

Rand Aid *review*

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Caring and connected *communities*

The four Rand Aid retirement villages – Inyoni Creek, Thornhill Manor, Tarentaal and Elphin Lodge – have always placed residents' safety and well-being at the heart of village life.

While most residents remain active and independent, age-related challenges mean that additional support systems are valuable. Alongside the village sisters and social workers, a strong sense of community thrives, where neighbours look out for one another and initiatives to promote safety and combat isolation and loneliness continue to evolve.

At Inyoni Creek, practical new measures are being introduced. Residents can now collect free daily calendars from the office, designed to serve as a subtle well-being check. "If a calendar hasn't been updated, it's a gentle reminder for us to check in and make sure everything is okay," explains village manager Jenny Tonkin. In addition, laminated emergency preparedness lists have been distributed, and residents have been given a step-by-step SOS button guide. A new buddy system is also being launched, inviting volunteers to keep an eye on two or more neighbours, with support and communication through a dedicated WhatsApp group.

Elphin Lodge is also exploring a buddy system. Village manager Debbie Beech says the idea gained traction after lessons learnt during a recent power outage. "There's a very good informal system where neighbours check on each other,

but there's also a need for a more formal structure to support frail and vulnerable residents," she explains. Already,

two sections of the village have set up their own WhatsApp groups, with positive results. Elphin residents are also making good use of the new village WhatsApp community group, which keeps everyone updated about outages, events and important announcements.

In addition to these measures, Elphin Lodge hosts regular learning circles, facilitated by Debbie. A learning circle is a group discussion format where a facilitator poses a question, and each participant has an uninterrupted opportunity to respond before a broader conversation begins. "The aim is for people to connect on a deeper level than superficial chat," Debbie explains. She adds that they provide an opportunity for residents to share memories and connect in a meaningful way – and all are welcome to



Inyoni Creek resident Pam Hadden with her daily calendar.

join.

Another initiative that spans both Elphin Lodge and the Ron Smith Care Centre, located on the same grounds, is the men's group. Facilitated by village social worker Nadine Radford, the group provides a space for men to come together, share experiences and discuss topics of interest. In one session, for example, a member gave a fascinating talk about Ascension Island, sparking lively conversation. The group plays an important role in preventing isolation among men in the care centre and encourages meaningful interaction with village residents.

At Thornhill Manor, manager Shaun Victor says the village is reviewing various strategies. Meanwhile, residents have been using WhatsApp groups for daily check-ins, and these are now being considered for wider rollout.

Tarentaal residents also benefit from community networks and the long-established SOS button system, which connects directly to Carephone in emergencies, with a maximum response time of 20 minutes. Residents are reminded to keep their panic buttons charged and within reach, and to save key emergency numbers.

All these initiatives reflect Rand Aid's commitment to creating caring, inclusive and resilient communities.



Thornhill Manor's **hobby fair** on August 1 transformed the village hall into a vibrant showcase of creativity, with residents displaying everything from stained glass and pottery to coin collections, needlecraft and model trains. Quilting queen June Robinson (pictured) was among the many residents whose passion and talent turned the event into a true celebration of craftsmanship and community.

Lessons from those who care:

How older people thrive when they're heard

Even small acts of attention and connection can transform the lives of older adults – whether it's listening to a life story, sharing a daily chat, or including someone in an activity. Staff who work with older individuals say that being seen, heard and valued is at the heart of what truly matters in later life.

On International Day of Older Persons, October 1, staff across Rand Aid Association's retirement villages and care centres reflected on lessons they have learnt while working with older adults – lessons that highlight the power of listening, respect and connection.

Listening and presence

Many staff emphasise that older people need to be genuinely listened to and acknowledged.

Ayanda Matthews, GM care and human resources, recalls a resident with dementia who often appeared scruffy and annoyed nurses with constant questions. "One day, a visitor asked if the gentleman at the entrance was not Professor so and so? It turns out he was a professor of English with a passion for poetry. Every time I visited, I made sure I spent time with him – and there was a glimmer of light in his eyes whenever I said, 'Good day, Professor'."

