

Shifting perceptions of ageing and care

In the not-so-distant past, old age was often associated with frailty, dependence, and a decline in quality of life.

“Care centres – or nursing homes or old age homes, as they were called – for elders unable to live independently often resembled hospitals. However, a significant shift in perceptions has taken place,” says Rand Aid Association general manager Ayanda Matthews. “Society now recognises that ageing is a natural part of life and that older individuals can continue to live meaningful, active, and fulfilling lives.”

Rand Aid Association, which runs four retirement villages and two care centres, is at the forefront of this transformative approach to ageing and care in South Africa. By adopting the Eden Alternative philosophy over a decade ago, the organisation is challenging traditional institutional models that often isolate and depersonalise older residents, explains Amanda Diener of Rand Aid.

Eden Alternative is a non-profit organisation founded in America with a global mission to improve the well-being of elders and their care partners. In late 2016, after a four-year process of physical, cultural, organisational and personal transformation, Ron Smith Care Centre achieved Milestone One on the Eden Alternative Registry, becoming the first organisation in Gauteng – and the second in Africa – to achieve Eden Alternative Registry membership.

In the years that have followed, Rand Aid has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the Eden Alternative principles. “Despite challenges such as Covid-19, Rand Aid has made significant progress in integrating the Eden Alternative into the organisation, which is evident in our continued dedication to culture change,” says Amanda. In 2020, Ron Smith Care Centre became the first organisation in Africa to achieve Milestone 2.

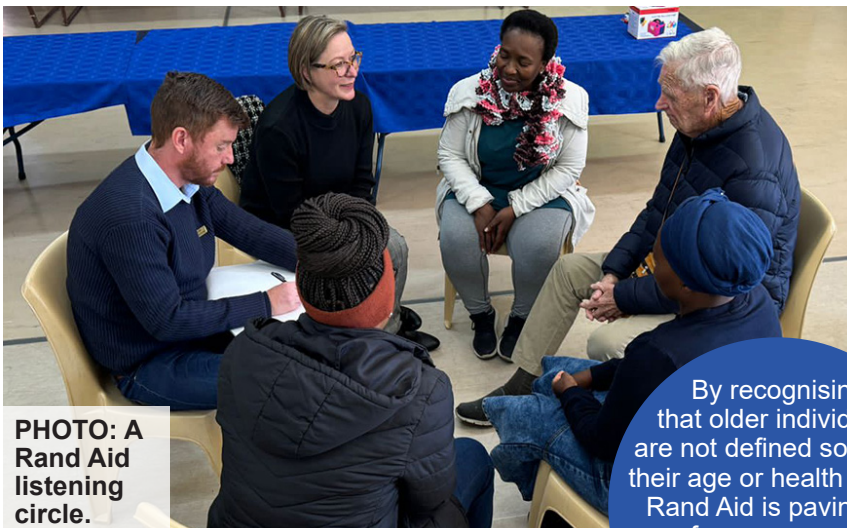


PHOTO: A Rand Aid listening circle.

On July 18, Eden Alternative SA said on its Facebook page: “We did our very first Eden Associate training 12 years ago... at Rand Aid’s Ron Smith Care Centre. It is an honour to celebrate the continuation of the relationship and its impact on all the care partners and residents. Here’s to the next 12 years!”

By recognising that older individuals are not defined solely by their age or health status, Rand Aid is paving the way for a more compassionate and inclusive society – Ayanda Matthews

The Eden Alternative culture change journey encompasses physical, organisational, and personal transformation, structured into 12 tracks and 21 practices, integrating best practices in relationship-directed support into daily work.

The 12 tracks

- Leadership
- Person-first language
- Education
- Employee practices
- Clinical services
- Data, quality assurance, and performance
- Communication
- Loneliness, helplessness, and boredom
- Rhythms of daily life
- Institutional trappings
- Food and dining
- Community

Eden Alternative is aligned with Rand Aid’s focus on creating a home-like environment that fosters meaningful relationships, personal choice, and a sense of belonging. Instead of treating residents in care centres as patients requiring care, the emphasis is on supporting their individual needs and aspirations.

“All of Rand Aid’s staff members and interested residents will in future have the opportunity to participate in multiple ways to grow. They will be empowered with the knowledge necessary to improve the quality of life for residents and care partners by implementing relationship-centred support practices with a primary focus on well-being.”

Driving transformation in elderly care

To help the organisation drive transformation, a core leadership team comprising staff members from all Rand Aid establishments will be established. This will help ensure that all staff members are growing towards the same goals, even if some are only entering this journey now.

