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UPDATE



ETHEKWINI Living Legends



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May 2023

Homeless Man to chair Municipal committee

Holy Family Sisters meet in Rwanda

Digital Art on display After Dark

An invitation to eThekweni Municipality



A reunion for Sr Cathy in central Africa



The many ways we try to project Peace



A good use for R16,000 per day?

STREET LIT BOOK VENDOR TO CHAIR MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE

One of our Street Lit book vendors, David van der Westhuizen, has been selected to chair a selection committee for eThekweni's Library Department.

Street Lit facilitator, Illa Thompson, was invited to be part of the 'One City, One Book' panel and she suggested to the organisers that one of the Street Lit vendors be included too. So David van der Westhuizen, well known at the coffee shop at KZNSA Gallery, joined Illa on the panel. It was the first time he had been part of such a process.

The 'One City, One Book' Campaign is an initiative of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Unit of eThekweni Municipality to promote a culture of reading among the citizens of Durban, urban and rural. Each year, it encourages people to read one new book by a South African author and engage with the content and message of that book across the Municipality's libraries and Sizakala service centres.

The panel was tasked to select one book, from a shortlist of four novels, and present their preferences at a formal meeting. Panellists were given time to read and critique the books and then met to debate at length the virtues, merits and shortcomings of the four - working within selection guidelines. But you will have to wait a while to find out what the winning book is!

Moreover, the panel also had to elect a chairperson from among the group to present their findings and be a source of feedback to the Library Department

heads over the next few months. And they unanimously chose David after being really impressed by his input, ideas, preparation and suggestions.

It is quite possible that this is the first time in South Africa that a member of the homeless community has been elected, on merit, to chair a formal city structure that is not about homelessness.

David is one of the project's triumphant success stories and most popular vendors. A building contractor by trade, he found himself living on the streets when he moved to Durban and job opportunities failed to materialise. Through the support of the Street Lit project, he gradually moved from sleeping rough, to living in a shelter, and he now rents a room in a Glenwood apartment block. He is known as a fast and critical reader, and the vendors often defer to his incredible knowledge of books and literature.

David was chuffed and surprised to have been chosen to lead the panel. "I am very honoured to be on the committee and to be a part of something like this. It feels really good to be respected, and it is a huge ego boost to be involved. I really didn't expect to be chosen as chair!"

Whilst we encourage you to use your local library, we especially encourage you to buy books from our Street Lit vendors as they operate in various locations around Durban. Follow their Facebook page for an update on where you can find them.

David at his usual spot outside KZNSA Gallery - as always with a book in his hands.



SR CATHY INSPIRED BY A VISIT TO RWANDA

Our senior social worker, Sr Cathy Murugan, is a member of a Catholic religious order called 'the Sisters of the Holy Family' which is why she has the letters 'HF' after her name.

Founded originally in France in 1820, they are an international order operating in more than 25 countries and with 1200 sisters worldwide. The order has deep roots in South Africa and a sign in our café recalls that they have been operating in central Durban since they arrived here in 1888. The four Holy Family schools in Durban today (Holy Family College, Maris Stella, St Augustine's and St Anthony's) all remain very involved in the work of the DHC. As well as Sr Cathy, both Sr Marion Millane and Sr Collette Holmes have worked with our organisation since the early days. And we are immensely grateful to the Holy Family sisters for the financial support they give us each year.

Every few years there is a gathering of the leadership teams of the different African countries where Holy Family is present: DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Lesotho, Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa. This last month, their meeting took place in Rwanda and Sr Cathy was one of the SA representatives.

She explained that the theme for the meeting was taken from the Scripture quote (Mk 4:35) 'Let us go over to the other side'. The work of the sisters was presented in the light of the huge challenges faced across the Continent: economic crises, unending wars, terrorism, xenophobia, poverty, high unemployment. As well as the participants from nine African countries, sharing in both English and French, there were also contributions from Italy,

Ireland and the UK.

“By getting to know each other and the reality of our countries, we were able to explore together leadership towards transformation. We conducted a deepened evaluation of our presence which will help the leadership in Rome to make specific decisions for the continent. We reflected on what needs to change for each of us, personally and in our communities, asking ‘what does it mean to go to the other shore?’ as we plan the way forward.”

While in Rwanda, Cathy had the chance to reconnect with families from nearby Uganda whom she had helped when she worked there immediately before joining the DHC in 2016 (see picture at the top).

Cathy remarked on how very welcoming and friendly Rwanda is and how beautiful. She was especially struck by how clean the country is with its zero tolerance for plastic. It was explained to her that, on the last Saturday of each month, everything stops until midday and all citizens are involved in cleaning up their neighbourhoods.

Rwanda’s population of 13.2 million is one of the youngest in the world and it is also one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. But while the capital city, Kigali, becomes ever more modern, life outside the city is tough for the majority of people who depend on subsistence farming.

