

Rand Aid review

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Recognition for Rand Aid's Covid protocols

Dr Christina Eleftheriades, a resident doctor at Rand Aid Association, was invited to speak at the South African Geriatric Society's geriatric conference in August. She shared insights into the management of Covid-19 in a care home facility, based on her experience working with residents at Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre.

Dr Eleftheriades wrote an article about the profound impact of Covid-19 on elderly patients and the need for adequate treatment plans. The article, which was published by the South African Journal of Family Practice last September, provided recommendations for the supportive care and treatment of residents in long-term care facilities.

The article drew the attention of the conference organisers and Dr Eleftheriades was asked to be a guest speaker.

Ron Smith Care Centre's medical and care Covid-19 protocols were formulated by Dr Eleftheriades and fellow Rand Aid-based doctor Carmella Mielke, who closely liaised with a team of sub-specialist geriatricians. Both Rand Aid doctors hold Diplomas in Geriatric Medicine.

"The South African Geriatric Society acknowledged our work and Ron Smith Care Centre and requested I present my findings formally at the conference. The conference was held over a month, every Thursday night in August, and I presented on 19 August," says Dr Eleftheriades.

There were approximately 600 delegates, comprising specialists, general practitioners, physios, occupational therapists, speech therapists, dietitians and healthcare workers interested in learning about geriatrics.

"The scope of the conference extended internationally," she says.

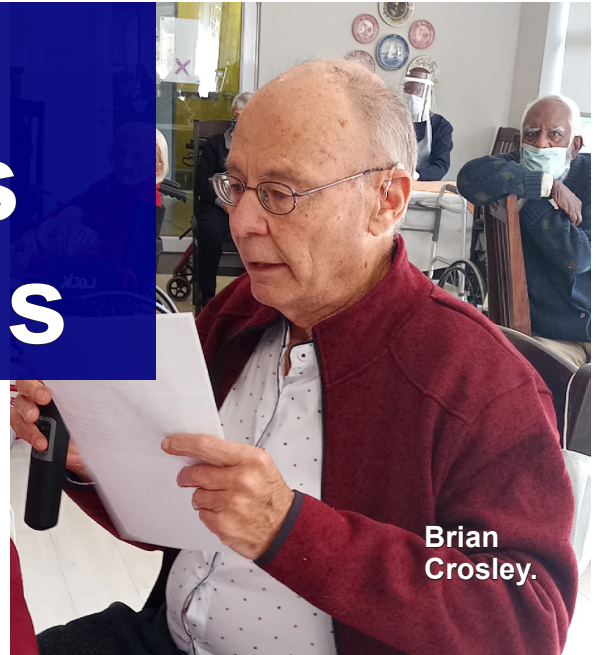
The South African Geriatric Society requires that doctors attend the conference, as a pre-requisite for their Geriatric Diploma.

"It was truly a wonderful experience. The feedback was positive and I have had doctors approach me, wanting to come and see Ron Smith Care Centre and the work we do in caring for our residents.

Many colleagues cannot believe the longevity of our residents," says Dr Eleftheriades.

"Rand Aid is extremely grateful to have Dr Eleftheriades and Dr Mielke based onsite in the grounds of Ron Smith Care Centre and Elphin Lodge retirement village," says Zabeth Zühlsdorff, Rand Aid's general manager: services and advance division.

"Their Covid-19 management approach at Ron Smith Care Centre was excellently planned and executed and Rand Aid, all of our residents and their families are extremely grateful to have such admirable skills on hand."



Brian Crosley.

Thembalami prayer day brings a sense of calm

Thembalami Care Centre recently held a prayer gathering for all of its residents and staff.

"We feel blessed to have been Covid-19 free during the third wave, and wanted to give thanks," says Elize Raath, Thembalami's deputy manager, who organised the event in collaboration with the centre's occupational therapy technician Neo Sefuthi.

Thembalami's residents and staff, who wanted to, read a prayer for those who attended the gathering. Hymns and songs of gratitude, from various religions, were also played.

Residents Heather Abrams, Jessie McDevitt and Brian Crosley each read a prayer; while former teacher Jennifer du Preez, who is blind, recited the Lord's Prayer from memory. "She did it so beautifully," says Elize.

Thembalami's driver Jacob Bahumi and another staff member also said a prayer.

"The gathering showed us how much our staff and residents needed a spiritual morning," says Elize.