Lara Swanepoel, social worker at Thembalami Care Centre, shares another example. "A new resident had experienced mistreatment at her previous facility and was fearful and withdrawn. Through consistent support, patience and open communication, she gradually felt secure. Over time, she gained confidence, built strong relationships, and eventually welcomed new residents. Despite getting older, she truly blossomed – becoming not only more self-assured but also a positive influ-

ence on those around her."

Lynn Barrow, deputy manager at Tarentaal retirement village, highlights the calming power of being heard. "An 83-year-old lady believed her car was being tampered with and called the office in distress. I went to visit her and listened to her story – one could just see her anger disappear once she felt heard."

Respect and recognition

Staff consistently note that older people want to be treated as individuals with valuable experiences, not dismissed because of age.

Catherine Dube, Elphin Lodge village sister, says: "Healthcare workers sometimes refer to them as 'these old people', forgetting they were once young and navigated life into old age without a map. I take time to listen to stories about their childhood, adulthood, marriages, divorces, medical and work experiences. This helps me understand them as individuals."

Leanie Bessinger, nursing services manager at Ron Smith Care Centre, adds: "What many older people need most is to feel seen, heard and useful – while having the security and support to live with dignity."

Connection and purpose

Combating loneliness and fostering social engagement are recurring themes.

Tammy Neilson, manager of Tarentaal, outlines three key needs: "Respect and recognition – they want to be seen as individuals with rich histories, wisdom and contributions. Connection and belonging – loneliness is one of the greatest challenges older people face; opportunities to stay socially connected help them feel part of society. Practical

support with independence – whether accessible housing, transport, health-care or technology training, older individuals value systems that allow them to remain independent while knowing support is available."

Simoné Botha, RSCC manager of OT and recreation, adds: "Staying connected, whether with family, friends, or even strangers, brings meaning and joy. We thrive when we feel part of a community."

Karen Griessel, social worker at Thornhill Manor, observes: "What older people need most today is to be recognised as valued members of the community, with unique strengths, stories and contributions to share."

Shaun Victor, manager of Thornhill Manor, summarises: "I think what older people want most is simple: To stay connected and know they still matter. They value respect, the freedom to make their own choices, and the chance to share their experience in ways that count."

Practical support

Staff also highlight the importance of maintaining autonomy and dignity.

Leanie says: "Not just medical treatment, but care that respects dignity, autonomy and mental health, like the Eden Alternative philosophy of care we follow at RSCC."

Nadine Radford, Elphin Lodge social worker, notes: "Deciding what to wear, which activity to join, or even how to spend the day may seem small, but it makes a profound difference. Being old or frail does not take away the need to be respected, heard and valued."

Debbie Beech, manager of Elphin Lodge, emphasises the power of interactions: "Spending time with someone – even five minutes – may be the only meaningful interaction that person has."

101-year-old shares words of wisdom

To mark the International Day of Older Persons on October 1, Billie Sack, aged 101 and the oldest resident at Inyoni Creek, shared her reflections on ageing with social worker Michelle Matsolo.

Billie stresses the importance of staying busy and engaged. She encourages older adults to remain social, for example by playing bridge with friends, and to keep physically active with simple arm and leg exercises. "Above all," she says, "stay interested in life and always be open to learning something new. Curiosity and connection are the keys to thriving in older age."

On what older people need most from society, Billie is clear: "The main enemy of old age is boredom. Never exclude older people. Even short visits of 10 minutes mean a great deal. Small moments of connection counter loneliness and bring joy."

She highlights the challenge of losing independence, such as when she could no longer drive, and the importance of asking for help. "Support from friends, family and neighbours is vital. Small acts of thoughtfulness help older people stay connected and supported."

At 101, her advice is simple: Stay active, stay curious, and cherish connections.



Billie Sack.



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Gert Coetzee, Amanda Diener, Michelle Matsolo and Shaun Victor at the IFA conference in Cape Town.

Rand Aid leaders gain global insight at IFA conference

A delegation from Rand Aid Association joined thought leaders, policy-makers and practitioners at the International Federation on Ageing's (IFA) 17th Global Conference, held from September 9 to 12 in Cape Town.

Representing Rand Aid were CEO Gert Coetzee; Amanda Diener, GM of Commercial and Compliance; Shaun Victor, Thornhill Manor manager; and Michelle Matsolo, Inyoni Creek social worker.

