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UPDATE

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September 2022

L'Shana Tovah for our Jewish readers

UKZN law students offering help
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Remembering the late Queen Elizabeth II



Dress-up day at the creche



Partnership with Lotus FM



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BRINGING LAW AND LAWYERS TO THE STREETS OF DURBAN

As part of the 4th year of their studies, UKZN law students are encouraged to do a Street Law project - to get a better understanding of what the law is like when it hits the streets. In 2018 they started coming to the Denis Hurley Centre as an option; we are delighted that post-COVID we have been welcoming new students back this year.

20 students were with us across two days each week from April to June and another 20 now from August to October. The students engage with the homeless people in Paddy Kearney Way between breakfast and lunch. But they also help prepare and serve the meals: this is an important way of them building the trust of our visitors.

One of the hardest lessons for them to learn is that most of the time they cannot solve problems - but they can be valuable just by being willing to listen. They work in pairs and there is always at least one Zulu-speaker in each pair to facilitate easy communication. Where appropriate they can give advice on legal matters and also teach people about their rights. In some cases, they take a witness statement of an incident: or help a homeless person to learn what makes for a good witness statement in the future.

The students feel that they have learnt some big lessons: "I need to adapt to the needs of my clients sometimes that means answering a call at 10pm to give advice"; "I need to be compassionate and understanding"; "Homelessness is indeed a multidimensional issue."

And they also feel that the project has made a difference in their lives: “I’m now more convinced that I should practice human rights law”; “Now I won’t be judging people on their outward appearance”, “I will take more pro bono cases in my practice because not everybody can afford legal services”.

Some of these lawyers may indeed work in the human rights field in the future, but whatever area of the law they take up, we hope that seeds of empathy and compassion have been sown that will bear fruit. As one commented: “I will always have a special place in my heart for the centre after what I learnt”.

Dr Janine Hicks, the lecturer in charge of the programme added: “I deeply appreciate the opportunity this partnership creates for our final year students to connect ... Connect with this community of 'other' citizens, connect with social justice issues, and for many, connect with their passion for why they chose to study Law in the first place. I love seeing how this experience unlocks their insight into systemic failures in access to rights and justice, and how the Law can be used to leverage transformation for those neglected by the state.”

We will soon be launching a regular Street Law clinic in conjunction with the UKZN Law Clinic at the Denis Hurley Centre. A workshop has taken place with students from this year and ones who have offered to come back from previous years and initially work at the regular clinic. We want to be careful that we do not over-promise and so the students will be thoroughly briefed about what issues they can and cannot take on and how they can connect street living people to free professional legal services.



SUCCESS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MESS

We have reported a few times this year about Dalton, the area about 2km from the DHC where we have a satellite operation run out of two containers. The garden set up by friends from the Durban Botanic Gardens continues to prosper; and the directly observed treatment (DOTS) that we run for residents on ARVs and TB medication continues to do well, thanks to the patience of our clinic staff and the perseverance of the people they are helping.

The crèche that we set up initially in 2016 also perseveres under the professional eye of our pre-school teacher, Charity Motaung. For most of this year, we have been preparing 15 children, aged 4 or 5, to be ready for primary school. Foundational education at this age is a critical key to doing well at school - not just starting literacy and numeracy, but also learning to play and work with others, following a timetable, keeping oneself and one’s area clean, and developing creative skills. This is true for any children but even more so for the Dalton children who, outside our compound, are in the middle of such chaos and squalor.

September being ‘Heritage Month’ we hosted a Heritage event, with the children dressing up in traditional clothes and performing songs and dances for their mothers. This also marked the inauguration of a wonderful soft green lawn that they can now play on, supplied at a keen price by the Go Group of Belgotex and installed by Isintu Flooring. This was funded by a Dutch organisation, Izingane Happy Foundation, who have been faithful supporters of the crèche since 2018, helping through regular grants and visits by their Trustee, Loni Vles-Rosenmöller, to offer advice and provide connections with

similar projects that they fund in other parts of South Africa.

The green lawn complements the wonderful new jungle gym that was built for the children by the Adventure Obstacle Training group. One of their members heard about our crèche, came to visit and was inspired to assemble the funding and the expertise that led to such wonderful and safe play equipment.

All of this, meanwhile, is in stark contrast to the disgusting situation outside our small compound. The area has become dirtier and dirtier: rubbish is rarely collected, problems of accumulated rainwater are making it even more unliveable, and the toilet block that the Municipality installed (after years of nagging by us) has a sewerage fault that gets worse and worse. Moreover, 5 years after we installed our containers with sinks and toilets, we are still waiting for them to be connected to the mains supply!