"At the end of the proceedings, everyone was given an opportunity to light a candle in thanks or in memory of a lost loved one," she adds.

"The event left a sense a unity amongst staff members and residents, appreciation for each another and a sense of positivity for the future," says Lara Hurwitz, Thembalami's social worker.

"Residents who had been very anxious, said they felt a sense of calm after the event," she adds.

Irene celebrates centenary!

Ron Smith Care Centre resident Irene Watson celebrated her centenary on 8 September, with her daughter Fiona.

Irene was born in 1921 in County Durham, England. Her father Richard was a farmer, while her mother Harriet assisted the local midwife.

"I attended catholic junior school and was one of only five students awarded a scholarship at a private senior catholic school in Darlington," says Irene.

"My first job was in the counting house of a huge department store. To transfer money, we put it into a tube and into a special shoot, where it would go whooshing through to its destination," she adds.

Irene continued with office work during the war. "I met my husband Reginald at a dance in Darlington and we married soon after the war was over in 1945. He eventually signed up with an engineering company in Bulawayo and travelled ahead to Rhodesia to set up what would become our new home," says Irene.

To join her husband, she travelled alone by ship for 15 days, from South Hampton, England, to Cape Town, with her two young children Trevor and Fiona. "Then we travelled by train for two days to Bulawayo, Rhodesia! It was a very long journey indeed," says Irene.

Irene enjoys doing crossword puzzles every morning after

breakfast, and also likes to listen to light music on the radio.

"I like to read novels, magazines and the newspaper and watch BBC News and quiz shows on TV. I also enjoy watching soaps, my favourite one being 7 de Laan. I also like going for walks at Ron Smith Care Centre and enjoying the lake, trees, flowers, gardens, birds and ducks; the sing-alongs and chair exercises in the activity centre and playing bingo," says Irene.

Her simple pleasure is to have coffee with Fiona at Elphino's Coffee Shop, which is located in the care centre's grounds.

"My proudest achievement is to have raised two wonderful, understanding children," she says.



Happy 100th birthday to Irene Watson.

Mike and Golda's 69 years of happiness

Inyoni Creek residents Mike and Golda Britany, both in their early 90s, celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary at Café on the Creek, with a few close friends, on 24 August.

The couple met at a wedding, where Mike told Golda that same evening that he was going to marry her!

Mike and Golda were married at a Shul in Greenside and had their reception in a hall attached to the Shul. Mike lived in Greenside at the time.

"We both worked hard together all our lives, with no disagreements," the couple agrees.

Their recipe for a successful marriage is communication. "It's critical," says Mike. "We discussed everything – bad or good," says Golda.

The couple have two children, six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. "They all say that we are an example to them," says Golda.

Mike and Golda moved to Inyoni Creek retirement village 12 years ago. "We have made wonderful friendships through the years. The people are wonderful here," says Golda. "It is a beautiful place, but it's the people who are amazing," adds Mike.



Golda and Mike celebrate 69 married years

Lacys celebrate 67 years of marriage

Thornhill Manor retirement village residents Jack (90) and Hilda (91) Lacy celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary on 3 August.

The couple got married in a congregational church, in Blackburn, Lancashire, in England in 1953.

Hilda and Jack, who have two sons and two grandchildren, spent most of their married life in Modderfontein.

"Modderfontein is special to me, as it is where we started our married life and I have very fond memories of our time here," says Hilda.

While Jack was a research chemist, who loved working with his hands; Hilda was a secretary, who enjoyed being in a drama society for many years. They both loved hiking and church work.



Jack and Hilda celebrate 67 married years

"After our wedding, we left for Stratford-upon-Avon, but waited on the wrong platform and missed the train! Finally, we arrived, but had to walk at midnight to our hotel, through the cemetery," says Hilda.

Thornhill Manor residents for the past 17 years, Hilda describes the residents and staff as friendly and helpful.

HALF A CENTURY OF TOGETHERNESS FOR HILLIARD AND SANDRA



The Lipworths.

Inyoni Creek residents Hilliard and Sandra Lipworth celebrated their 50th anniversary on 8 August. "I married my beautiful bride at Sydenham Shul, the same place I celebrated my Bar-Mitzvah in 1958. We then went on to celebrate the Simcha at the Capri Hotel in Savoy," says Hilliard.