Gert says the event provided an important opportunity to learn from international experts while sharing South Africa's experiences. "Rand Aid is committed to providing world-class services and care to the residents of its retirement villages and care centres. Being part of an event of this scale offered valuable insights and fresh perspectives that will help us strengthen our role in building communities where older people can thrive."

The conference brought together delegates from around the world to share knowledge and collaborate on the challenges and opportunities of ageing. Keynote addresses, workshops and themed sessions focused on issues ranging from health and care to building inclusive, age-friendly environments. As North-West University vice-chancellor, Prof Bismark Tyobeka, told attendees: "Ageing is not a burden but a celebration of life."

For Shaun, the conference was a reminder that ageing extends beyond healthcare. "It is about shaping systems and environments where older adults live fulfilled lives by staying engaged and contributing in meaningful ways. It highlighted the need to build communities that promote independence, encourage participation and recognise older adults as active shapers of their world," he says.

Michelle emphasises the importance of holistic well-being. "In alignment with the World Health Organisation's Age-friendly Environments programme, the 17th IFA Conference served as a rallying point to accelerate the global agenda of building inclusive communities."

"One theme that stood out for me was the focus on promoting brain health across the life course. Too often, we reduce brain health to activities like crossword puzzles or reading. In reality, it goes much further – encompassing cognitive, sensory and social well-being. It is a holistic approach that speaks to the whole person, recognising the interconnectedness of mind, body and social engagement," she says.

World Mental Health Day Spotlight: Why caregivers need care too

Looking after people who have lived through trauma is rewarding, but it comes with an emotional toll, says Caryn Berman, occupational therapist at SANCA Wedge Gardens Treatment Centre.



Caryn Berman.

Reflecting on World Mental Health Day, which was commemorated on October 10, Caryn emphasises that caregivers and therapists need care too. Supporting those who support others is essential for sustainable healing and stronger communities.

Wedge Gardens helps people living with substance use disorders, many of whom carry deep scars from their past. "Successful rehabilitation depends on addressing the root causes of addiction," explains Caryn. "This means working with people from diverse backgrounds, different ages and cultures, and often with dual diagnoses."

The demands are significant. As the centre's only occupational therapist, Caryn works with all in-care patients, facilitating group sessions, running leisure and work-preparation programmes, and conducting individual therapy and assessments. The work doesn't end when the sessions finish. Reports, planning, and administration often spill into evenings, alongside home and family responsibilities. "Burnout is a real challenge in this field," Caryn admits. "At times I'm coping well, but at other times I feel I'm sinking into a trough without even realising it."

To manage stress, she leans on colleagues for encouragement, takes daily breathing and meditation breaks, and finds healing in nature. "Dinner with my family is non-negotiable – no phones or TV, just conversation and connection." For Caryn, these coping mechanisms are not just about her own well-being – they model healthy ways of managing stress for her patients. "All people suffer stress," she says. "Substance use is not the only way to handle it."

Self-care tips for caregivers:

Take regular breaks – Short pauses, even a few minutes, help recharge energy and prevent burnout.

Stay connected – Talk with friends, family, or support groups to share experiences and reduce isolation.

Prioritise your health – Eat and sleep well, sleep enough, and stay active to maintain physical and emotional resilience.

COME LOSE YOURSELF IN ART AT INYONI CREEK

Pablo Picasso once said: "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." Inyoni Creek's art group proves it true every Thursday, when residents gather at the village clubhouse to paint, draw, or sculpt together.

"Art is therapeutic," says village manager Jenny Tonkin. "It relieves stress and provides an outlet for emotional expression."

Participation is free, though members supply their own materials. Beginners can join an optional class every second week for R50 a session. Tea and coffee are served, and members often share cakes and cookies.

"Pop in to find out how to get started," Jenny invites.

For more information, call Mel Starmelmann on 082 454 4043.



Dr Elazar Marcus.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Quizmaster Brian Appleton brought his trademark British humour to Elphin Lodge's quiz night on September 2, keeping residents entertained through four rounds of fun questions. The winning team – Graham and Nan Clarke, Denise Sherel, Shirley Cosser, and Marian and Danny Nussbaum – earned vouchers for the coffee shop, while all participants enjoyed a meal and plenty of cheer.