Another tool to be adopted is listening circles. Already used by some Rand Aid care centres and villages, listening circles encourage staff and residents to contribute their thoughts and ideas to make the transformation more inclusive.

Shaun Victor, the manager of Thornhill Manor Retirement Village, says that the most recent workshop presented by Eden Alternative South Africa reaffirmed the practices they have been implementing. “It was a valuable reminder of the need to strengthen connections within our community and move beyond simply meeting basic needs, focusing instead on truly enhancing the quality of life for residents.”

Growing a fresh start at Wedge

SANCA Wedge Gardens substance abuse centre has expanded its holistic approach to recovery by incorporating a vegetable garden into its comprehensive programme.

Under the guidance of Wedge housekeeper Thuli Dlamini, the vegetable garden aims to empower clients to take ownership of their healing journey through active participation in a nurturing activity.

"Gardening has long been recognised for its therapeutic benefits, providing a tangible outlet for clients to care for something other than themselves," says Wedge's manager, Adèl Grobbelaar.

"By tending to plants from seedlings to maturity, individuals experience firsthand the process of growth. This tangible representation of progress can serve as a powerful metaphor for their personal recovery journey," she adds.

In addition to its therapeutic value, gardening offers a practical skill.

"As clients learn to cultivate healthy produce, they gain a sense of self-sufficiency and empowerment. The act of harvesting and preparing food can also foster a deeper connection to their bodies and promote mindful eating habits.

"The success of the vegetable garden at SANCA Wedge Gardens underscores the importance of incorporating diverse therapeutic activities into the recovery process," says Adèl.



Wedge Gardens housekeeper Thuli Dlamini and two Wedge clients at work.



How high can she go? Maria Volschenk in action.

Golden time at annual games

A week of friendly competition and camaraderie unfolded at Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) as residents and staff participated in the third annual Golden Games.

Dressed in vibrant team colours, the six residential wings battled it out in a series of fun-filled events, including Noodle Wars, Flying Around the World, Skyscraper Building, and Bocce Ball, between August 19 and 23.

All six wings used their creativity and designed a banner that illustrated their unique identity as a wing and also embodied and incorporated elements of the Eden Alternative philosophy and practices that RSCC embraces. "These banners were judged and awarded points that contributed to the final score of each wing," says Debbie Christen, RSCC facilitator: Recreational and training services.

Preparations for the games began in mid-July, as RSCC staff kicked off the team-building process by participating in a dance challenge that was designed as a fun way to build unity and team spirit. Staff were taught a dance to the song, One Way Ticket by Tanja Thomas and attended scheduled practice sessions. The Dance Champions of 2024 were the dynamic second group from River Lodge 3 residential wing, who managed to score a whopping 68/70 points!

The four-day event culminated in an awards ceremony, at which the residential wing of Cedar Park was pronounced the winner of the Golden Games grand championship for the second year in a row.

"The games are more than just about winning and losing; they are about having a positive attitude, trying your best, encouraging your teammates, and recognising and appreciating other people's achievements!" says Debbie.

A cracker of a Christmas in July at Tarentaal

Wearing Christmas hats and eating feasts in mid-summer does not appeal to everyone, which is why many South Africans opt for a braai or picnic on December 25.

Christmas in July, however, is a different matter altogether. The weather is chilly, bundling up is cosy rather than sweat-inducing, and a full plate is appealing. Residents of Tarentaal Retirement Village discovered this for themselves on July 30, when they gathered in the village hall for a festive celebration.

"The Christmas in July High Tea was organised by our residents' committee, consisting of Nan Haslehurst, Wendy Laver, Charmaine Datt, Doreen Steyn, Rhoda Heynes and David Picton. It was a cracker of an event and I am sure the organisers will all find a little something extra under the tree come December, to reward them for their efforts," says village manager Tammy Neilson.



Smiles from Janet Ristic and Kay Stott.

Rand Aid residents open hearts after fire

Rand Aid staff members, residents and their families opened their hearts after a devastating fire at SAVF Die Anker Tehuis in Germiston in July. Tragically, a resident died in the blaze that destroyed a section of the two-storey building.

Rand Aid's senior nursing services manager, Avril Maltman, and charge professional nurse (management) Leanie Bessinger asked the families of the Ron Smith Care Centre residents to open their hearts to the Germiston home.