"It's been a beautiful ride, filled with highs and lows, with the Blessing of Hashem, our wonderful children, grandchildren, family and friends. We have enjoyed every moment. We have travelled to beautiful places throughout the world and treasured every moment," he adds.

The couple's recipe for a long and happy marriage is to be there for each other.

"Life has been good. We have sold up our home of 43 years and settled in at Inyoni Creek, a beautiful retirement village that's filled with tranquillity, greenery and friendly people," says Hilliard.

Marie celebrates 99th birthday, after beating Covid-19 twice

Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) resident Marie Roberts celebrated her 99th birthday on 27 August.

Aunty Marie, as she is fondly called at RSCC, contracted Covid-19 in both the first and third waves, and is renowned at the care centre as 'a very strong lady who sailed through her second infection'.

Marie contracted Covid-19 prior to being vaccinated, but has since received her first vaccination and will have her second shot in September.

"She didn't have many symptoms during her second infection," says Leanie Bessinger, charge professional nurse at RSCC.

"Her love of music carried

her through, the first and second time. She had her small radio with her and entertained us in the isolation unit with her music every day. Aunty Marie has a very positive outlook on life and a very sharp sense of humour, which both helped her through her Covid-19 experience," she adds.

Marie was born in 1922, in the one-horse town of De Putten near Zeerust.

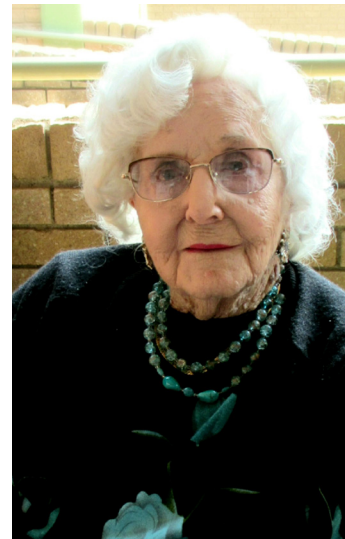
"My father was a school teacher who came to South Africa from Scotland. I grew up with six sisters and two brothers, and attended a farm school for the first 10 years of my life – which is where I learnt to speak Tswana. We used to go to school on a donkey cart," says Marie.

Marie met her husband Lawrence at the local roller rink in Malvern. "When he came swooping up behind me and whisked me around the rink a few times, I was smitten. We married shortly afterwards, when I was 19, and were married for almost 72 wonderful years. He died in November 2013, and I still miss him very much," she says.

Marie and Lawrence had two sons, William and John, seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"I am most proud of the fact that after retiring as a company secretary for an oil company, for which I worked for 25 years, I raised a second family – including my two young grandchildren who

lived with us for 15 years. I am so proud of how they turned out," says Marie.



Golly good jabbing!

Thornhill Manor resident Evelyn Neuhaus praises Rand Aid's vaccination programme:

A grand finale (hopefully) to such a huge task. A very big thank you to the absolutely wonderful Rand Aid team for bringing this vaccine delivery to fulfilment.

To all of you for having organised this big project in such an amazing and efficient manner: It is so much appreciated.

But then living at Thornhill Manor going on for 20 years, I should be in a position to know how privileged and fortunate I am to have chosen to live here. I have not regretted one second in all this time.

I must make mention of charge professional nurse Leanie and village professional nurse Jana, two wonderful human beings. To Shirley and Jackie, we are so lucky to have you here for us and all the other staff.

Thank you so much!

Ron Smith Care Centre spreads Mandela Day cheer

Rand Aid Association's Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) residents and employees celebrated Mandela Day this year by writing postcards and delivering sweets to residents and staff at Rand Aid's sister care centre Thembalami and the Max Ordman Deaf Association.

Rand Aid's senior nursing manager Avril Maltman and RSCC's sister Leanie Bessinger delivered the postcards and sweets to Thembalami's manager Esme van der Walt and matron Paulina Namo to hand out to residents.

In previous years, RSCC and Elphin Lodge retirement village residents and staff celebrated Mandela Day by gathering together for a knitathon. The knitted squares were sewn together to make blankets, which were donated to a charity.

This year, due to Covid-19 lockdown Level 4 gatherings and visits being prohibited, RSCC had to find a safe way to celebrate Mandela Day.

"Writing postcards engaged our residents and staff in a meaningful activity, while acknowledging our sister care centre's residents and staff, who were also working on Mandela Day. The messages were written from the heart, with some residents even writing to family members," says Avril.

