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August 2023

Annual Paddy Kearney Memorial Lecture
Founder's Day and the 'Paddy Grant'
Law students, police and the homeless
An Angel flies into our Pharmacy



**Staff
inspiring
each other**



**SAPS Summit
on homeless**



**Managing
our
Medicines**

PADDY KEARNEY MEMORIAL LECTURE GIVEN BY THE NEWLY ELEVATED "DR RAYMOND PERRIER"

Almost 5 years after his untimely death, we continue to be inspired by our founder, Paddy Kearney. In later years, his influence also extended over two other Durban institutions: the Gandhi Development Trust (GDT) and the International Centre of Non-Violence (ICON at DUT). So all three organisations came together to celebrate him with the 2023 Paddy Kearney Memorial lecture.

This year's event came very close to home, not just because it was hosted at the DHC but also because the speaker was our own Raymond Perrier. In fact he was carrying out his first official duty as 'Dr Perrier' having been awarded a PhD from UKZN for his thesis on the subject ofPaddy Kearney!

Raymond explained: "This thesis is not just a life story; it is Biography as Theology. My wish was to understand Paddy's theology not just through his writings but more importantly through his life. Each aspect of his life is examined through the lens of the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) at which Archbishop Hurley was a key participant and which so influenced Paddy."

Given the association with the GDT, Raymond's speech drew on an Appendix in the thesis which explores Paddy's links with the Gandhi heritage. "It is clear that Paddy's interest in interfaith dialogue and the effectiveness of non-violence were heavily influenced by his personal association with the Gandhi family and also the Mahatma's writings. In turn, he was also encouraged by +Hurley's own devotion to Gandhi."

Raymond was introduced by Prof Jairam Reddy former Chair of DUT Council and now a Trustee of the DHC; the welcome was given by Prof Alain Tschudin,

the new Director of ICON. Reflecting on the fact that the street in front of the DHC was named after his old friend Paddy, Alain concluded that there was 'a Paddy Kearney Way' from which we could all learn: "His was not the preserve of some sectarian or denominational interest; Paddy had a profoundly ecumenical and inter-faith orientation that advanced a values-based and inclusive society for all."

Dina Daniels provided two musical interludes including the gospel song "I will change your name"; the vote of thanks was given by Ela Gandhi, a Patron of the DHC and former Chancellor of DUT.

Among the 80 people present at the lecture were many of Paddy's old friends and colleagues as well as younger people keen to be inspired by him. Raymond singled out for praise his PhD supervisor, Dominican Brother, Prof Philippe Denis who had in fact worked with Paddy on his final project, the editing of +Hurley's 5,000 letters. Raymond also thanked the more than 70 people who had been willing to be interviewed for the thesis. Several of them were present including Judge Chris Nicholson and Joan Kerchoff, the widow of Peter Kerchoff who had been Paddy's counterpart in Pietermaritzburg in the 1980s.

Raymond explained that he plans to turn the 241,000 words (and 1,800 footnotes!) of the thesis into a shorter more readable book to be published next year. A video of the event [can be watched here](#) (the lecture proper starts at 13:20); a copy of the text of his speech is attached. Anyone wishing for a pdf of the full thesis is invited to [email Raymond](#). [Click here to listen to Raymond talking about Paddy on SAFM.](#)

The general feeling was that - while Paddy would have hated the personal attention - his life and his way of working remained an important inspiration for social activists today.

Photo (DUT Multimedia): Dina Daniels provides a beautiful musical interlude for the crowd. More photos of the event can be found on [our Facebook page](#).



FOUNDER'S DAY WITH THE DHC STAFF TEAM

Continuing our desire to remain inspired by Paddy, we held our Founder's Day with the DHC staff team, interns and some of our booksellers. Each year this is an opportunity, especially for newer staff, to learn something about Paddy and also to connect with his interests.

Our day began with an activity with Saxon Kinnear, the UJ art therapist who has been volunteering for us for the past few months (see [Update April 2023](#)). We were piloting a new project in anticipation of our 10th anniversary next year. 'Share with a Square' will be an invitation to anyone involved with the DHC (service users, staff, volunteers, donors, partners and visitors) to paint on a 12cm wooden square to express how they feel about the Centre.

We tried this out with staff and were fascinated by the results (see pic at the top). First, we encouraged people to walk around the building in pairs and actively look at some of the shapes and colours, in and around the DHC, that they might not usually notice. They talked about what the DHC means to them and how it made them feel. Under Saxon's guidance they then tried out some drawings on paper and, when they were ready, they committed the images to paint on the specially prepared wooden blocks.

We learnt some lessons from this pilot and will be launching this as a fuller project in the new year. Eventually the blocks will be assembled to create an

anniversary art piece on the walls of one of our rooms.

The second part of Founder's Day was also a chance to be inspired by the arts but remains hush-hush for now: watch this space for details later!

At last year's Founder's Day we launched the 'Paddy Grant': a small bursary available to every staff member to pursue something that helps them with their own personal development. When running Diakonia, Paddy was always very keen to invest in his staff and encourage them to pursue their interests. Recognising that many of our staff have multiple claims on their earnings, we set up the bursary so that, if there was something that a staff member wanted to do for their own personal growth, they could access funds to do so.

One year on, we have had some interesting uses of the grant. Some have used it to support activities they were already doing such as gym membership or choir subs. Two used it for driving lessons or a PDP license. A few people invested in outside businesses they have such a hair salon, tour guiding or bead-making. One person, after our recent visit to St John, combined the grant with the voucher St John gave her, to get a new pair of spectacles.