Inyoni Creek's Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden group is really cooking! Their Vlam and Vleis social on August 11 saw 16 men gather around the braai fires for sizzling camaraderie and food. Clive Cubitt was the 'fireman' and Norman Caplan earned kudos for making the most novel meal – eggs, bread and tomatoes cooked in a frying pan! Pictured are Stuart Jayes, Hilly Lipworth and Brian Berry.



Inyoni Creek celebrated Arbor Month and Heritage Day with a community tree-planting ceremony on September 19. Residents and staff gathered as Ernie Muller, chairperson of the residents' committee, planted a liquidambar tree donated by Servest. The celebration continued with a braai, featuring traditional pap and 'sous' catered by Good2Go. Pictured with Ernie and Inyoni Creek staff, many of who wore traditional attire, are residents Sue Benjamin (far left) and Barbara Muller (far right).



Ron Smith Care Centre welcomed spring with a celebration of the season and South Africa's rich cultures. Residents and staff enjoyed music, dancing, traditional Sepele and Zulu performances, and a delicious braai at the Woodlands Garden and Lapa. Pictured: Mary Johnstone and Boniswa Maqubs.



Ron Smith Care Centre served up a Wimbledon-themed day on July 11, complete with classic white attire, fun facts, a lucky draw, strawberries and cream, and iconic match screenings. Residents and staff relived tennis memories and enjoyed the festive atmosphere. Pictured: Karabo Makgopela and Miriam Benjamin.



Rand Aid's Tarentaal retirement village residents had their bodies and hearts warmed with Mandela Day when Stoneridge Centre in Greenstone Park arrived with a gift of 100 cuddly blankets. Nearby Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association, also Rand Aid run, also received a pile of blankets. Pictured are Michelle Hurley, Stoneridge Centre's lease administrator; marketing manager Michelle van Staden; resident Auriel Wittert; and Tarentaal's Lynn Barrow.



As part of Eco Week, the St Peter's Boys Prep Eco Committee recently donated dozens of spekboom plants to Tarentaal Retirement Village. Each plant came with a student-coloured eco-themed picture. Tarentaal manager Tammy Neilson said they were thrilled to receive the water-wise, carbon-absorbing plants. Pictured are Arthur Mathole and Melton Nyathi, who delivered them.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Feeling bored or lonely? The Tarentaal village hall has something for everyone! Resident Adrian Lillywhite has sparked a table tennis revival, and a recent friendly tournament saw paddles flying and plenty of laughs – with inter-village matches on the horizon. Multiple tables mean you can gather your friends for a game, or join Adrian and get in on the fun. Prefer something quieter? The hall also has a cosy library and lounge area, plus a great selection of board games. Don't miss out – the hall is your space, so make it your place! Pictured: Elaine Flowerdew and Adrian Lillywhite take on Grenville Payne and Bonnie Davis in a spirited doubles match.



Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association birthday bash was held on September 17. As always, there was plenty of dancing to the lively music – this month courtesy of guest entertainer Ruan Tennant. Tea or coffee and cake were served. Some of the people whose September birthdays were celebrated, and the age they turned: Tony Peters (76), Errol Townsend (88), Amanada Brown (85), Rodney Sheahan (89), Muriel Erdis (92) and Nellie Green (85).



In honour of Women's Month, residents of Thembalami Care Centre's Ibis wing enjoyed pampering on August 21, including hand massages, manicures, and pedicures. The occupational therapy team, joined by volunteers Khosi Msimang, Dineo Mabatlane, and Nabo Msiza, helped residents feel truly cared for and celebrated. Pictured: Tsakani Shihlomule and Maureen Henstock.



ABOVE, LEFT: 'Rejoice with your family in the beautiful land of life,' said Albert Einstein – a spirit celebrated at Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association's bi-monthly family days. On August 30, residents and their loved ones enjoyed meals, music, and laughter, with treats like hamburgers, chips, tea, and cake. Pictured: Johannes Naude and daughter-in-law Sanet Naude.



ABOVE, RIGHT: Sorbet Morningside celebrated Mandela Day by pampering 16 ladies from Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association with buffing, polishing, and nail care. The generous volunteers left residents with beautiful nails, big smiles, and a feeling of being truly spoilt. Pictured: Daphne Paetzold.