"What was really special was watching RSCC's River Lodge 3 residents, many of whom have advanced dementia, being able to put pen to paper to write their postcards," she adds.

"The idea of reaching out to other older persons in the same boat is so in tune with our Eden Alternative philosophy," says Zabeth Zühlendorff, Rand Aid's general manager: services and advance division.

"It is empowering to not only receive care, but to also provide it. It shows that older persons, just because they need care, are not helpless and self-centred. They can think of others, who



Elizabeth Trinder with Sylvia Lasarow from Lakeside.

may also need a word of encouragement. They can understand how they feel and empathise with them.

"Due to Covid-19, everyone in a residential care facility has been so limited in terms of contact with the outside world and with friends and families. To know that there is someone else in the same boat and understanding how it is, must have been very nice for Thembalami's residents to know, especially coupling this with Mandela Day and acknowledging the great sacrifices Madiba made during his lifetime," she adds.

Stella Dibotelo, Paul Carter (board chairman), Esme Erasmus, Tanya Switala, Laurentia Jooste, Ayanda Matthews, Vivian Maphosa, Mercia Sekgarametso, Peter Quinn (CEO), Joyce Mabule, Rebecca Nkabi, and Hannie Combrink. Absent: Winnie Mapekula.



STAYING POWER CELEBRATED

Rand Aid Association (RAA) recently held its annual Long Service Awards to celebrate its loyal and dedicated employees.

40 years' service

Mercia Sekgarametso was awarded for a phenomenal 40 years' service at RAA's Tarentaal retirement village. Mercia started working for RAA at the Bramley Complex in 1981 as a care worker, at the age of 27. "In 1983, I underwent training to become an enrolled nursing assistant. During this time, new units were being built at the Bramley Complex and I was asked to become the village nurse," says Mercia.

"In 1995, the Bramley Complex closed and I was offered a job at Tarentaal village as an enrolled nursing assistant, under the supervision of sister Audrey James. I have assisted many other sisters since then," she adds.

Mercia enjoys working with Tarentaal's residents and is loved by them all. Her milestone demonstrates her loyalty and dedication to the organisation, which regards her as a valued member of the team.

30 years' service

Ayanda Matthews Head Office's general manager: compliance and social react – in charge of Tarentaal, Thembalami Care Centre, SANCA Wedge Gardens and the full human resources function – was awarded for 30 years' service along with Esme Erasmus, Thornhill Manor's manager; and Stella Dibotelo, from Elphin Lodge.

20 years' service

Laurentia Jooste and Vivian Maphosa from Ron Smith Care Centre, Joyce Mabule from Head Office and Tanya Switala from Elphin Lodge all celebrated 20 years' long service; while Rebecca Nkabi from SANCA Wedge Gardens, Winnie Mapekula from Head Office and Hannie Combrink from Inyoni Creek were congratulated on 15 years' service.

■ To view the full article about our employees, their history with the organisation and the 10 and five-year awards, visit www.randaid.co.za, click on the News tab, and scroll down to find the story.

Rand Aid villages continue Mandela Day traditions

This year, in celebration of Mandela Day, Rand Aid Association's Inyoni Creek retirement village residents broke their own record of the number of knitted squares they completed for non-profit organisation 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day.

"The ladies will be very happy to know that they broke their own record this year! Last year they knitted 1 529 squares, compared to 1 602 squares this year," says Inyoni Creek's deputy manager Marinda Looyen.

"We also got a huge donation of wool from Cummins, which we will distribute to our ladies that have mostly been using their own wool to knit the squares," says Marinda.

Sister retirement village **Thornhill Manor** also knitted squares for the organisation.

"A number of our residents used their own wool and knitting needles and were assisted by our Knit and Knatter group. The initiative is run by resident Audrey Hepburn, who runs the knitting group," says Thornhill Manor's deputy manager Jackie Scott.

"We collected 459 squares, in all the colours of the rainbow to reflect our rainbow nation," she adds.



Inyoni Creek residents Marge Garden, Jenny Cubitt and Dr Glenda Myers.



Cynthia Dlamini offers Ron Adcock a cupcake for **Father's Day**. Ron is a resident of the Woodlands wing of the Rand Aid-run Ron Smith Care Centre. The staff and residents spent a morning icing cupcakes before enjoying them for morning tea. All agreed that they were delicious!