"The response from families and friends of Ron Smith Care Centre was heartening, with donations of clothes, crockery, cutlery, groceries, bedding and some cash pouring in," says Avril.

Elphin Lodge and Inyoni Creek residents also donated generously and on August 29, the donations were delivered to SAVF Kinross Herberg for storage.

Jenny Tonkin, Inyoni Creek's manager, says in 'true Inyoni spirit', the residents donated generously. "The Men's Shed donated R5 000 and we raised an additional R1 100, which will be credited to Die Anker bank account," says Jenny.

Don't miss the Thornhill fun day

Thornhill Manor's annual family fun day and fete has become a firm favourite on many people's social calendars. This year's event, to be held on October 5, will have the same vibrant atmosphere and variety of stalls that regulars have come to expect.

Indulge in mouth-watering food options like German cuisine, pancakes, curry and rice, egg and bacon rolls, boerewors rolls, and refreshing treats from the tea garden. Explore unique crafts, paintings, jewellery, leather items, and natural supplements while browsing the wide selection of

products, including jams, honey, diamond art, and decoupage. Delicious baked goods, pickles, preserves, sewing and knitted items, books, and more will also be on offer. Rudi van Niekerk will provide entertainment, adding to the festivities. Don't miss out on the exciting raffles and the many other stalls available.

All funds raised go directly to the Thornhill Manor village fund to be spent on a project decided by the residents.

Thornhill Manor is in Lakeside Village, Old Johannesburg Road, Modderfontein. The fun day runs from 9am to 1pm.

For further information, please contact Jackie at 011 608 2480 or email her at jscott@randaid.co.za

45 employees rewarded for long service

The star of Rand Aid Association's long service awards this year was Paulina Namo, the nursing services manager at Thembalami Care Centre who was rewarded for a whopping 40 years of service.

Paulina started working at Rand Aid in 1984. In that year, cheese cost R5.99 p/kg, 250g of bacon cost R1.95, and a packet of Bakers tennis biscuits cost 79c. Archbishop Desmond Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize, and dissatisfaction over rent increases sparked the bloody Vaal Uprising. South Africa was a decade away from achieving democracy. During her four decades at Rand Aid, Paulina has seen significant changes in the country and her profession. What has not changed, however, is her dedication to the well-being of the people in her care.

She was one of 45 Rand Aid employees honoured on August 22 at the Tarentaal Retirement Village hall. Since the awards were implemented 19 years ago, 1 667 people have received awards ranging from five to 45 years of service. This represents a staggering 14 165 years.



George Vermuelen (20 years), Gert Coetsee (Rand Aid CEO), Portia Ngobeni (20 years), Paulina Namo (40 years), and Paul Carter (chairperson of the Rand Aid board).

Paulina believes that her greatest achievements were to mentor and support careworkers and enrolled nurses at Thembalami. The people she took under her wing went on to pursue nursing careers not only internally, but also at different provincial and private institutions. Under her guidance, 15 enrolled nursing assistants (ENAs) qualified as enrolled nurses, and one completed her professional nursing qualification and was recently promoted to professional nurse.

"Paulina also guided a staff member to become a qualified paramedic, who was recently employed by the emergency services," says Ayanda. "She also supervised and trained

careworkers and ENA students from the Arwyp Training Institute and Lunghile Nursing Schools, and some of them were placed at Thembalami. I salute Paulina for her dedication to the nursing fraternity. Not only does she have a passion for nursing, but she has compassion for the elderly she so diligently serves. She has touched the hearts of many a resident and impacted and imparted this compassion to staff members."

20 YEARS

George Vermeulen, Rand Aid's grounds manager (head office), was recognised for 20 years of service.

With a mechanical background, having worked in a motor vehicle workshop and as a service technician at a tobacco company, Rand Aid's management believed that George would be the perfect person for the Rand Aid workshop. He started his Rand Aid career in July 2004 as a mechanic.

"George took responsibility for the maintenance and repairs of the Rand Aid vehicles until he fell ill. After his recovery in 2007, he was reallocated to the grounds and became the grounds manager. He completed an intensive horticultural course that enabled him to take the gardens to the next level," says Ayanda.

"George is well known to all residents and staff. He is always willing to share his opinion and get stuck in when a job needs doing. For 20 years, George has been contributing towards the maintenance and improvement of Rand Aid."



Nursing services manager Paulina Namo received an award for 40 years of service.

15 YEARS

The housekeeper at Ron Smith Care Centre, Portia Ngobeni, was awarded for 15 years of service.

