

HIV/AIDS UNIT COMMEMORATES WORLD AIDS DAY 2009



The HIV/AIDS Unit this year commemorated 2009 World AIDS Day with various events. The first stop was Malmesbury Prison where the HIV/AIDS Unit presented World AIDS Day to coincide with its 2009 Prisoner Peer Education Awards Ceremony in collaboration with Malmesbury Prison and the Group of Hope of Prisoners Malmesbury Prison (GOHMA) on 30 November 2009. This event was followed by commemorating World AIDS Day with the Community Health Forum of Bellville South December 1, 2009 and A Presentation to staff of Public Protectors Office in Cape Town on 4 December 2009.

GOHMA is one of the HIV/AIDS Units main HIV/AIDS Community Outreach Projects (Ithemba Project) for the inmates of Malmesbury Prison. This project strives to empower inmates who have pledged their support to the neighbouring communities in various ways, including the fostering of children living with terminally ill parents and providing them with clothing and food. A fashion show showcasing the clothes manufactured by the inmates for the children was one of the highlights of this year's event.

Outgoing chairperson of GOHMA Mr Xolisani Galada, said the children were identified through the local schools as well as inmates of Malmesbury Prison. GOHMA in addition to their own collection and fund raising campaign in prison also request local businesses to provide food parcels and buy school uniforms and books for their fostered children. Currently there are 13 children are under the foster care by GOHMA The partnership with CPUT HIV/AIDS Unit

involves the training of inmates in sewing, fashion design, art, and the ongoing HIV/AIDS/STI & TB Awareness Campaigns and capacity and life skills programmes .

Currently there are nine inmates GOHMA involved with the sewing programme and several are involved in the prison vegetable gardening programme whilst most are in involved in HIV/AIDS/STI & TB Awareness Campaigns in the prison. The Ithemba Project inculcates skills and capacity building for the inmates with a built-in sustainability for the continuity in HIV/AIDS Community Outreach Programme where inmates to be released train others to continue Ithemba Project in prison with support from the HIV/AIDS Unit and Malmesbury Prison.. CPUT also bought sewing machines and over locker machines for the inmates in 2005.

Dr Joyce Nduna, Director Community Engagement & Work Integrated learning of CPUT, delivered the keynote address during the event. Earlier on, Mr Marius Harmsen of the HIV/AIDS Unit delivered a talk on life after HIV. The Sinenjongo Choir, a group of inmates at the prison, rendered musical items throughout the event. Other items on the program included a presentation of the Overview of the HIV/AIDS program at Malmesbury Prison by Dr Ashraf Mohammed, HOD of the HIV/AIDS Unit at CPUT, the symbolic lighting of candles, and the handing over of Christmas gifts to the children by Marius Harmsen (dressed in the Father Christmas suit) and the representative of US Embassy (Mark Canning) who had donated the Christmas gifts to the foster children.

The event for Bellville Health Forum at the Bellville South Civic Centre was marked by the distribution of information about HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis and speeches from representatives from various community organizations dealing with HIV/AIDS. Dr Mohammed demonstrated the progression of HIV infection to AIDS and subsequent death due to opportunistic diseases. Inspector Raymon Solomon of the Social Crime Prevention Unit of the SAPS advised women on what to do when they get raped. He mentioned that the SAPS have improved its service to rape victims so that they can reduce traumatization by the process of reporting cases immediately

Zanele Gantsho from Mothers to Mothers said people need to know what to do when they are positive. She read a message of hope directed to the Creator of the Universe, which pleaded "We ask for your special blessing for all infected and affected by HIV and Aids. Help us to accept and face ignorance, stigma and discrimination associated with this disease. Grant us courage. Fill the hearts of all with compassion and unselfish concern to accept and support, to treat with kindness and love those who are courageously living with HIV/AIDS".

“Provide strength to those caring for the sick and lonely. Enlighten those doing research and seeking ways to cure and prevent the disease. Calm the fears of those who are suffering in pain, and fill them with courage and renewed hope. Comfort those who are feeling alone and hopeless. Help us all to work together to build a healthy and supportive humanity. We are hopeful for a cure, and are committed to living positively for ourselves, our families, and our futures”.