Thornhill Manor resident Dale Cherrington with some of the knitted squares. Dale has worked with 67 Blankets for Mandela Day for quite some time.



RSCC staff receive a special thanks: Allison van Staden, Mirinda Godden and a group of their friends started an initiative to write letters to healthcare workers to thank them for their service. They recently visited Ron Smith Care Centre and handed out thank you letters to the staff, to show their appreciation for how the care centre looks after its residents. Pictured is RSCC care worker Lebo Mashale with her thank you letter.

Tribute to past Rand Aid chairman Iain Fraser

It is with deep sadness that Rand Aid Association learnt of the passing of Iain Fraser on 17 June 2021.

Iain was Rand Aid's architect for many years and served on the organisation's Board for 23 years. He joined the Board on 13 March 1997, serving as a dedicated member until April 2021. During his tenure, Iain held the post of vice chairman, and also served as chairman for two years prior to his retirement.

Iain was always very supportive of Rand Aid and its employees and always attended the organisation's annual Long Service Awards and other events.

"From the first time I met Iain during my interview for the position of Rand Aid CEO, I found him to be an absolute gentleman. In the short time I worked with him as chairman, I always appreciated his support," says Rand Aid's CEO Peter Quinn.

"Iain was committed to serving Rand Aid over many years and stood in as chairman in 2019, at relatively short notice. He had extensive knowledge of Rand Aid and was very involved in the construction of Thornhill Manor and Inyoni Creek. Iain was gracious and a true gentleman. He will be sorely missed by everyone at Rand Aid," he adds.

Rand Aid Board member Keith du Buys says that Iain, as a member of the Board and as an architect, was able to add value to all of Rand Aid's developments beyond his design knowledge.

"He not only understood how buildings worked, but how to make them work to best benefit the end users of Rand Aid's villages, both residents and staff. Iain was also able to provide valuable input in the maintenance and renovations of the villages as they went through their life cycle," says Keith.

■ Read the full tribute on www.randaid.co.za. Click on the News tab and scroll down until you find the tribute.



The members of Inyoni Creek's Residents' Committee are: Back left to right: Melvyn Stamelman, Peter Moore, Steve Foster and Gordon Roberts. Front: Helen Parkinson, Graham Brokenshire (chairman) and Jenny Tonkin (village manager). ON LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Mike Tudhope, Glenda Myers (deputy chairperson) and Mike Edwards.



Residents to serve their villages

Elections to choose new village committees have taken place across all Rand Aid Association complexes.

Regrettably, a photo of Elphin Lodge's committee could not be secured in time for publication, and will be featured in the fourth quarter newsletter.

* Masks removed for the purpose of the photos.

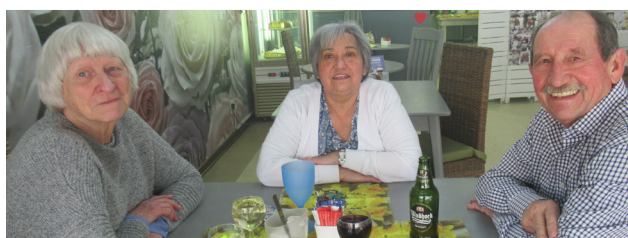


Tarentaal Village Residents' Committee: Nan Haslehurst, Antoinette du Plessis (secretary), Mavis Knight, Dave Bull, Charmaine Datt, Doreen Steyn, Auriel Wittert (deputy chairperson), Judy Pearse (chairperson). Inset: Rosalind Prillwitz (treasurer).



Thornhill Manor retirement village's new Residents' Committee. Front: Maureen Stewart, Esme Erasmus (village manager), Keith Fraser (chairman), Steve Walker (deputy chairman) and Jenny Brownson. Standing: Carol Gaynham, John Sartor, Don Gaynham (treasurer), Terry Riley, Bob Davies and Dale Cherrington (secretary).

KEEP IN TOUCH with happenings and news across all Rand Aid villages and care centres by visiting our **website**: www.randaid.co.za and clicking on the NEWS tab. Also, if you have not already done so, please LIKE our **Facebook** page - <https://www.facebook.com/RandAidAssociation>



ELPHIN LODGE RETIREMENT VILLAGE RESIDENTS AND STAFF WELCOMED SPRING:

A hamper was raffled as part of the festivities on September 1. It was won by Marlene Sirchia. Elphino's coffee shop put together a lovely cheese platter, and residents thoroughly enjoyed their day! Pictured are Deidre Krull, Jenny Sella and Diego Sella.