Currently, Portia runs the linen room, manages the Ron Smith Care Centre housekeeping team, and is the stand-in supervisor for the Elphin Lodge Retirement Village domestic team when their supervisor is on leave. She also assists at the Elphin reception when they are short-staffed. "We all know the twinkle in her eye, but also the stern look!" says Ayanda.

Mantji Makhwiting, an enrolled nurse at Thembalami Care Centre, was also recognised for 15 years of service. Mantji is in charge of both the Ibis ward and the MODA section. "She is loyal and humble and displays great empathy towards the special-needs residents in her care. She is always willing to assist in an emergency and is a great team leader known for boosting morale and encouraging interpersonal connections."



RIGHT: RSCC's Debbie Christen, warms a new mom's heart.



Bundles of goodwill for mother and child hospital

In the spirit of selfless service and honouring the legacy of Nelson Mandela, Elphin Lodge Retirement Village and Ron Smith Care Centre extended a helping hand to the Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital.

The Rand Aid-run retirement village and care centre community came together to donate essential funds and care packages to support the hospital's vital work in caring for new mothers and their babies.

According to Debbie Beech, Elphin Lodge's deputy manager, Rahima Moosa hospital is the second busiest maternity in Gauteng and specialises in premature deliveries.

"At our initial meeting with Prof Keith Bolton, one of the paediatricians, he told us that the Kangaroo Mother Care Unit has no hot water facilities. A dream was for them to get a geyser installed to solve this issue. They were also in constant need of care packs, blankets, and clothing for baby and mom alike," says Debbie.

A raffle was put together to raise funds towards the purchase of a geyser and the response from residents and members of the general community was amazing. "We raised R8 000 for the geyser and received sufficient donations to fill 43 care packs. We also got a huge number of hand-knitted blankets and baby clothes, receiving blankets and other much-needed items."

On July 26, a small group of staff and residents from Elphin Lodge went to the hospital to hand over the items that had been collected.

"We were greeted by Dr Joy Fredericks, a paediatrician who kindly showed us around the wing. Although the building is old, the place was spotless. Overcrowding is a very real issue, and they have several public-private sector collaborations underway to improve the facilities and deal with overcrowding. The staff were friendly and their dedication to their patients was obvious," says Debbie.

She says the Kangaroo Mother Care Unit is a cosy place, where the moms 'incubate' their babies on their chests. "This method has been proven as the most effective in treating stable prem babies," says Debbie.

The Rand Aid delegation was able to hand out a care pack, blanket, and hand-knitted teddy to each mother in the unit.

"The need for hot water remains but the solution is more complicated than merely providing a geyser. We are still in discussions with the relevant people to make this dream a reality.

"A big thank you to everyone who contributed, from the ladies who knitted and sewed, to those who donated items and bought raffle tickets. We were overwhelmed by the positive response.

"Mandela Day aims to give back. Not just for 67 minutes, but on a sustainable level. Hopefully, the geyser and provision of hot water will be a long-lasting result of this successful initiative," says Debbie.

Meaningful connections fostered

What was meant to be a morning of games between the residents of Thembalami Care Centre and Tarentaal Retirement Village ended up instead as a good old chinwag over tea.

Thembalami's deputy manager Elize Raath explains that this Mandela Day they wanted to share their many blessings with the residents of the retirement village. "We invited them over for a morning of games, tea and cake. Fifteen residents accepted our invitation. They arrived earlier than expected and within a short space of time, were happily chatting to our residents. The plan to play games went out the window as friendships were formed or strengthened."

Tsakani Shihlomule, Thembalami's occupation therapist, managed to get a connectivity game going, with people sharing their interests and experiences. "The residents then had to confirm if they shared an interest or went through the same kind of experiences. For example, if one person said, 'I lost my partner due to illness', others were given the opportunity to share their stories," says Elize.

She explains that should a Tarentaal resident no longer be able to live independently, they might choose to move to sister Rand Aid property Thembalami, which provides nursing care. "The event gave Tarentaal residents the chance to catch up with former village neighbours who have moved to Thembalami, and also allowed them to get to know the care centre, which will help remove some of the uncertainty should they opt to relocate here in the future," says Elize.



Tsakani Shihlomule, Shirley D'aquino, Sarah Moodley, Imelda du Toit, Margaret McFadden, and Anne Kojetin.



