

## NEWSLETTER

2024 | ISSUE 2

### Unisans celebrate Mandela Day with community engagement



On 18 July 2024, the 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng' Engaged Scholarship Project Team from the College of Law visited the Thandanani Drop Inn Centre, a youth-driven non-profit organisation in Mamelodi East, to commemorate Mandela Day. The Centre, founded by cousins Thabo Kgotsi and Victor Tswayi, was revitalised in 2011 to address the pressing challenges of





poverty, hunger, unemployment, gender-based violence and drug abuse in the community. Thandanani Drop Inn Centre, a beacon of hope for many, runs four essential programmes: partial care for school children, a drug and substance abuse unit, homelessness support and environmental care. Each programme embodies Thandanani's commitment to "Love one another" by uplifting the marginalised, vulnerable and voiceless, and fostering a nurturing environment for all.

The Tshokollo team, which included Prof Kevin Sibanyoni, Dr Francois Louw and Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu from the Department of Corrections Management, was joined by



representatives from the Baviaanspoort Correctional Management Area, as well as officials and parolees from the Mamelodi Community Corrections office. The group participated in painting the walls and floors





of the Thandanani Drop Inn Centre. Alongside these efforts, donations of toiletries and cleaning materials were made to the Centre, honouring the spirit of Mandela Day's 67 Minutes initiative and underscoring the spirit of Ubuntu that Mandela championed.

Those interested in assisting or learning more about the Thandanani Drop Inn Centre can reach out to Thabo Kgotsi at [kgotsithabo@gmail.com](mailto:kgotsithabo@gmail.com)



Pictured, from left, are Mr Thabo Kgotsi and Mr Tebogo Mpho from Thandanani Drop Inn Centre.

## Celebrating phenomenal women: An inspiring outreach event

 <b>correctional services</b> Department of Correctional Services REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA	
 	
<b>OUTREACH EVENT FOR FEMALE PAROLEES &amp; PROBATIONERS IN CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S MONTH</b>	
<b>THEME: PHENOMENAL WOMEN</b>	
<b>DATE: Thursday, 22 August 2024</b>	
<b>VENUE: Rethabile Community Hall</b>	
<b>ADDRESS: Thandanani Drop Inn Centre, 19027 Somo St, Mamelodi East</b>	
<b>PROGRAMME</b> <i>Programme Director: Ms Merry Mokoena</i>	
<b>9:30-10:00</b>	<b>REGISTRATION &amp; REFRESHMENTS</b>
<b>10:00-10:15</b>	<b>OPENING PRAYER</b> Pastor Victor Tswayi
<b>10:15-10:25</b>	<b>WELCOMING</b> Mr Kagiso Maswanganyi Ward Councillor, Mamelodi
<b>10:25-10:30</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF THE DAY</b> Dr Francois Louw Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng
<b>10:30-10:40</b>	<b>SPEAKER</b> Ms Kate Kekana Thandanani Drop Inn Centre
<b>10:40-11:30</b>	<b>BREAKAWAY GROUP DISCUSSIONS</b> Ms Connie Mokoena (Facilitator) The Seed
<b>11:30-12:30</b>	<b>PRESENTATIONS</b> Female parolees & probationers
<b>12:30-12:45</b>	<b>PRIZE-GIVING</b> Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu & Mr Charles Kgoale
<b>12:45-13:00</b>	<b>VOTE OF THANKS</b> Ms Sylvia Baloyi Community Corrections Office, Baviaanspoort MA
<b>13:00-14:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>

On 22 August 2024, the Rethabile Community Hall in Mamelodi transformed into a beacon of hope and empowerment, as it welcomed over 70 attendees for a

remarkable outreach event themed 'Phenomenal Women' in celebration of Women's Month. This inspiring initiative was organised by the Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng Engaged Scholarship Project in collaboration with the Thandanani Drop Inn Centre, the Seed Ministry and the Mamelodi Community Corrections Office. The event paid tribute to the incredible journeys and resilience of female parolees and probationers as they navigate their reintegration into society.

The day began with a warm welcome, filled with coffee and a beautifully decorated venue. Ms Merry Mokoena, the Programme Director, set the tone for an uplifting day. Pastor Victor Tswayi opened





the event with a prayer, invoking blessings and strength for the day ahead. Mr Kagiso Maswanganyi, representing the Ward Councillor for Mamelodi East, delivered a welcoming address, underscoring the importance of community support in the reintegration process. Dr Francois Louw, one of the project leaders of Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng, then took to the stage with a powerful message, emphasising the day's purpose: celebrating the strength and resilience of women who have faced and overcome immense challenges. He encouraged the women to share their personal journeys, underscoring that their experiences were central to the celebration. Ms Kate Kekana of the Thandanani Drop Inn Centre followed with an empowering message, recognising the struggles and triumphs of the women who bravely faced the challenges of reintegrating into society.



Pictured, from left, are Pastor Victor Tswayi, Mr Kagiso Maswanganyi and Ms Kate Kekana

A highlight of the event was the formation of breakaway group discussions facilitated by Ms Connie Molomo from the Seed Ministry. These sessions provided a safe space for women to share their personal experiences, including challenges such as rejection, anger, sexual assault, unemployment, regret and mental health



issues. The stories shared were both moving and inspiring. One parolee spoke about her struggle with rejection and stigma, and how, with the support from the Department of Correctional Services, she transformed her life to become a registered nurse who now cares for the elderly in Mamelodi. Another woman shared her journey from overcoming unemployment to starting an organisation that empowers other women in the community. These personal narratives brought a mix of laughter and tears to the event, which was deeply impactful.



As the day progressed, Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu and Mr Charles Kgoale presented awards to the participants, celebrating each woman's courage and contributions. The recognition extended beyond awards, as every participant was acknowledged for their bravery in sharing their stories and supporting one another.