School children and adults came together at Unisa's 5km Silent Walk on September 16 to raise awareness of communication barriers faced by deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. A delegation from the Max Ordman Deaf Association and residents and staff from Thembalami Care Centre joined learners and educators from seven Gauteng schools for the deaf. The day included hearing screenings, a 'learning to sign' competition, silent aerobics, sign singing, and dance performances. Pictured: Jerry Mofokeng, Sydney le Sueur, Barry Waldeck, and Thanyani Nevari.



"Dancing, laughter, and cupcakes filled Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association on Mandela Day, thanks to a visit from the Arwyp Training Institute team. They brought scarves, treats, and plenty of fun, joining residents and staff on the dance floor. Pictured: Patricia Maki enjoys a cupcake."



Residents of Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association celebrated the start of spring on September 1 with a breakfast buffet and outdoor fun, proudly wearing the colourful spring hats they had made. Pictured: Errol Townsend, Merle Townsend and Shirley Sibeko.

Village committees: Meet the people residents chose to act on their behalf



THORNHILL MANOR: Front: Maureen Stewart, Milena Palmer, Lynne Wardle (secretary), Shaun Victor (village manager) and Graham Hayward (treasurer). Back: Len Larson, Dave Webster (chairperson), Keith Fraser, Gavin Standing and André Vosloo (deputy chairperson). Inset: Maggie Bold.



TARENATAAL: Nan Haslehurst (chairperson), Adrian Lillywhite, Wendy Laver, Elaine Goldberg, Charmaine Datt (deputy chairperson) and David Picton (treasurer).



ELPHIN LODGE: Front: Shirley Cosser (chairperson), Howard Evans and Hlumela Anderson (deputy village manager). Back: Wally Gollop, Barry Tedder, Danny Nussbaum, Debbie Beech, Laurence Newman (vice chairperson) and Gerald Mills (treasurer). Absent: Avril Rebeck and Geron Elferink.



INYONI CREEK: Back: Brian Berry, Steve Foster, Graham Brokenshire, Ian Davies and John Hooper. Front: Mike Edwards, Mel Stamelman (deputy chairman), Jenny Tonkin (village manager), Helen Parkinson and Ernie Muller (chairperson).

■ Representing residents on the **Rand Aid board** are Dave Webster from Thornhill Manor and Ernie Muller from Inyoni Creek.

Thornhill Manor celebrates Arbor Day with tree planting in the park

Sunshine and community spirit marked Arbor Day at Thornhill Manor on September 19 as residents, garden club members and Servest staff came together to plant a karee tree in the park.

The tree was generously donated by Len and Felicity Larson. Known scientifically as *Searsia lancea*, the karee is a fast-growing, scintillating, evergreen tree native to southern Africa. With its graceful, weeping form, dense canopy, and glossy trifoliate leaves, it is not only attractive but also practical, providing shade, supporting wildlife and producing edible fruit.

The new tree, which was ceremoniously planted by Servest, will contribute to creating shaded areas in the park, ensuring comfort for visitors and stallholders at the village's annual fete.

"Planting new trees is vitally important for our precious earth for oxygen into the atmosphere and carbon dioxide



Residents of Thornhill Manor, garden club members and Servest staff with the karee tree.

elimination," said Wendy Hunt, the resident who arranges the annual Arbor Day celebration.

After the planting, everyone enjoyed tea and cake in the community centre, kindly provided by the garden club.



Treasure hunting at Tarentaal's White Elephant: Nestled in Tarentaal Village, The White Elephant is far from your typical second-hand shop. Volunteers Heather Johnson and Allan Neilson (pictured) run the quirky store, brimming with nostalgic gems, curious gadgets and the occasional 'what on earth is this for?' item. Heather keeps the shop humming with pricing, packing and selling, while Allan – the self-proclaimed Gadget Man – fixes blinking lights, tangled wires, and anything with buttons before it hits the shelves. From classic DVDs and CDs to boxes of remotes and plugs, there's always a treasure waiting. Pop in on Tuesdays or Thursdays, 9–11am, and you may leave with a rare find, a story, or both.

RSCC goes paperless with HealthWare medical records

Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) has taken a significant step in modernising its resident care by digitising its medical files.

The initiative, which began with a pilot in the River Lodge 1 wing in April, is now being rolled out across the centre's other wings, following successful implementation in River Lodges 2 and 3.

Leanie Bessinger, head of nursing services at RSCC, says the move to digital records has already had a noticeable impact on efficiency and patient care. "Having the system in place means I can oversee residents' vital signs and nursing staff notes directly from my office," she says. "Although I still prefer to maintain a hands-on approach, it greatly improves our oversight and ensures nothing gets lost."

The centre uses HealthWare, a software solution chosen after careful evaluation of several service providers. According to HealthWare, its platform 'provides a complete software solution to manage the clinical, administrative and financial requirements of any care



home facility or hospital'.

Each wing of the care centre has two to three tablets for nursing staff. Nurses' notes, along with entries from the doctor on call, physiotherapist, and other allied providers, plus blood test results, vital signs, and daily reports, are updated in real time, saving staff time previously spent on paperwork.

HealthWare stores all patient records safely in an electronic medical record,

allowing RSCC to become entirely paperless. Seamless integration ensures that information flows smoothly from intake to discharge, improving care co-ordination between disciplines and departments.

The system is also linked to Rand Aid's four retirement villages. If a resident requires recuperative care at Ron Smith, the village sister can load the resident's medical details before admission, making the process smoother and more efficient.

Leanie emphasises the practical benefits of the system: "It's incredibly easy to use. Our doctor makes her notes directly into HealthWare, and everything is immediately available to the team. No more misplaced files, and the time saved on administrative tasks can now be dedicated to providing better care."

With the digitisation project underway across all wings, RSCC continues to prioritise high-quality, efficient, and co-ordinated care for its residents, embracing technology without compromising the personal touch that defines Rand Aid's approach.



RSCC and Wedge Gardens staff members.

Sweet collaboration honours Rand Aid healthcare heroes on Mandela Day

In the true spirit of Mandela Day, Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) and SANCA Wedge Gardens came together in a heartwarming initiative that celebrated both residents and healthcare workers.

On July 16, RSCC residents and staff welcomed occupational therapist Caryn Berman and nine clients from Wedge Gardens for a lively morning of baking chocolate chip cookies. The visitors eagerly joined in mixing, rolling, and baking the biscuits, before sharing tea, coffee, and laughter with the residents. Their enthusiasm shone through as they even took on the clean-up, much to the delight of RSCC therapists.

"It was a morning of shared purpose and connection, with new friendships forming in a short space of time," said RSCC manager Ulricka Beukman.

Adding a thoughtful touch, SANCA's occupational therapy assistants crocheted small 'Worry Worms' – tokens of comfort – which were packaged with the baked treats. On Mandela Day, the RSCC recreation team, together with nursing manager Leanie Bessinger and social worker Nadine Radford, delivered these gifts to Wedge Gardens. Staff enjoyed tea, conversation, and a much-needed moment of recognition.

"Healthcare workers often focus so much on others that they risk burnout," noted Simoné Botha, RSCC's manager of OT and recreation. "This outreach was a reminder to care for ourselves and those who dedicate their lives to caring for others."

Thornhill residents 'sew' some love

With needles, thread and plenty of goodwill, Thornhill Manor residents have stitched together a colourful affirmation of their commitment to compassion and community, while also creating a striking new look for the village's reception area.

Resident Gail Mann and her quilting group, the 'Maplotties', came together during the winter months to craft eight vibrant cushions adorned with colourful patchwork hearts. These cushions reflect The Rand Aid Way, an initiative built on the values of 'Hearts', an acronym for:

H – Honesty and humility
E – Empathy, encouragement and equality
A – Accountability and assistance
R – Respect
T – Trust, teamwork and transparency
S – Safe space, support, self-worth and sensitivity

"The cushions have transformed our reception area and sparked many compliments and conversations about the meaning behind the hearts," says deputy manager Jackie Scott. "We thank Gail and her ladies for this wonderful contribution."



Gail Mann with some of the heart-themed cushions.

Cabinet reflects builders' mastery

A magnificent, handcrafted cabinet now takes pride of place in the home of Inyoni Creek retirement village resident, Bob Wilmot, safeguarding one of his most treasured creations – a finely detailed model of a Royal Navy frigate.

The cabinet was the result of teamwork and craftsmanship at the George Green Men's Shed, where members Steve Sherwood, Mike Tudhope and Roger Matthews dedicated several months – from February to May this year – to building the elegant display unit.

"I approached the fellows in the shed earlier this year to suggest that, with their help, a display cabinet be constructed," says Bob. "The model had no protection from dust, spider webs or possible damage, so I'm thrilled that it finally has a safe home."

Bob's frigate model, built to an authentic design at a scale of 1:48, was completed in 2013 after years of meticulous work. Until now, it sat exposed to the elements, perched atop the cabinet housing his first model – the HMS Victory, which took him over five years to complete back in 1988.

The newly crafted cabinet was delivered to Bob's cottage in early June, and the frigate was installed after he spent several hours cleaning it. "I'm delighted with the result," he says.

Bob joined the George Green Men's Shed in January. He is now working on his next maritime masterpiece – a clipper ship from the 1850s, which he jokes is his way of avoiding too much TV.

Established in 2019, the George Green Men's Shed provides Rand Aid residents with a well-equipped 200m² workshop where they can pursue DIY projects, collaborate on community initiatives, and share skills in a relaxed, social setting – all without worrying about space constraints or disturbing the neighbours.



Roger Matthews standing next to the finished cabinet and frigate model.



Debbie Beech, manager of Elphin Lodge and a qualified social worker, recently shared her expertise on 702's Clement Manyathela Show, offering practical advice for supporting and caring for ageing loved ones. In September, she also spoke on dementia during World Alzheimer's Month on the Aubrey Masango Show. Rand Aid is proud to have such a valued industry expert guiding families and caring for our elders with compassion and professionalism.



Malcolm Cummins from 67 Blankets collected the squares and blankets on July 22.

Nearly 1 500 squares knitted for charity

Thanks to a partnership with Malcolm Cummins from the 67 Blankets for Mandela Day initiative, Thornhill Manor residents have made a remarkable contribution to those in need this winter.

While the village's knitting group focused on their ongoing charitable commitments this year, many other residents stepped forward to support the Mandela Day initiative. With wool kindly donated by Malcolm, and some residents even using their own, knitting quickly got underway across the village.

"The response was amazing," said Jackie. "We only received the wool three months ago, and it wasn't long before we ran out. Some residents even bought their own wool or used what they had at home."

Residents knitted 1 496 squares and three completed blankets, enough to create over 34 blankets for people who desperately need warmth during the cold months.

"We are so grateful for the incredible effort by our residents. This truly is the 'Rand Aid Way' in action," Jackie added. "Blessed be those who receive them."



Tong tjomies: Brian Burls, Di Zylstra and Tony Wells.

Thornhill sizzles with Heritage Day braai

Residents of Thornhill Manor celebrated Heritage Day on September 24 with a classic South African braai in the village park.

Chairs, tables and picnic baskets dotted the open, tree-filled space as around 50 residents enjoyed the outdoors, good food and each other's company.

"This is what retirement is all about here – it's like being on a permanent holiday," says Jackie Scott, deputy village manager.

The village office provided braais, tables, chairs, charcoal, and braai tools, while residents brought their own meat, sides, and drinks, creating a shared celebration that captured the spirit of the day.

Golden Games bring energy and fun to RSCC

Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) was buzzing with excitement from August 11 to 15 as residents and staff took part in the fourth annual Golden Games. The week was filled with laughter, friendly rivalry and plenty of team spirit.

In the lead-up, staff practised lively dance routines to Meghan Trainor's *Better when I'm dancing*, while residents and staff created colourful banners reflecting the HEART initiative, a core RSCC and Rand Aid value.

Throughout the week, all six wings competed in a series of fun challenges, from Bocce-ball and fingerboard to skyscraper-building with Jenga blocks, and finally beanbag throws at golden bottles. Every afternoon ended with staff dances, bringing energy, colour and cheer to the centre.

Friday's award ceremony was a highlight, celebrating not just the winners but participation, teamwork and community spirit. Residents and staff shared smiles, cheers and a sense



Golden Games Champions: River Lodge 3 residents and staff.

of pride, with one resident saying: "We are never too old to have fun!"

Simoné Botha, RSCC's manager of OT and recreation, says the Golden Games were a wonderful way to bring everyone together, lifting spirits and celebrating the joy of participation.

"The week-long event reminded everyone that success is about more than winning – it is about kindness, encouragement and shared laughter," she says.