Over 1 000 squares were knitted and crocheted by Thornhill Manor's Knit and Natter group for Mandela Day. The group consists of around 18 to 20 women. "They began making squares only a couple of months ago, as they are constantly doing charity work for the greater community," says Thornhill Manor deputy manager Jackie Scott. Malcolm Burroughs from 67 Blankets for Nelson Mandela Day fetched the results of their hard work the day after Mandela Day, on July 19 – 1 357 squares, which equates to around 28.5 blankets. "We are so proud of our ladies and their hearts of gold," says Jackie. Pictured: Elaine Weldon, Barbara Damstra, Audrey Hepburn, Caryl Richardson, Carol Foulis, Sheila Bagnol (heads up the Thornhill knitting group) and Malcolm Burroughs from 67 Blankets.



Thuli Dlamini, the Wedge Gardens housekeeper, holds one of the completed packages.

Embracing the gift of giving

SANCA Wedge Gardens' clients and staff spent Mandela Day putting together care packages for people in need of pampering!

Forming part of the substance use treatment centre's occupational therapy activities, the assembled care packages included a bodywash/soap, lotion, shampoo and an emery board for nail care.

"These were finished off with a ribbon and a picture of Madiba," says SANCA Wedge Gardens' occupational therapist Caryn Berman.

"Our clients worked efficiently in pairs to make a big batch of completed packages. This was in a happy atmosphere of giving and sharing with others," she adds.

Each client who assisted was given a piece of Caryn's homemade cake, a sucker, and of course, a care package.

"These packages are being handed out to people outside Wedge Gardens who may be begging on the streets, car guards, or anyone in need of some pampering," says Caryn.

Clients were also entertained by a group of learners from Lyndhurst Primary School.

"They sang and read poems and essays they had written. These delightful young people brought some brightness and pleasure to our clients."

Woolly web of care woven

Warm drinks on a chilly day and a toast to Inyoni Creek's knitters made Mandela Day 2024 extra sweet.

Two events were held on the day, with the first being a celebration for the women who collectively knitted a record 4 169 squares for 67 blankets for Nelson Mandela Day. This is 1 794 more than last year's 2 375. Joining the women for a cup of hot chocolate topped with marshmallows, muffins and cake he supplied was Malcolm Burroughs of Cake Brothers, who is also a 67 Blankets representative. "Malcolm had donated wool to the knitters for the past three years," says Inyoni Creek manager Jenny Tonkin.

In the afternoon, the village's staff members were invited to enjoy a cup of loaded hot chocolate and muffins.

"We then made our own 'listening' circle and tossed an unravelling ball of wool to each staff member, creating a web that indicated the importance of teamwork and how we keep our residents safe in the web that we weave," says Jenny.

Listening circles are encouraged by the Eden Alternative, a philosophy of care based on authentic, inter-reliable relationships that Rand Aid has embraced. These circles are peer-directed listening experiences that are intended to lead action and change.



Inyoni Creek staff members weave a web of love in a listening circle.

Visitors aplenty for MODA and Thembalami residents

Three sets of visitors made Thembalami and the Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) care centres' residents feel cherished this Mandela Day.

Clicks Genesis on Fairmount, mining company Normet Africa, and BevCo staff members spent time with the residents and donated much-needed items and well-received treats.

First to arrive were six people from Clicks, who spent a happy 67 minutes interacting with residents and staff. A box of spectacles and a blood pressure machine were donated by the visitors.

The six-man Normet Africa team was next through the door, bringing with them four wall clocks large enough to be seen by residents with vision challenges.

Occupational therapist Tsakani Shihlomule, who wore a DJ hat on the day, got the residents and visitors up and dancing before tea was served by the Normet delegation.

Just before lunch, a party of 15 people from BevCo arrived bearing bottles of water and popular cold drinks, sweets, colouring-in pencils for the occupational therapy department,

cakes, and much-needed clothing items. After lunch, BevCo visitors participated in games in the MODA activity room. There was so much laughter from the employees and the MODA residents that the visitors did not want to leave.



Delyse Burgess with all her drinks.



LEFT: Making new friends – Regina Ratshosana (Thembalami) and Carol Murphy (RSCC).

Sister centres join hands

Mandela Day challenges South Africans to make an impact on the lives of others, and this is just what two Rand Aid care centres did on July 16.

"The recreation team and residents of Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) wanted to do something special and meaningful for Mandela Day this year, so we invited some of the residents and staff from our sister care centre, Thembalami, to join us for a morning of fun and delicious treats," says Debbie Christen, RSCC facilitator: Recreational and training services.