SANCA Wedge Gardens welcomes OT students

Four Wits University occupational therapy (OT) students completed a four-week practical training block at SANCA Wedge Gardens treatment centre.

Rebecca Aitken, Dalya Abadi, Batya Naparstek and Ari Jacks, all third-year students, started their training at SANCA Wedge Gardens on 23 August, under the guidance of the treatment centre's part-time occupational therapist Caryn Berman.

Caryn, who joined SANCA Wedge Gardens in February, is also an associate lecturer at Wits University and is thus playing to two roles to assist the students – that of mentor and that of assessor.

The students were meant to begin their practical training last year, but were unable to do so due to Covid-19 restrictions.

When interviewed in August, the students said they were enjoying their time at SANCA Wedge Gardens.

"Wedge is so willing to have us. The people who work here are really special and the vibe is amazing. Everyone is so accepting and loving. It feels like we are part of a big family," said Dalya.

"It has been overwhelming and amazing at the same time. The friendliness and support we are receiving is not what we expected," said Rebecca.

Caryn explained that many OT students feel overwhelmed when they first start their practical training. "These students, however, have so much more to deal with due to how their way of learning has changed due to Covid-19. Everything is new for them, not only dealing with patients for the first time."

Batya said being exposed to addiction first-hand and getting to understand Wedge's patients has been eye opening. "We are sharing their life stories and experiences with them, it's not only about a diagnosis," she said.

Ari said Wedge is such a nice environment to work in, they don't want to leave! "We were previously unaware of OT's role in substance abuse. Working here has made a huge difference to our understanding of these roles. It's very satisfying," she said.



OT students Dalya Abadi, Batya Naparstek, Ari Jacks and Rebecca Aitken

All four students agreed that Caryn is the 'best supervisor' they could hope for. "To see the way she does things, how she implements OT at Wedge and how the patients open up to her and us, as a result, is wonderful," said Dalya. "It's exciting to come to work, the atmosphere is really amazing," added Ari.

Dalya decided she wanted to become an occupational therapist as she wants to help people to help themselves. "Especially those people who don't have the opportunity to work with an occupational therapist. They have never had access to OT tools before."

Rebecca said she wants to help people and make a difference in their lives. "I'd like to see them get to a better place."

Batya agreed, and said she wants to help people become independent. "Being able to use OT tools to assist them with their challenges will help them to become independent and not have to rely on others."

Ari said she enjoys bringing meaning into everything she does. "OT is therapeutic, meaningful and powerful." One of the first lessons she has learnt at Wedge is that an OT activity won't necessarily help every patient. "If an activity doesn't get through to a patient, we have to think on our feet and adapt quickly."

"Everyone's addiction is different and the OT tools used to help each patient may not be the same," said Caryn. "OTs have to adapt, think on their feet and learn how to speak to patients in a way that gets through to them," said Caryn.

Welcome to the family!

Inyoni Creek extends a warm welcome to Kim, who has taken over Carol's post.

Born in Johannesburg and raised in Johannesburg South, Kim moved to Edenvale 17 years ago. She has been married to Ian for 10 years and their daughter Paige is eight years old.

"We have two little chihuahuas, Bear and Wrench. I enjoy singing and dancing and, on the odd occasion, I like to knit," says Kim.



Goodbye Carol, hello Kim!

Inyoni Creek has welcomed Kim Gilliland to the village as its new receptionist, while saying a fond farewell to Carol Garnett. Carol is leaving for a new adventure on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast where she will be living with her son and family.

"I have been so blessed and grateful to have spent time here at Inyoni Creek. Very special friendships were formed and I take very fond memories with me, which I will treasure forever," says Carol.

"My plans for the rest of this year will be to explore my surroundings at the coast (make some noise and then run) and to find my feet (which are actually not too far away). I would like to continue to work in a community where I can make a difference while I am able," she adds.

Inyoni Creek's Chairman Graham Brokenshire presented Carol with a Woolworths gift voucher on behalf of the village's residents and staff. "Thank you to our Inyoni Creek residents for their exceptional generosity. Thank you to Helen Parkinson who co-ordinated the collecting of the donations. I have no doubt that Carol will use some of it on an item that will always remind her of her time with us," says Graham.