As the event drew to a close, the atmosphere was filled with music, dancing

and a palpable sense of joy. The success of the outreach event was a shining example of the positive impact that community engagement and shared experiences can have. It highlighted not only the unique challenges faced by female parolees and probationers but also celebrated their unwavering ability to rise



above adversity. The "Phenomenal Women" event left a lasting impression on all who attended, proving that when women come together, they can uplift, empower and inspire one another in truly transformative ways.



From left to right: Dr Aaron Labane, Ms Kgotlele Moremi, Ms Sunita Zive, Dr Francois Louw (in front), Mr Charles Kgoale, Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu and Prof Kevin Sibanyoni



## Celebrating the unsung heroes of Community Corrections: A day of appreciation and insight



On Thursday, 12 September 2024, the Mess Hall at Baviaanspoort Management Area was filled with an atmosphere of appreciation and shared purpose as a community corrections workshop, themed “*Community Corrections Appreciation Day*,” unfolded. This inspiring event, a collaboration between the Baviaanspoort Management Area of the Department of Correctional Service and UNISA’s Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng Engaged Scholarship Project, brought together correctional officials, project members and UNISA students to celebrate the invaluable work of community corrections officials who dedicate themselves daily to the rehabilitation and reintegration of parolees and probationers.

Programme Director, Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu led the day with grace and enthusiasm, which began with a heartfelt opening prayer from Chaplain Mangoedi. Ms Mologadi Tshabalala warmly welcomed



Ms Mologadi Tshabalala

attendees on behalf of the Baviaanspoort Correctional Management Area, setting the

tone for a day filled with inspiration, reflection and shared learning.

Mr Joseph Hlatswayo of the Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng Project captivated the audience with his presentation on



Mr Joseph Hlatswayo

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). He emphasised how individuals can turn life experiences and informal learning into academic achievements. This initiative offers hope to many, as skills and knowledge gained outside formal education are acknowledged and potentially turned into qualifications that unlock new opportunities.

shared the challenges the team faced, from resource shortages to high caseloads, yet reminded everyone: *“We are here to do our best—to help offenders rebuild their lives and keep them from reoffending. We must never lose sight of that.”* His words were a testament to the resilience of both the offenders and the officials who work tirelessly to supervise and support them.



Ms Gail Kock provided valuable insights into the admission process, noting the importance of detailed documentation and verification procedures to

The highlight of the day was the insightful presentations by dedicated officials from the Mamelodi Community Corrections Office. Mr Dumisani Khanyile, Head of Mamelodi Community Corrections, delivered a comprehensive overview of the vital role community corrections play in South Africa’s correctional system. He

ensure a smooth transition for parolees and probationers. She stressed that accuracy and attention to detail were crucial, from receiving an original warrant to confirming identification through physical fingerprints. Mr Nicodemus Seakamela followed with an equally compelling presentation on the assessment and monitoring process, outlining key procedures for handling cases when offenders abscond. He emphasised the importance of proactive monitoring and the role of officials in ensuring accountability, underscoring the delicate balance between supervision and support in fostering successful reintegration.



The final presentation, led by Mr Richard Ndabezitha, delved into the release process. He underscored the importance of accurate record-keeping, especially in

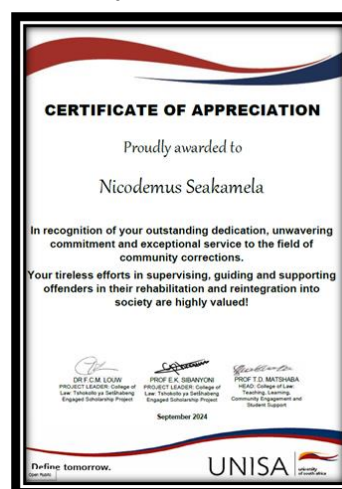
cases where technology fails. Mr Ndabezitha also discussed the careful steps taken to notify parolees and probationers of their release, and the importance of addressing their complaints to prevent frustration that may lead to absconding. His emphasis on human dignity and empathy during these moments served as a powerful reminder of the impact thoughtful actions can have on those transitioning out of the system.



UNISA students in attendance were deeply moved by the workshop. Their reflections spoke to the power of experiential learning. Ms Sunita Zive, one of the students, noted, *"Hearing directly from correctional officials about their daily challenges brought our studies to life. It was inspiring to see how much care goes into each offender's journey toward reintegration."* For Zive, the day deepened her resolve to pursue a career in corrections. Ms Kgotele Moremi echoed this sentiment, highlighting how the technological systems in place have made the tracking and tracing of offenders more

manageable. *"Despite the hardships they face, the officials' passion for their work motivates me even more. I wish I already had been in the field, practicing alongside them,"* she said with excitement. Ms Mmanoko Kekae added a thoughtful reflection on the barriers faced by offenders, particularly in securing employment post-release. *"I hope that one day, the challenges that drive offenders back into crime, like unemployment, will diminish. This will make rehabilitation a lasting success,"* she expressed, hopeful for the future.

The event ended with a vote of thanks from Prof Kevin Sibanyoni and Dr Francois Louw, the project leaders of Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng. In a heartfelt gesture, they presented Certificates of Appreciation to each official from the Mamelodi Community Corrections Office, recognising their "outstanding dedication, unwavering commitment, and exceptional service to the field of community corrections."





The Community Corrections Appreciation Day was more than just a workshop – it was a celebration of the unsung heroes working tirelessly to guide and support offenders on their journey to reintegration. It was a day that shone a light on the compassion, dedication and resilience of these community corrections officials and reminded everyone of their vital role in shaping safer communities.



Pictured, from left, are Dr Francois Louw, Mr Nicodemus Seakamela, Prof Kevin Sibanyoni and Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu