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DENIS HURLEY CENTRE
UPDATE
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June 2022

Positive news in the fight against AIDS
Chiropractors changing lives for free
Prestigious venue for our booksellers
The return of Street Store



Healing Hands #1



Healing the Planet



Healing Hands #2

MAJOR PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV - ONE STEP AT A TIME

Whilst the focus of the world has been on a coronavirus, the retro-virus that has had such an impact in KZN across 4 decades continues to affect our patients. HIV of course is no longer the death sentence it was - but making sure that people do not just live but thrive is a constant focus of our work.

At our recent monthly birthday event for staff, Dudu Ntombela, one of our senior nursing sisters, shared about how 30 years ago working with 'AIDS patients' was just a matter of helping people die with dignity. Now, thanks to ARV medication, there is no reason why anyone with HIV should not enjoy a normal life span. But that requires people being tested regularly, understanding and accepting the diagnosis if it is positive, starting medication (ARVs), and sticking with it every day for the rest of your life even though you don't feel sick!

That is hard enough for anyone. But harder still if you are homeless and living a chaotic life; or if you are a refugee woman and worried about the stigma of HIV in your community. (It is, for example, shocking to hear that there are Congolese churches in Durban that require a negative HIV test before they will marry you!).

Since we started our clinic, we have conducted over 16,000 HIV tests - with counselling before and after - with test kits supplied by the Department of Health. We are alongside a number of organisations offering HIV checks (including Government clinics) but we are able to get to patients who would otherwise be overlooked or who are more reluctant about testing. Between 20% and 30% of the people we test are HIV+, usually a higher % among women.

But tests are no good unless you can also follow up. For several years, we had to rely on our HIV+ patients going to Government clinics to get their ARVs: but sometimes they did not follow through or they were not made welcome. Three years ago our local clinic, Lancers Road, assigned a specialist ARV nurse to be based at the DHC so that she could 'initiate' clients on site. This was going well but a few months ago the funding ended. So the DHC has taken on that task (and the related costs) and now two of our own nurses are ARV specialists. They are helping over 250 people: our own homeless and refugee patients and also people who live/ work in this area and need easy access to their medication.

For our regular patients we have gone a step further with our Directly Observed Treatment Strategy (or DOTS). This means that 100 people who are on ARVs are seen every day or every week as appropriate so we can monitor them and make sure they are keeping healthy and taking their treatment. And we had some great news this month from the people on the DOTS programme at our Dalton Clinic who are living in a most degrading and dirty environment. They have all been so faithful to their treatment that their virus levels are now undetectable: that means they have almost no chance of getting sick or of passing on the virus to someone else.

This is a great testimony to their perseverance and to the patients and to the health workers who support them, Mpume Fuze and Zovuyo Ncayiyana. We really do believe in 'life before death'!

Photo: Ruth Birthwhistle, our Clinic Co-ordinator, in the ARV room with one of her regular patients.



'HEALING HANDS' PROVIDING A NEW FREE SERVICE

Over the years, we have had many connections with DUT (the Durban University of Technology): from their Urban Futures Centre, the International Centre for Non-Violence (ICON) and their health education programmes. DUT homeopathy students started offering free services at the DHC last year; now in the last few months we have welcomed *Chiropractors*.

The students who are coming to us are towards the end of their six-year course and work under the supervision of Dr Grant Matkovich and Dr Charmaine Korporaal. Each Wednesday morning, four or five students bring in their field beds and create a pop-up clinic. Take-up was initially slow since people do not always understand what chiropractic is: a manipulation of the musculo-skeletal system to set things back to the way they should be. But word-of-mouth is the best advertising and once a few of our more adventurous staff and service users had felt the benefits for themselves, they soon became fervent ambassadors.

Shameez Egumbo, one of the students commented: "Some of the people we have seen have been suffering for many years; and then they tell you that they feel not only better, but amazing, for the first time in years. It's very rewarding work."

Often the patients they see are having their first experience of such a service. Perhaps they did not realise that there was a solution to their back pain or neck pain; or they just thought they would never be able to afford it in private practice.

One delighted man is Siphon Shongwe: living on the streets means that he rarely sleeps comfortably and so often has back pain. "Now I feel completely

refreshed," he said. Another satisfied customer is Nonhlanhla Ndlovu, known to many of our supporters as Ma-Ndlovu in the kitchen. "My body was very stiff and just stuck. The treatment has freed me - I am so happy and will definitely be returning!"

Dr Korporaal commented that she was especially pleased that so many of our staff members and volunteers have benefited. "Often times, at many of the places we visit especially at places that provide charity work, the staff are overlooked."

You can read Nia Louw's fuller story about this service in the *Berea Mail*.