LEFT: Helen Parkinson with Graham Brokenshire and Carol Garnett.



Neeri breaks the cycle of poverty

When Edenvale resident (43) was growing up, she experienced levels of poverty that challenged her to change the course of her life.

Neeri, who despite all odds recently obtained her Bachelor of Commerce in Financial Management Degree from the University of South Africa (UNISA), realised when she was 12 that her mom couldn't read or write.

"I remember her telling me that she so wished to read and write, but was denied the chance due to the culture and era she grew up in. My mother signed us into school with her thumb print, as couldn't sign her name. As children, we tried to teach her while we learnt at school. This forced me to look at education differently and the seed was planted to change the course of my life," says Neeri.

As a result, she worked hard at school. While she was not in the top of her class, she studied hard to obtain the highest possible marks.

"I knew I was not a distinction student, but that didn't stop me from trying. In Grade 1, I made my sister enrol me at the local library and started reading as much as possible. I realised I needed to educate myself if I was going to end the cycle of poverty," she says.

A hard life

Born in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal, life was hard for Neeri and her family.

"There were periods in my childhood when we had no electricity. One stretch lasted for two years. My mother was the strength that held us together. She made sure that we had a warm meal and a bed to sleep in."

Through sheer perseverance and determination, Neeri completed Grade 6. "Because I was only an average student, my teachers didn't pay any attention to me. I floated through primary school, purely as a result of grit and grind."

When Neeri was in Grade 7, a new school was built in the area. "This meant that instead of a 10km walk to school, I had less than 5km to walk."

Her brother and sister left home the same year, to chart their own life path. "My parents couldn't help me with my schoolwork, so it was up to me to do as well as I could."

At the end of Grade 9, when learners must choose the subjects they want to continue with, Neeri chose computer sciences and accounting. "I figured these would at least help me get a job after matric," she says.



Neeri Stroebel, conquering the odds.

Technology was a luxury

Right through Neeri's high school career, owning a computer was a luxury that her family couldn't afford. Projects had to be done at school or a friend's house.

"You had to fight for education and this became my aim in life. I knew I wanted to study further after matric, but didn't know how I was going to do it. Although I had no answers, I believed in myself when no one else did. This enabled me to complete matric with exemption. For the first time in my life my mother was proud of me. It was one of those rare occasions when I received praise."

Her next challenge was to convince her mother to allow her study further. "I knew we had no money for further education and that I would have to leave home for that to happen. The only option was to move to Johannesburg and live with my brother until I could find a job," says Neeri.

With no money to get to Johannesburg, she sold timeshares until she made enough money to pay for a train ticket. "I told my mom on the Wednesday that I was leaving on Saturday. And I did, with only R20 for lunch and a bag of clothes."

Neeri arrived at Johannesburg station in February 1996, bewildered, scared and excited.

"I knew I had to find a job to change my future. I gave myself and my mother three months. If I didn't find a job in that time, I said I would return home. I walked Johannesburg's streets, took taxis to Hillbrow and asked for help get to interviews.

"I was a small-town girl, armed with a Johannesburg city map, and hungry for a job that could change my future. I got one two months later, but was re-trenched. I found another job, but only by being gutsy. I told my interviewer that I would work for free for five days. If I did not meet expectations, I would leave. I got the job."

In 1997, Neeri's mother passed away. In 1998, she applied for a bursary and enrolled at UNISA.

"I was petrified when I opened my books. I looked at my husband George (then boyfriend) and asked him, 'What now, what do I do?'. He said: 'Open your books and start studying'.

There I was, 19 years old, living on my own, determined to make it and get my degree."

Despite Neeri's determination, she faced many other challenges – personally and financially. "I studied on and off and stopped in 2007. I just could not do it, I was juggling too many tasks a day."

In 2015, she was employed by Rand Aid Association.

"When I was interviewed for the position, my interviewer asked me why I had not completed my degree. His question reignited the flame and determination to realise the dream I've had since I was 12."

"I started studying again in 2017 and muscled my way through, with two children and work and family commitments. I had long days, sometimes between 15 and 16 hours a day. My husband supported me the whole way. He never doubted that I could achieve this massive goal of mine. Even when I doubted myself, he did not."