“It is known as the land of a thousand hills – more like a million!! Goods are transported largely on bicycles to the local markets and that is hard labour on those hilly roads. But their main export, Rwandan coffee and tea, can compare with the best in the world.”

Visiting a local shrine, where Mary is believed to have appeared to three young women a few years before the genocide, Cathy found herself wondering: “What meaning does the message of Mary, the Mother of Christ, have for us today especially on our beautiful Continent of Africa beset with so many challenges?”

Holy Family novices from around Africa welcome the delegates in song.



TORRENTIAL RAIN DIDN'T STOP AN INNOVATIVE ARTS EVENT AT DHC

Michelle Stewart, Coordinator of the Digital Arts program at UKZN, writes about 'Urban Projections: Designing Freedom' which she helped stage recently at the Denis Hurley Centre.

As part of the Centre for Creative Arts' Human Rights Festival, 'Artfluence', we organised an after dark event which featured still and moving images projected on to the windows of the DHC and the walls of adjacent buildings. The projections featured images and animations from a range of sources.

The Denis Hurley Centre's large-scale scripts projection focused on the commitment to peace shared by the Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions, by showing the word written in the alphabet of the four Scriptures: 'Peace - Shalom - Salaam - Shanti' (see picture at the top). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) presented a memorial projection featuring a series of 60 images in an incomplete puzzle, with each piece representing individuals who migrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa and went missing

along the journey or after arrival. These families form part of the "Missing and Deceased Migrants Project" from the ICRC.

The Digital Arts program with selected local artists presented animations and digital artworks that explored various human rights themes, with an emphasis on 'the right to freedom of expression'. Lastly, the projections featured a live collaborative drawing event between artists in Durban and Belgium. This exhibit was centred around a drawing application 'FRAMED' which allows artists to draw and co-create simultaneously and interactively. It was created by Janna Beck and her Maxlab team at the Royal College of Fine Art (Antwerp University College).

We wanted to host this event at the DHC due to their unique location within a vibrant urban and diverse community hub that is not always visited by the general public. This was a chance to expose the broader academic, cultural and student community to this area and to the DHC itself. It seemed apt to project artworks based on themes of human rights on and within the unique architecture of a building that functions as a humanitarian centre, serving the pastoral, community, and educational needs for the poorest of the poor. Despite the rain, the event was exhilarating for the many who attended and participated.

Some of the images on the DHC, projected from outside the building and from inside through the windows.

We were also pleased this month, again via UKZN, to welcome a jazz band from the University of Northern Iowa who gave a free outdoor concert. Photos from both events on our Facebook page.



OFFER FROM THE DHC TO ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

We were very saddened recently to read that eThekweni officials want to spend R16,000 a day on a facility for holding meetings. Officials claim that the Pencil Club (pictured at the top) is the sort of environment that they need to use to show investors the best of Durban.

The DHC would be very pleased to offer meeting rooms in our own building for city officials to welcome potential investors - and at a fraction of the price!

Sadly, we cannot offer cigars or expensive cocktails. But we can definitely show investors the best of what Durban is: a city where people of all faiths work together; where Durbanites are willing to donate food and volunteer time to help those most in need; where marginalised people like the homeless, refugees and drug users are helped to turn their lives around; where young people from our top schools are open to learning and being challenged; and where artists, musicians and dancers enjoy sharing their talents with the community.

It is reported that a meeting room for just one day at the Pencil Club in Umhlanga costs R16,000. That is roughly what it costs to run the whole of the Denis Hurley Centre each day. For that money, last year, the Denis Hurley Centre served 161,000 meals to homeless people; saw 32,000 patients for primary healthcare, TB and HIV support; and provided training and empowerment programmes for dozens of people who want to change their lives.

Our director commented: "It is shocking that eThekweni would even consider prioritising spending ratepayers' money like this when there are so many

social needs that they could be funding. What is even worse is how eThekweni consistently ignores the needs of the poor and regularly spends money on policies that are designed to exclude or even harm people at the margins. This from the place that aspires to be Africa's most caring city."

The DHC relies entirely on funds and donations from the general public, faith groups and corporates. We receive no funding from eThekweni (though a proportion of the medicines in our clinic are provided by Government). Our budget for 2023 is R6.2 million or about R16,000 per day. For more details on how to support our work click here or contact the Director.

One of the several meeting rooms at the DHC that are for hire to the Municipality and others for a fraction of the price of Umhlanga, and which can still showcase the best of Durban!



Director: Raymond Perrier (raymond@denishurleycentre.org)
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If you wish to support our work, you can donate by EFT:
First National Bank Durban Main branch 221426
Account: Denis Hurley Centre Trust A/C No. 622 0426 1002

For more information, and to donate from outside South Africa, see:
www.denishurleycentre.org

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