After being warmly welcomed, the residents from the two care centres participated in a lively pass-the-parcel type game, in which there were several opportunities to win chocolates. Then those gathered tucked into cheese and asparagus quiche, sausage rolls, homemade carrot cupcakes, and oatmeal and raisin cookies, specially made for the occasion and served with a choice of tea, coffee or hot chocolate.

"After tea, RSCC residents Ria Milburn and Carol Murphy presented small gifts to each resident and staff member from Thembalami," says Debbie.

Thembalami resident Carol Schneider thanked RSCC for the lovely morning and said that it was a wonderful opportunity to get out for a bit, meet new people, and have some fun in a new environment.



Residents, carers, staff members and Servest employees at the Arbor Day celebration.

More shade in Thornhill's future

Two lavender trees were planted by Thornhill Manor on September 2 in celebration of Arbor Month.

It is hoped that the trees, which were planted in the retirement village's park area, will create more shade for the stalls at the annual family fun day and fete. This year's event is on October 5, from 9am to 1pm.

"What a great turnout of residents we had for the tree planting," says Jackie Scott, the village's deputy manager.

"The trees and fertiliser were generously donated by Servest Garden Services, and the company's Londrick Mathebula and Sibongayena Dlamini kindly dug the holes."

"Wendy Hunt, a Thornhill Manor resident, is always willing to organise our Arbor Day event and say a few words and a prayer. As is tradition, this year's tree planting was followed by tea and cake in our community centre," says Jackie.

Residents get to know each other at chapel tea

Single Thornhill Manor retirement village residents were recently treated to tea and treats by the Chapel Committee.

"The residents were spoilt with delicious treats and enjoyed each other's company, getting to know each other.

"This time we had a bigger turnout, and more connections were made," says Thornhill Manor's social worker Karen Griessel.

Amanda Brown, who is passionate about playing the organ and piano, entertained everyone with her beautiful background music.

Charles Power and Amanda also performed a heartfelt piece by un-



Amanda Brown and Charles Power.

packing the Lord's prayer. "Social engagement is vital, especially for single older adults as it contributes to overall well-being.

"Engaging in social activities not only provides companionship but also

positively impacts mental and physical health," says Karen.

"Thank you to the Chapel Committee for their big hearts in caring for their village residents," she adds.

At 80, Neil's giving ageing a run for its money

Most 80 year olds – especially those who have had two knee replacements – would consider a good meal in the company of loved ones a great way to celebrate their birthday, but not so Neil Munro.

The Inyoni Creek resident spent his birthday on June 28 doing his 239th parkrun in Namibia.

Neil's right knee was replaced in July 2010 and two years later, his left knee was also replaced. "With the pain gone, I was able to walk properly but it was not until August 2017 that I did my first parkrun.

"My ex-neighbour Claude Pearce took me to Modderfontein to try something I knew nothing about. Wrongly dressed, I joined the many runners who had lined up for the start and Claude said to me 'pick a nice bum and follow it'. Fifty-four minutes later I had completed the 5km run and could not wait for the following Saturday. I ran 37 runs at Modderfontein before it closed down."

Not deterred, Neil started travelling to compete in other parkruns. He will soon do his 250th parkrun, having competed at more than 125 locations.

"What a wonderful innovation the parkrun is, with close to 10 million registered runners worldwide."

He says while in Namibia for his birthday, he did two parkruns, in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund respectively. "Both were next to the sea, both were paved, and there were no hills to tackle. Walvis Bay was misty, so it was an eerie run, especially when I passed hundreds of flamingos on the misty bay. The Swakopmund was run in bright sunshine and only a few metres from the sea, making it very scenic.

"I have run in all the provinces in South Africa and have done 15 runs in the UK, one in Wales and two in Namibia. I just need a venue with the letter Y to have completed the alphabet."



Rob and Lu Gair with Neil Munro in Namibia. The Gairs run with Neil most weeks.

Breaking the cycle of addiction denial

Denial is a cornerstone of addiction, a powerful force that can blind individuals to the destructive consequences of substance use.

Those suffering from substance use disorders often deny their addiction, the substances they use, the quantities consumed, the frequency of use, the people they use with, and the negative impact their addiction has on themselves and others, says Adèl Grobelaar, the manager of SANCA Wedge Gardens.

This denial is a formidable obstacle, trapping individuals in a vicious cycle of substance use and rationalisation.