We hope that other medical practitioners will also think about how they can provide a free version of their service to assist those who come to the DHC. We especially want to hear from opticians, dentists, pharmacists and physiotherapists.

Photo: Chloe Bothma treating Illa Thompson who, with her booksellers, has definitely benefited from the chiropractors, given the heavy boxes of books that they are often moving around.



HOMELESS BOOKSELLERS ALONGSIDE DURBAN'S FINEST

Vendors from our Street Lit entrepreneurship project have been gifted a stand by the organisers of the East Coast Radio House + Garden show to sell their quality second-hand books to the thousands of visitors to this high-profile event.

They have two tables full of carefully chosen books including gardening and home improvement books, great novels and art books. The H+G Show continues until this Sunday (3 July) so do go and look for them in the Home-Grown Design Fair sector at stand HG06.

"We are hugely grateful to the organisers of the ECR House + Garden Show for giving us this great opportunity," says project facilitator Illa Thompson. "Like so many other initiatives, we were battling over lockdown. Finding places to trade has been a challenge. We have motivated vendors and excellent books - we just need places to sell. So being offered at stand at the ECR House and Garden Show is really important for everybody."

Homeless people are recruited into the Street Lit programme if they have an aptitude to set up their own micro business, and also have a love of books and reading. Working with the rest of the DHC team, Illa identifies, trains, supports and nurtures the booksellers.

Street Lit is an award-winning entrepreneurship project which provides income, skills and purpose to a team of a dozen rehabilitated men and women who were once homeless and are now off the streets. And it is also helping to heal the planet since the thousands of books we have sold would otherwise have ended up in landfill.

Having been birthed in 2018 when Durban was awarded status as a UNESCO City of Literature, Street Lit has managed to survive lockdown. In fact, it has gained momentum since people have had more time to read and, with many libraries still closed and new books so expensive, access to quality pre-read books has become even more attractive. The project also benefits from the generosity of the Order of St John in Durban who host our huge book store.

We are selling all across Durban and are grateful to our various venue partners: David V is based at KZNSA Gallery; Eric at the Botanic Gardens; Richard and Khanyi at Pick'n'Pay Hyper Durban North; Vusi at Berea Centre; Mxolisi outside the DHC; David J by the taxi rank near the station; David S by the mobile library behind the Workshop, and Bongwa in Pine Street at a licensed street table (our first after years of trying!). In addition, there are other vendors around town and at events such as concerts, plays and pop-up markets. They can easily be spotted by their lime green branding.

Should you have books to donate, or know of places to sell books, contact Illa. (Please do NOT deliver books directly to vendors or to the DHC).

Photo: Alvon and Bongwa ready to make money at the House + Garden Show: perhaps they already read 'The Smartest Guys in the Room'!



STREET STORE BACK IN ACTION IN 2022

Street Store, for the first time since 2019, was back in action in June and it was a huge success.

Of the many disruptions caused by COVID lockdowns, one we felt keenly was that for the last two years we have not been able to hold our annual Street Store with Grace Family Church. This is not only a great chance to provide a range of services for poor people in central Durban but also a way of connecting with one of the strongest faith communities in Durban and giving them an opportunity to come and see our part of the city. Our Director recently spoke, live and virtually, at Grace Church services: [click here for the video](#).

The concept of Street Store has spread around the world but it is 'proudly South African', having been devised originally by a Jewish woman in Cape Town. It is not just about collecting and handing out thousands of items of clothing - though we did do that - but doing it in a way that reinforces dignity and choice. Thus, all the clothes are neatly sorted and folded or on hangars, and each customer is helped by a personal shopper to choose the clothes that fit them - it's a very upmarket department store! To give you an idea of the scale of the project - a whole morning was spent at Grace sorting the bags of donated clothes into boxes and those boxes filled an entire container which was delivered to the DHC (thanks to Container World).

After shopping for clothes and shoes, our 782 visitors (men, women and children) then had the chance to get a haircut, a foot wash, a COVID vaccine, and a TB or HIV test. Our own clinic team were on hand for any follow-ups plus there were advice tables from DUT Chiropractors, the SA Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) with first response being provided by St John's. Excellent breyani was served to everyone from the Newlands branch of Food for Life (which is affiliated to the International Society of Krishna Consciousness).

All of the practical elements were important; but the most critical part of the exercise was showing poor people that they deserve to be treated with the same care and respect as anyone else in society. 'The Golden Rule' - variations of "treat others as you would like to be treated" - is a moral precept of all religions and rightly so. The 170 volunteers who ran Street Store certainly put it into action.

Photo (Brett Morgan): Just one of the dozens of volunteers and one of the hundreds of happy shoppers who came together for Street Store. (More pictures on our Facebook page and also a wonderful short video on YouTube).



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First National Bank Durban Main branch 221426
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www.denishurleycentre.org

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