in its wake. Culture is a way of living that shapes people's mindsets, behaviours and interactions with others. It is a driving force that builds communities.



As fourth-year occupational therapy students, we serve large community areas, visiting various sites for our community block. The community members have different cultural backgrounds, with home languages

such as Afrikaans, Sepedi, isiZulu, Setswana, Xitsonga and Sesotho. For most, English is their second language.

Before starting the block, we were concerned about the possibility of language barriers affecting the clients' understanding of our sessions and our understanding of their responses. Cultural differences might affect whether or not they would be open towards us and willing to work and share with us. Possible personal biases and preconceived expectations from both sides could affect our overall relationship and ability to work well together. Another concern was our physical safety and unfamiliarity with the areas and road conditions.

Being paired in a culturally diverse manner has provided us with the unique opportunity to conquer

the challenges mentioned above, shifting our mindset to working in the community. Interaction between each other's cultural norms led to a deeper understanding of different cultural groups in terms of traditions, values, beliefs and daily living.

This developed our skill set, improving our competency as future occupational therapists. We are now better equipped to provide contextual, culturally relevant intervention sessions and increase our adaptability to cater to diverse clients. Our ability to explain concepts and translate the discussions for one another, where necessary, ensured an optimal relationship and interaction with our clients. It also helped maintain a good flow in the group sessions.

Our cultural backgrounds not only affected how we were able to help one another but also how we presented ourselves and our session to the clients.

I, Katleho, note, "In my culture, taking on a leadership role is expected of occupational therapy students when presenting sessions and this stirred inner conflict regarding how to address the clients respectfully despite our age differences. I had to learn to address groups confidently while still being respectful."

I, Bianka, felt, "Certain concepts and ideas that I viewed as universal sometimes did not have a culturally applicable explanation. A limited understanding of South African native languages affected my ability

to relate, continuously interact and understand what was happening in the session; thus, I had to rely more on non-verbal cues. I had to wait for Katleho or other members of the group to explain what was happening and not let this barrier affect how I continued to present the rest of the session."

Being an intercultural team with a close personal relationship allowed us to build upon each other's strengths and combat each other's weaknesses, putting our hearts at ease so that we could fight the battles of this diverse cultural world together. Thus, collectively, we could experience success.

'Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.' ~ Stephen R Covey

24. Socioeconomic divide: A poem

Christy Witter and Leané Vorster (Students: Occupational Therapy, University of Pretoria)

Dressed in green, smiles wide
Nerves growing slowly but with much hope inside
Our notebooks in hand, perceptions afoot
Going into Mamelodi, entering areas we never thought we would.

On the way there, a single road divides
We look left and right, seeing two different worlds collide.

On our left, a community built on dusty roads, brick and tin
Street vendors, some spaza stores, but what more is within?
Young kids running barefoot all on their own,
In these streets, they see more than they should really know.

Then, on our right, tall, whitewashed walls reach the sky
Neatly trimmed gardens, what a contrast, so high.
Within their locked gates, children play without a care
Our hearts begin to ache, 'But is this really fair?'

"We've come to help," we say, "we want you to succeed."
With plans so large, but is this what they really need?
We try to offer skills so that they might thrive
Anger management, communication, but they're just trying to survive.



Substances used, needles exchanged
However, deep down, still a desire to change.
Amongst the hustle, there's still hope for a better life,
One without struggles, one without strife.

With hurt in their heart, what they truly crave is not a fix but community
We therefore redirect our aim to try and build unity
Here in the deep of Mamelodi, occupational therapy takes its place,
Working towards restoration, creating a healing space.

The clock strikes 12 and our session comes to an end,
We set our notebooks aside, green with hope that the community will mend.
And so, as OT students, we write this poem with advocacy in hand
That maybe, by understanding, we can live less apart in this land.

Not a guarded city here and a township there
But people starting to become aware,
Aware of each other, aware of the divides,
And more aware that we can be on the same side.

25. Jacaranda Children's Home

Charlene Grobler (CEO) and Mariette van Aswegen
(Mental fitness Social Worker)



and community-driven adults. Beyond its direct care work, the organisation supports others by donating clothing and food and providing mentorship.