In 2020, Neeri completed her final subject – after having already failed it three times. "I again wondered if I would finish my degree. I had 29 subjects and one that was wracking my brain."

In December 2020, she got her final results. "I was so amazed that I completed all the exams. In February this year, I got my audit results. I had finally achieved my goal, even though I was tested over and over again. I was really proud of my three distinctions."

"In achieving my degree, I was also able to achieve my mother's goal. It was her thumb print signing me into school that ensured I broke the cycle of poverty."

As for the future, Neeri is taking this year off to enjoy some free time, but she is already planning ahead. "I have my sight set on obtaining a Higher Certificate in Counselling and Communication Skills at the South African College of Applied Psychology," she says.

Thornhill's Man Cave members get to work

Members of Thornhill Manor retirement village's Man Cave have gone above and beyond, creating a beautiful lock-up cupboard for the village's occupational therapy games and books.

Thornhill Manor's village committee asked the men from its Man Cave group to build a special, lock-up cupboard to house the village's occupational therapy games and some of the book club's books in its community centre.

"They were extremely happy to oblige and showed their skill and talent during the project," says Jackie Scott, Thornhill Manor's deputy manager. "They purchased the wood and all relevant items and began their task of measuring and designing what has turned out to be a job very well done. A hearty congratulations to them all," she adds.

"It looks magnificent and so professional! It shows how our residents use their excellent hobby skills for the benefit of the community," adds Zabeth Zühlsdorff, Rand Aid's general manager: services and advance division.

The Man Cave members next put their skills to good use, building a wall of bookshelves for Thornhill Manor's library.



Thornhill Manor's book club ladies handing over thank you gifts to the men from the Man Cave. Pictured are Andy Tasker, Carol Gaynham (book club chairwoman), Janet Davies (book club member), John van Leeuwen and Al Zylstra.

Ron Smith Care Centre held a **Spring Day braai** for residents, with each wing decorating their own tables and prizes for the best decorated table and the prettiest dressed employees and residents. The best dressed residents were Linden Millard, from River Lodge 2, and Josephine Maxted, from Lakeside. All six wings won the best decorated table, as the judges couldn't single out a specific wing.

Pictured: Arthur Nortje, Doreen Woodward (Best Dressed Cedar Park), Dorothy Brokensha, Ursula Northern, Sylvia Morowitz and Joy Smith. **Sitting:** Charge Professional Nurse Florah Tshonisa.



BUSAMED VISITS THORNHILL MANOR

Thornhill Manor retirement village residents and staff were recently each given a special, non-breakable mug by the Busamed Modderfontein Private Hospital Orthopaedic and Oncology Centre.

Busamed's group brand marketing manager Taryn Laas visited Thornhill Manor with her colleagues Egon Vivier, the hospital manager, and Ryno van Jaarsveld, the nursing manager.

"The Busamed team updated our staff about the doctors who practice at the hospital. They also wanted to learn more about Thornhill Manor, care in our independent living homes and how Rand Aid's care centres work," says Thornhill Manor manager Esme Erasmus. "When Covid-19 permits, they will make arrangements for their specialists to conduct talks and presentations at Thornhill Manor, to inform residents about a number of important issues that affect the elderly," she adds.



Thornhill Manor resident Wendy Hunt with her mug.



A work group of residents and staff busy preparing the plastic yarn.

Hearts and Hands for the Homeless

Ron Smith Care Centre, represented by staff members Debbie Christen and Salina Mtshali, and volunteer, Claudette Theunissen, was able to finally deliver crocheted sleeping mats and blankets to the homeless and needy in Krugersdorp in June.

The mats were made out of recycled plastic bags, which were cut into strips and wound into balls of yarn.

The Hearts and Hands for the Homeless Project kicked off in March 2020, but ground to a halt a few weeks later due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

The blankets were part of an ongoing recreation programme, which sees squares being knitted and then sewn together by volunteers to make blankets.

For over a year, Ron Smith Care Centre residents and staff intermittently worked on the initiative, through many disruptions and the ever-changing circumstances of lockdown.

"Finally, and just in time for the winter cold snap, 14 mats and 45 blankets were handed over to the WAS Foundation's Rainbow Haven in Krugersdorp with our love and best wishes, especially to each person who received these gifts from us," says Debbie.

"It was amazing that staff and residents were able to persevere through all the disruptions and use the time during lockdown to try and make a difference," she adds.