"Overcoming denial is not a simple matter; there is no magic wand that can

instantly dispel this powerful emotion. Denial is the primary force that keeps people in active addiction. It shields them from the harsh realities of their situation, allowing them to maintain a distorted perception of their behaviour," Adèl explains.

To help individuals break free from the grip of denial, it is essential to avoid shielding them from the consequences of their actions.

"By allowing them to experience the negative consequences of their substance use, loved ones can help them understand the destructive nature of their addiction," says Adèl.

■ To read the full article, visit www.wedgegardens.co.za.

Cream moustaches for a good cause at Thornhill

Background music filled the air as Thornhill Manor retirement village residents came in droves to support the winter warmer market, despite the icy weather.

There was lots of chatting, laughing and sharing as residents tucked into delicious meals, including butter chicken with rice, cottage pie and salad, massive and delicious crumpets with jam and cream (many cream moustaches were seen), boerewors rolls and tea and coffee.

A special thank you to Thornhill Manor's café manager Neil Ross and the residents who manned and ran the stalls.

Spearheaded by Thornhill Manor resident Vicky Keenan, two stalls had banners and posters to raise Alzheimer's awareness and funds for outings for residents battling Alzheimer's and dementia.



Malcolm Robinson, Esther and Nigel Brain, Kathy Waage and Dale Cherrington.

Alzheimer's, a degenerative brain disease, is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for 60% to 80% of cases.

It typically begins with memory loss and progresses to disorientation, confusion and difficulties speaking and swallowing. It has specific pathological features and is primarily associated with ageing, but is not a normal part of ageing.

Some symptoms associated with Alzheimer's may include difficulty following storylines or conversations, apathy and loss of interest in hobbies and activities, changes in mood and personality, withdrawal from social activities, decreased or poor judgement, misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps, problems with words in speaking or writing and confusion.

Human connections improve well-being

Old friendships were strengthened and new ones formed at a morning of movie magic presented by Thornhill Manor Retirement Village for the residents of Thembalami care centre on August 16 – but behind the fun was a meaningful reason for the get-together.

Both Thornhill Manor and Thembalami are run by 121-year-old NPO Rand Aid. Karen Griessel, Thornhill Manor's social worker, says for the past years, the village's staff and residents have committed themselves to raising awareness about dementia before and during September, which is World Alzheimer's Awareness Month.



Maureen Otnes of Thornhill and Elizabeth Andrews of Thembalami.

“According to the World Health Organisation, more than 55 million people worldwide have dementia. While the disease is more common as people grow older, it is not a normal part of ageing,” she says.

“The Thornhill Manor team understands the impact that dementia can have on individuals and their loved ones. We are committed to raising

awareness about the condition, including ways to support brain health, recognise early signs, and offer care and understanding to those affected,” says Shaun Victor, Thornhill Manor's manager.

Following last year's fundraising events, Thornhill Manor was able to donate equipment to Thembalami care centre for its newly opened Snoezelen multi-sensory room. Karen explains that Snoezelen equipment is often used for Alzheimer's and dementia care because it creates a safe, mood-enhancing environment.

Not all events held in the build-up to Alzheimer's Month are about raising funds or spreading awareness, however. Some, says Karen, are about human connections and how they improve well-being.

“Thembalami and Thornhill residents united in laughter while watching *Mrs Doubtfire*, a comedy starring the late Robin Williams. Between the laughs and enjoying of popcorn, tea and cookies, old friendships are rekindled and new ones formed.

Strong social connections in older people can improve a person's mood and sense of belonging,” says Karen.

“Having people to support and engage with you can be invaluable to people in a care centre setting,” she says.



Tsakani Shihlomule, Thembalami OT, and Vicky Keenan, a Thornhill Manor resident, with one of the games Vicky made.

The serious business of play

Play therapy helps older adults with dementia improve their cognitive skills. In the build-up to World Alzheimer's Day on September 21, Thornhill Manor Retirement Village donated hand-made games to Thembalami Care Centre.

Thornhill Manor resident Vicky Keenan, who is a qualified occupational therapist and a skilled DIYer, made the games, which are designed to enhance memory and motor skills. The games – ‘Feed the Clown’ and ‘dart’ board – were gratefully received by Thembalami's occupational therapist, Tsakani Shihlomule.

“Playing games and engaging in fun activities is a form of therapy as well as an effective way of exercising the brain,” says Thornhill Manor social worker Karen Griessel. “The interaction achieved by playing games with friends strengthens a person's sense of belonging, thus reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.”