Despite its impact, Jakaranda Kinderhuis faces significant challenges, including limited funding, unstable family structures and the growing number of children in crisis. To help address these, the organisation has built lasting community partnerships.

It has collaborated with the University of Pretoria for over 20 years hosting social work, psychology, engineering, drama, occupational therapy and speech therapy students helping with tutoring, homework assistance and UP RAG projects.

The centre also welcomes partnerships that support its mission and amplify its reach. It also partners with Kamcare, Loerie Children's Home, Rock of Hope, Bramley Children's Home, Lerato Children's Home, Takalani Children's Home and Messaia Hands.

Situated in East Lynn, Pretoria, Jakaranda Kinderhuis (NPO183-619) has been a pillar of hope for vulnerable children since its founding in September 1987.

As registered children's homes (child and youth care centres) operating two campuses, Jakaranda Kinderhuis (NPO183-619) in East Lynne and Louis Botha Kinderhuis (NPO 181-992) in Queenswood, this organisation provides more than shelter.

It provides healing, education and a future to children who have suffered abuse, abandonment or neglect. Children are placed at Jakaranda Kinderhuis by the Children's Court

after being removed from unsafe environments. Here, they receive therapy, medical care and most importantly, a loving home.

With the capacity to care for 327 children aged three to 18 years, the organisation runs 20 houses with 225 children at Jakaranda Kinderhuis and nine houses with a maximum of 102 children at Louis Botha Kinderhuis. Every day, children are transported to 23 schools across Pretoria, ensuring continuity in their education.

The mission of Jakaranda Kinderhuis is to empower children through skills development, guiding them to become self-reliant, compassionate

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26. Integrating garden projects into ECD training: A collaboration between Moja Gabedi and Mamelodi Campus

Dr Eugene Machimana (Head: Curricular Community Engagement, Unit for Community Engagement)



On 19 September 2024, Innocent Chauke (Moja Gabedi site manager) and Pontsho Masele (assistant site manager) participated in a sensory garden workshop at Mamelodi Campus, facilitated by Dr Martina Jordaan. The primary objective of the workshop was to equip early childhood development (ECD) practitioners with skills to enhance their centres for the benefit of the children. Innocent and Pontsho led a training session for the ECD

practitioners, demonstrating how to initiate garden projects at their respective centres.

Their training was based on the successful garden model developed at the Moja Gabedi Community Hub in Hatfield, Pretoria. The workshop participants expressed gratitude for the training and received seedlings to help them start their own garden initiatives. These gardens are expected to produce vegetables that can be used to support the nutritional

needs of children in their centres. The Moja Gabedi site managers were supported by Albert Matlheketha (project coordinator), who mentored them throughout the development of the garden.

Albert brings a wealth of experience as a former skills trainer in agriculture and a rural community developer, with a strong commitment to transforming subsistence farming communities into commercial producers. Over the years, he has also succeeded as a small-scale broiler chicken farmer with limited resources.

To further inspire the ECD practitioners, the Moja Gabedi team invited them to visit the hub. Visiting the site at Hatfield Stand 384 Festival Street offers a unique opportunity to witness the garden's success and gain practical insights for replicating similar projects on smaller scales.

Previously, Moja Gabedi was an illegal dumping ground. However, the site was transformed in November 2019 when the University of Pretoria adopted it for curricular community engagement (CCE). In 2024, over 1 000 students implemented their CCE projects at Moja Gabedi, contributing their knowledge and enthusiasm to its development.

The team remains committed to sharing their expertise with community members, fostering sustainable growth and development through collaborative efforts.

27. Transformative collaborations: Bridging academia and communities

Ms Tseleng Modjadji (Community Engagement Specialist, University of Johannesburg)

On 10 October 2024, the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria (UP), the Unit for Community Engagement and the Mamelodi Campus hosted an Annual Community Engagement Seminar. Academic staff, postgraduate students and community organisation representatives presented their community engagement projects and scholarly papers on societal impact, innovation, community upliftment and transformative practices.