We have repeatedly reported all of this to the Municipality with photographs – but have just been moved from department to department. Despite site visits, expressions of shock, and promises that ‘something will be done’, nothing has been. If the DHC is a lighthouse in the stormy waters of the CBD, our Dalton compound has become an island in a cesspit of neglect and indifference.

The photo from Heritage Day shows the new green lawn and the jungle gym in contrast to build up of waste just outside the fence (insert).



DHC 'WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE' JOIN THE LOTUS FM 'WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE'

Women representing the Denis Hurley Centre had a strong presence at the Radio Lotus FM Women of Substance initiative during August – Women’s month.

Lotus FM’s talk show Talk@7 presented by Zakia Ahmed Siddiqi (pictured above) hosted the station’s inaugural Women of Substance Awards. The awards seek to recognize South African women who are excellent achievers and who are using their voices and positions to effect powerful change.

The public were invited to nominate such outstanding women in the following categories:-

Business & Entrepreneurship; Education; Health & Medicine; Disability; Social & Community Welfare (including non-profits & NGOs); Arts & Entertainment; and Youth Icon.

Lotus FM chose three women affiliated to the DHC as category judges who were considered to be role models in their respective fields. Sister Cathy

Murugan (our social worker) judged the Social & Community Welfare category; Ursula Collings (our Chair) judged the Education category, and Illa Thompson (who facilitates the Street Lit programme) judged Arts and Entertainment.

Judges spoke on-air at the launch of the campaign about the importance of their category, with hints and tips for women working actively in those areas.

The national awards evening was held at the Elangeni Hotel, and was broadcast live on Lotus FM – a national SABC channel.

It was an excellent opportunity to network with fellow Women of Substance, and with media representatives from Lotus FM – and for the DHC to be publicly affirmed as an environment for Women to Substance to thrive and perform.

The line-up of judges for the award including (far left) Illa Thompson and (second from right) Sr Cathy Murugan. (Unfortunately, Ursula Collings was not available on the night).



LINKS WITH HER LATE MAJESTY, QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The death this month of Queen Elizabeth, and the outpouring of sympathy for her family and for the British people, moved the world greatly. We are pleased to note three interesting links with the Queen.

One was reported a few months ago when Illa Thompson, who runs our Street Lit bookselling programme, received an award from the Order of St John, of which the Queen was the Sovereign Head. Although Illa did not get the medal directly from the royal hands, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba as Prior of the Order of St John in South Africa, was bestowing it on the Queen's behalf.

We also reported earlier this year on our new UK-based patrons and that one of them is Thembi Tambo, daughter of 'mother and father of the nation' Oliver and Adelaide Tambo. We shared a beautiful photo of her with the Queen, since until recently, Thembi was the High Commissioner of South Africa to the Court of St James – and so had to present her credentials at the Palace. She is taking a short break and in the new year will be appointed as the High Commissioner in New Zealand – where she will then have to present her credentials to Charles III, since he is the King of New Zealand.

(Ambassadors between countries in the Commonwealth are called High Commissioners to indicate the friendship that exists between this family of independent nations).

During the coverage of the Queen's death, her voice was frequently heard giving a broadcast from Cape Town which she visited as part of a post-World War Royal Tour with King George VI in 1947. On 21 March, she was in Durban

at a very grand garden party in Mitchell Park – the royal family were of course staying at King’s House. One of the guests was Denis Hurley who only 2 days earlier had become bishop – it was one of his first episcopal duties and set a trend for a life in which he would mix with the highest and lowliest.

Our Director (who is British) was invited to share a few words about the Queen at a service at St Paul’s Durban a few days before her funeral – she had actually attended a special Matins in the church when she was in Durban for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1999. He said that he drew inspiration from her life in three ways: her relentless commitment to service which she absolutely saw as her Christian vocation; the ease with which she mixed with people of all cultures as evidenced in the Commonwealth; and the way in which (like +Hurley and Paddy Kearney) she was able to show respect and engagement with other religious traditions without ever feeling she had to be apologetic about her own.

A fuller piece written by him will be in next month’s Southern Cross. Click here to subscribe to receive a monthly copy by post or on-line; or buy one in your church. If your church does not stock the Southern Cross please contact Pamela.

The photo shows the very 31-year-old Bishop Hurley (far left at the garden party) with a copy of his invitation inset. Let us know if recognise any other faces in the photo.



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