Paint in a specially mixed therapeutic colour was donated and will be used to freshen the activity room.

“We also donated three portable CD players and two boxes of CDs with classical music and golden oldies. Music therapy is used to soothe or stimulate people with advanced dementia,” says Karen.

Musical perception, emotion, and memory can survive long after other forms of memory and cognitive function have disappeared.

Diamond celebration for evergreen love

Elphin Lodge residents Roslind (78) and Cecil Shainfeld (86) marked their 60th wedding anniversary on August 30, a milestone that speaks to their enduring love, commitment, and resilience.

"We were introduced by a mutual friend early in 1963 and had a whirlwind courtship. Those were the days of dinner, dancing, theatres and wonderful Sundays at the Vaal River," shares Ros.

The Shainfelds were married at the Pine Street Shul in Johannesburg on August 30, 1964, and had two children, Richard and Kim. "Richard is a wonderful son and father to our three grandsons: Joshua, married to Sarah; Daniel; and Adam. Kim lives in Irvine, California, and is an esthetician."

Cecil owned retail stores and in the later years, bought and sold motor cars. He has always been a keen cyclist and gyms four times a week. He also enjoys playing card games and watching TV. Cecil says that while Ros is a great chef and a wonderful baker, he is handy in the kitchen too – making his breakfast oats and poaching a 'mean egg'.



Cecil and Ros Shainfeld.

Ros was a homemaker and taxi driver to and from school to sports activities and says she loved every minute of that time. In later years, she worked in the retail industry, selling clothing for women. She is an avid gardener, loves colour, and loves to paint, especially on material. Challah covers, which are centrepieces on every Sabbath table, table runners and wall hangings are her specialities.

"Over the past six years, while living at Elphin Lodge, we have made wonderful friends who are more like family to us," says Ros.

"Cecil's favourite memory is of me walking down the aisle to join him," she shares, adding

that he keeps that picture tucked away in his heart. Ros remembers the look on Cecil's face when he held his son and daughter for the first time.

"Our greatest blessing is reaching this milestone together. We are fortunate to have three wonderful grandchildren, who bring immense joy and fulfilment."

The Shainfeld's advice to other couples is to 'be yourself, learn to share, and give each other space to grow'.

Sharon is happily part of the Inyoni Creek team

Inyoni Creek's new receptionist is walking on cloud nine, so enamoured is she with the village and its residents.

Sharon Jacobs joined the team temporarily in February and was employed full-time from the beginning of May. "The welcome I received was 'absolutely phenomenal'. "The residents are wonderful and kind. They are only too grateful for the smallest thing I do, which makes a huge difference to my day. "I love being here. In fact, they make it so worth my while, I would love to stay here until I retire."

Outside of work, the Alberton resident says she loves spending time with her two boys – James (28) and *laatlammietjie* Hayden (19), and visiting with her close friends. "We love live entertainment and a braai. I love reading and I play the guitar and sing with my son James."

Sharon's previous jobs include being a caregiver to older people living with dementia, office work, and sales.



Inyoni Creek receptionist, Sharon Jacobs.



LEFT: MODA residents Shaun White and Sydney le Sueur with Fikile Mbatha (staff nurse MODA).

Women power celebrated at Thembalami and MODA

Dancing, singing, and modelling in a room brightly decorated in purple and white and filled with joy characterised the Women's Month celebration at Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) on August 6.

Sarah Moodley, a resident of nearby Tarentaal Retirement Village, gave an inspiring talk. She said: "When you see a woman, you see beauty, you see love, you see kindness, you see gentleness, you see love. God has created her so beautifully. He took time;

He took a rib of man and He made a woman. So I want you to feel important today... you are a gift."

Colstan, comprising Gavin Standing and Brian Colbert, residents of Thornhill Manor, played popular music from the 70s and 80s and provided back-up music for Thembalami's staff and resident choir.

The care centre's occupational therapist Tsakani Shihlomule says a modelling competition for staff members was one of the day's highlights. The best model of the day was queen Babalwa Gada-

la, followed by Pretty Malope and first princess Sr Rumbidzai Chatikobo.

Other hits were opera singing by careworker Lerato Tsholo and the occupational therapy team led by Babalwa Gadala who performed *My African Dream*.

Awards on the day went to the Ibis ward staff for best dancing, the MODA staff led by Fikile Mbatha and Sthembile Ntshingila for best-prepared ward, and choir awards to MODA staff and resident Freddy Buytendag.

To round off the event, cake was enjoyed by all.