The Community Engagement Unit at the University of Johannesburg, alongside other institutions of higher learning, were invited to participate. The keynote address by Annie Johnson on partnership development

was a valuable highlight, offering insights to enhance processes within my work, particularly through her focus on communication channels.

I found the student presentations particularly insightful, especially the Well Nurse Framework, which emphasises the well-being and recognition of professional staff.

Among other standout student projects were the South African National Blood Services (SANBS) initiative, which goes beyond blood donation, as well as the Sewing Threads Project and the menstrual health projects. Supported by academic staff, these projects aim to address real-world challenges through service learning.

The community projects showcased during the event were centred on meeting community needs, promoting sustainability and reclaiming neglected land, which gave rise to the Moja Gabedi initiative. These projects underscore the University's commitment to societal transformation. The Patch Up organisation, which focuses on aiding homeless individuals, exemplifies what young people can achieve when provided with meaningful opportunities.

Presentations from academic staff set the foundation for enduring, innovative solutions. Institutions of higher learning must continue to partner with communities to co-create sustainable solutions.

28. Stakeholder engagement at the University of South Africa: NPO perception and insights

Mukonazwothe Beauty Mateletele (Malusi Youth Development Organisation)

The Malusi Youth Development Organisation (MYDO), a non-profit organisation (NPO) founded by Mr Hlakudi Malatji, was honoured to be part of the stakeholder engagement on integrating community-engaged and service learning into research, teaching and learning towards employability, equity and well-being. I was privileged to attend this event on behalf of MYDO alongside my colleague, Miss Gladys Thaane.

MYDO was invited to this engagement through the University of Pretoria (UP). Its aim is to



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advance and advocate for youth socioeconomic issues through four programmes: an education programme, a feeding scheme, a sports, art and culture programme and a youth empowerment and entrepreneurship programme.

We also serve as a link between various institutions, NPOs, the City of Tshwane, government departments and UP, which allows them to engage with the community on several projects and services.

The stakeholder engagement focused mainly on integrating students and community engagement for their employability. Each theme and topic opened up room for more insightful discussions and opinions. The stakeholders were people from universities and NPOs, who were able to shed light on and equip us with knowledge pertaining to student affairs, community engagement and employability. I was captivated by

the topic of indigenising research ethics and integrity, which Dr Retha Visagie led. She unpacked how we can encourage students to be ethical when conducting research and writing assignments. We all agreed that there is a significant gap between indigenous academia and the current curriculum, especially now that artificial intelligence (AI) is thriving in the academic world.

This is where indigenous scholars come in: Introducing AI in communities and integrating it with indigenous knowledge could take us somewhere better and lead us to a promising future.

What I took away from all the discussions and engagements was the importance of community engagement with higher education institutions and the government for the future of South Africa. As a student myself, being part of this engagement made me realise how important it

is to be trained before I graduate. I can attest that such initiatives are necessary in every student's life. After this engagement, the different organisations and stakeholders had an opportunity to network. We also managed to network and exchange information with the University of South Africa (Unisa) Community Engagement Department.

We are eagerly looking forward to working with them in our future endeavours and hopefully, this engagement with them was the beginning of something greater.

In conclusion, this stakeholder engagement at Unisa was a success. All the discussions and initiatives on how higher education institutions can engage effectively through NPOs will definitely foster development. As an NPO, we are ready and more than willing to be the ones who bridge the gap between the community and universities.

29. Winning second prize in the University Social Responsibility photo competition

Monde Mzamani (BVSc VI, Faculty of Veterinary Science and VetSCO)



engagement had on the students and the community. The community appreciated the opportunity to receive healthcare and education, addressing human and animal needs in a single setting.

Meanwhile, the students gained hands-on experience and a greater appreciation for the collaborative efforts, fostering a collaborative spirit among future healthcare and veterinary professionals.

After my last community engagement for the year, I was advised to enter the University Social Responsibility (USR) Month photography competition.

I won second place. I was grateful because it meant that all my work was recognised. I thank Dr Martina Jordaan (Head: Community Engagement, Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus). As I near graduation, I am both excited and humbled by the journey of community engagement that has shaped my time at university. While my university years are coming to an end, my commitment to helping the community will continue.

This marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another, as I will start my compulsory community service (CCS) next year. My experiences with community engagement have equipped me with the tools to make a difference wherever I go. As I step into the future, I carry with me the lesson that community engagement and collaboration are key to creating a better, more equitable society for all.

As I have reached the end of my six years as an undergraduate, I reflect on my involvement in community engagement. I was privileged to work with diverse groups, initiate projects and contribute to various causes, all of which allowed me to deepen my understanding of the importance of collaboration.

I took on leadership roles in several community engagement initiatives. During my tenure as a community engagement representative for the Veterinary Student Community Outreach (VetSCO) group, one of the student societies, I worked closely with other student societies from

the different faculties and a few local organisations. This experience taught me valuable lessons in collaboration, communication and leadership.

I became actively involved in campus groups focused on community engagement and attended some workshops chaired by Dr Alfred Kgasi, a lecturer and the Community Engagement Chair for the Faculty of Veterinary Science (FVS).

On the last One Health outreach I organised with Lungile Mkhabela (Health House Community Engagement), we had a huge success and one of the rewarding experiences was seeing the positive impact the

30. University of Pretoria colleagues are welcomed to the University of Leeds, UK

Steve Gleadall (Educational Engagement Manager and Civic Engagement co-Lead), Amanda Jackson (Sustainability Manager and Civic Engagement co-Lead) and Anastasia Karanika (Student Volunteering Manager and Community Engaged Learning (CEL) co-Lead)



The University of Leeds was honoured to welcome three colleagues from the University of Pretoria (UP) in October 2024. The visit followed a delegation from Leeds visiting Pretoria in April 2024.

The University of Leeds hosted Prof Vanessa Steenkamp, Dr Eugene Machimana and Dr Neeraj Mistry for five days as part of a partnership to explore the importance of community engagement in student education, research and civic collaboration.

Our universities are committed to collaborating to learn from each other, develop more impactful approaches to community engagement and share good practices with a global audience. We showcased examples of the wide range of work from Leeds that addresses local inequalities. Our students support much of this work through volunteering opportunities, curricular community engagement (CCE) and paid

placements, so our guests had the opportunity to hear students talk about their experiences. The week started with the University's annual volunteering fair, an opportunity for our guests to meet more than 30 community partners and learn how the University of Leeds students support their work through volunteering and CCE.

This was followed by on-site visits to two of our partners. At the Leeds and York National Health Service (NHS) Trust, we saw where students volunteer with the on-site occupational therapy teams in the forensic inpatient wards.

At the historic Leeds Rhinos RLFC Stadium in Headingley, we met former player and now trustee of the Rhinos Foundation, Jamie Jones-Buchanan MBE, to discuss the impact of the foundation's inclusive Change Lives Through Sport Programme, which engages children and under-represented communities in sport.

We must train and develop our students to participate in community engagement activities. Throughout the week, ideas were shared on recruiting, supporting and ensuring students' success.

There are more opportunities for learning here and we look forward to continuing the work with our UP colleagues to develop information and guidance on the positive role of university students in community engagement.

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a key driver for our community engagement work and inform our strategic approach. Colleagues from our Sustainability Service shared their insights and expertise, outlining how we are working towards being a net-zero campus and utilising resources to address inequalities across the city and beyond. This prompted great conversations about shared values, approaches to addressing the SDGs and ideas for future collaboration. We are eager to continue learning together and exploring ways to bring community involvement, local knowledge and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into our sustainability work. The highlight of the week was the roundtable event that brought together university staff, young people and members of our local

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communities. The theme was the power of transdisciplinary collaboration in creating fair and

equitable futures for local children and young people. We were honoured to be joined by the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung, who gave an opening speech. She encouraged us to work together to provide young people with the best opportunities and access to a successful future. The audience enjoyed hearing about the South African perspective and we are very grateful to Dr Eugene and Dr Neeraj for sharing their experience and expertise with us.

We also heard from young people about their challenges and hopes for improving the city. It was an excellent forum for making connections and generating ideas that will help to shape the future of our work. It was truly wonderful to be joined by friends from the UP. It brought back memories of our trip to their beautiful country and confirmed how much we value the collaboration between the two universities. We look forward to continuing our work together.