The Paddy Grant has been renewed for a second year and is open to any staff member who has been with us for more than six months.

Photo (left to right): Leanne Banks (our Administrator) attended a yoga retreat; and Jemima Mulubi (receptionist at our clinic) did a course in hat-making: both activities were subsidised by the Paddy Grant.



WORKING WITH THE POLICE AND HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE

We continue our partnership with the Street Law programme at the UKZN School of Law which sends 4th year law students out into communities to do outreach work.

As part of this, Raymond recently gave a lecture at UKZN with Dr Janine Hicks, our main contact in the law faculty. Before looking at the technicalities of legislation and specific law cases, the students were invited to spend time in a reflective exercise to deepen their empathy for homeless people.

Janine commented: "The defence of human rights is dependent on individuals - police officers, politicians, judges and lawyers - and so we have to be aware of the prejudices that we may unconsciously have. If we lack empathy, it is easy to turn a blind eye when rights are being violated."

The students learnt about the legal cases in which municipalities have been successfully held to account after they have summarily destroyed the belongings of homeless people in the name of 'cleaning up'. But they also heard how this practice still continues and how hard it is to use a ruling made against the cities of Johannesburg or Tshwane when complaining against the actions of Durban's eThekweni municipality.

One particular area that students explored is the way in which by-laws are written by politicians, and interpreted by police officers, in ways that criminalise the poor. As one student commented: "Two people could be lying on the grass in a park: one is just enjoying their leisure time but the homeless person is charged by the policeman, invoking a 200-year-old colonial-era definition of vagrancy."

This discussion was especially pertinent since managers from the DHC attended a 'Summit on Vagrants' called by SAPS in Durban. It was chaired by Brigadier Parumasur (in the centre of the photo at the top); he reminded those present about how constructively different stakeholders had worked together to help protect homeless people during the hard lockdown. He encouraged all present to avoid words like 'vagrant' and 'para' and instead focus on the humanity and constitutional rights of every person which includes the homeless.

It was impressive that over 70 people attended: from SAPS and Metro Police, private security firms, Community Policing Forums, NGOs and businesses. But, though a few councillors were present, astonishingly there was no one from the Exco that runs the Municipality nor from the Safer Cities Department that has responsibility for homeless initiatives in eThekweni.

A lot of anxiety was expressed on all sides about the rise in the number of homeless people in Durban, which many blamed for an increase in opportunistic theft and property damage. A number of different ideas were proposed, some of which had validity, but none of which would be a silver bullet to 'solve' the problem in one go. One councillor pointed out that it is not a crime to be homeless.

A number of NGOs expressed frustration that they get no support at all from the Municipality for the useful activities they deliver, for example in training homeless people or reducing harm for drug users. It was pointed out that even the money assigned to build the city's own very moderate homeless sleeping area in central Durban - promised 4 years ago - had now been re-assigned to the Parks Department to buy tractors!

The strong feeling of the meeting was that SAPS need to use their authority to persuade the Mayor to re-engage with this issue and reinstate the Task Team on Homelessness that had been so effective during COVID to enable different stakeholders to work together.

Photo: Dr Janine Hicks with some of the 4th year law students at UKZN exploring the gap between theory and practice when it comes to human rights for the poor.

She is showing a clip from an Al Jazeera news item as an example of how DHC can use the media to highlight human rights violations.



EXPERT ASSISTANCE FROM A PHARMACY VOLUNTEER

It is remarkable how often a random individual walks into the DHC offering their expertise for free. This can be hugely valuable for us and for the person themselves. For example, although we run our own dispensary, we cannot afford to employ a professional pharmacist; so we were delighted when Purcell Pillay, a final year Pharmacy student at Rhodes University, offered several weeks of his time recently to work with Marie-Goreth Nduwimana, the community health worker who organises our medicines. He reflects on his time with us:

"When I first walked through the doors of the DHC, I was filled with a sense of humanitarianism. I had been drawn by a desire to create a purposeful difference in the lives of socially challenged individuals. I also wanted to gain from the experience of being affiliated with an organisation recognised for their unwavering commitment to providing social betterment.

Upon meeting the clinic staff, I was welcomed with an essence of warmth and belonging. From my first day at the clinic, I witnessed a team that displays effective collaboration and communication, consistently providing optimal treatment services to patients. They foster an environment that breaks down the barriers of social injustice and restores respect and dignity to the homeless. The staff shared their experiences and expertise with me which allowed me to enrich my understanding on the various challenges encountered by the homeless. During my time at the DHC Clinic, I advised on the rationale, usage and effective movement of medicine inventory. I was rather impressed at how every person that walked into the clinic was accounted for.

Patients entered the clinic with a burden of distress and exited with an aura of hope. I started to view this team as an assembly of benevolent knights who triumphed over whatever challenge they faced.

I entered this establishment motivated to create a meaningful impact on the lives of others; yet this journey has also been one of the greatest transformative experiences for me. It has provided me with invaluable lessons, helped me cultivate a sense of empathy for an unrepresented category of people, and displayed to me the power held by a community when we unite our strengths.

I would encourage anyone to align themselves with this organisation. This experience would shatter any preconceived bias you have and allow you to take action against the harsh realities many of us are not exposed to. Spreading togetherness and positivity in the lives of others are just a few things that you carry along with you even after your experience at the Denis Hurley Centre."

Photo: Purcell Pillay and Marie-Goreth Nduwimana working in the DHC pharmacy.



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