31. Bridging communication barriers: A collaborative effort to support invisible disabilities

Sabeegah Dawood (Audiologist: Transoranje School)

Located in the heart of Pretoria West, Transoranje School for the Deaf has been a cornerstone of specialised education for profoundly deaf learners since its establishment in August 1954. With over 71 years of dedicated service, the school continues to champion inclusive learning for children aged 4 through Grade 12, offering both academic and technical programmes tailored to meet the unique needs of its learners.

As a public school and registered non-profit organisation (NPO), Transoranje's mission is clear: to provide quality education, maximise resource utilisation and instil positive morals and values in its learners. The school's vision is anchored in the belief that every learner should feel valued and inspired through an innovative and accessible education system. Transoranje offers a wide range of academic programmes, from early childhood development to Further Education and Training (FET) and vocational training through the Technical Occupational Curriculum (TOC) and Differentiated Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (D-CAPS) streams. A

robust multidisciplinary team—including audiologists, speech and occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers and a full-time nurse supports the holistic development of each learner. Moreover, learners benefit from boarding facilities accommodating approximately 80 students and receive free transportation from surrounding communities such as Atteridgeville, Soshanguve, Mamelodi and Olievenhoutbosch.

With a staff complement of over 100 professionals, Transoranje provides a safe and empowering environment for its learners. Recent highlights include a successful choir tour in the Karoo and active participation in art competitions, demonstrating the school's commitment to holistic development. The school maintains strong ties with the University of Pretoria, particularly with the Departments of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, through modules such as third-year IHL, fourth-year ODL and KMP. These collaborations on community engagement projects have been described as both

positive and impactful, with students demonstrating professionalism and insight.

Despite its continued success, the school faces ongoing challenges, including funding for assistive devices and infrastructure maintenance. Students and volunteers can support the school by assisting with website updates, participating in Mandela Day cleaning initiatives and contributing to the construction of a play area for the Foundation Phase.

Transoranje collaborates with organisations such as Deaf Ability NPO, the Department of Social Development and various private donors. For the latest updates and opportunities to support the school, the public is encouraged to follow its Facebook page.

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32. Transoranje school for the deaf: 71 Years of inclusive education

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33. Community Engagement Forum Members



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Prof Gerrit Stols	Director Department for Education Innovation
Dr Rejoice Nsibande	Deputy Director Academic Development
Dr Eugene Machimana	Head: Curricular Community Engagement Department for Education Innovation: Unit for Community Engagement
Faculty support: Department for Education Innovation - Unit for Community Engagement	
Ms Kanye Rampa	Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT)
	Humanities
	Veterinary Science
Mr Albert Matlheketha	Health Sciences
	Law
	Theology and Religion
Ms Londiwe Mahlangu	Economic Management Sciences (EMS)
	Education
	Natural & Agricultural Sciences (NAS)
Community Engagement Faculty Representatives	
Prof Natasja Holtzhausen	EMS
TBC	Education
Prof Lelanie Smith	EBIT
Ms Sharne Mokhethi	
Dr Christa Ellis	School of Health Care Sciences (SOHCS)
Prof Ahmed Bhayat	School of Dentistry
Mr Mahlatse Moropeng	School of Health Systems and Public Health (SHSPH)
Dr Felistus Ndamba	Humanities
TBC	Law Clinic
Ms Karabo Ozah	
Prof Nerhene Davis	NAS
Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart	
Mr Lance Thomas	Theology and Religion
Ms Irene Thomas	
TBC	Veterinary Science
Support departments	
Dr Martina Jordaan	Mamelodi Campus
Mr Edwin Smith	
Mr Rowan Watson	Security Services
Mr Rikus Delport	Institutional Advancement
Ms Isabel de Necker	
Ms Bhaviksha Ramouthar	Student Affairs (DSA)
Ms Buhle Makhathini	
Ms Khanyi Mahlangu	Student Representative Council (SRC)
Mr Kamva Diko	
Mr Abe Mathopa	Department of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education
Ms Christine Nel	Library Services
Mrs Linky Mokgohlwa	
Community partners representatives	