Thornhill Manor deputy manager Jackie Scott (25 years of service) with Paul Carter, the chairperson of the Rand Aid Association board, and Gert Coetzee, the CEO.

Rand Aid recognises decades of dedication at annual awards

Thornhill Manor's deputy manager, Jackie Scott, was recognised for 25 years of service at Rand Aid Association's long service awards on August 19. The Tarentaal village hall was filled with cheer as 38 people received awards for five, 10, 15 and 25 years of dedicated service.

"An organisation's success hinges on its people, and the annual awards are a testament to the invaluable contributions of Rand Aid's employees," says Rand Aid's GM care and human resources, Ayanda Matthews.

Jackie's journey with Rand Aid began in 2000, when she started as personal assistant to the executive director at head office. Within three years, she moved to Thornhill Manor as the deputy administrator, where she played a key role in the village's development. After four years, she was promoted to deputy manager.

According to Ayanda, Jackie is renowned for her people skills and her deep connection to the Thornhill community. "She knows the residents, the staff, her colleagues – and everything else there is to know about the village. We hear her, we see her."

Residents walk for dementia awareness

Residents and guests took to the paths of Thornhill Manor on September 22 for a memory care awareness walk that highlighted determination, camaraderie and the beauty of the spring morning.

About 50 participants joined the event, including residents of Thornhill Manor and visitors from Thembalami Care Centre and Tarentaal. Whether using walking sticks, walkers or wheelchairs, everyone was able to take part thanks to two route options – a shorter 680m walk and a longer 1.8km one.

Laughter and chatter filled the fresh air as participants enjoyed the village's scenic surroundings. Afterwards, they gathered in the park to cool off with ice cream and spend time together.

The walk was organised by Thornhill Manor's Happy Chatters occupational therapy group, which was also celebrating its seventh birthday. The event formed part of World Alzheimer's Month, an annual campaign in September to raise awareness about dementia and fight stigma.

Research underscores the value of staying active: A recent Johns Hopkins study found that just 35 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week lowered the risk of developing dementia by 41% in older adults compared to those who were inactive.

"The Alzheimer's Awareness Walk was about more than exercise. It was about walking side by side in support, raising awareness, and reminding those affected by Alzheimer's that they are not alone," says Thornhill Manor manager Shaun Victor.



Thembalami resident Elizabeth Andrews with Nellie Dlamini and Thornhill Manor residents Joan Wilkins and Sigrid Hudson.

COMINGS & GOINGS



Princess Mohlahlana.

New village sister for Tarentaal

Tarentaal Village has appointed Princess Mohlahlana as its new village sister. She officially took up the position in August 2025, bringing with her extensive nursing experience and a passion for working with older people.

Princess, who has lived in Rembrandt Park for the past four years, originally hails from Limpopo but grew up in Johannesburg. She describes herself as someone who enjoys working with her hands, making crafts and DIY projects, and spending time with children. She also hopes to further her studies in palliative care.

She first joined Rand Aid in 2023 as a locum sister. Her qualifications include midwifery and community and psychiatric nursing. She also holds certificates in advanced life support, understanding dementia, and adult primary care.

Princess has extensive nursing experience, particularly in home-based care during the Covid-19 pandemic, which she says she loved as it allowed her to extend medical care to patients in their own homes. She has also worked in medical and surgical wards at Milpark and Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic hospitals, as well as in corporate health-care settings with Discovery and other medical aids.

When asked what she enjoys most about working with older people, Princess doesn't hesitate: "In seeking where I belong, I realised the elderly are my favourite people. Elderly people carry loads of life experience, loads of personality (no time to pretend), and loads of wisdom. Every day brings a new story, a shared laugh, or a moment of mutual respect that gives me fulfilment," she says.

Outside of work, Princess enjoys spending time with friends and family, planning her next solo trip and assisting her mother with her day care business.

Looking ahead, she says she is most excited about providing residents and their families with peace of mind: "I want them to know that they are safe and well cared for by me, and I look forward to building trusting and meaningful relationships within the Tarentaal community."

TARENTAAL SOCIAL WORKER STEPS UP AS DEPUTY MANAGER

Tarentaal Village's much-loved social worker, Lynn-Marie Barrow, stepped into a new role as deputy manager, effective August 2025.

Lynn, who joined Tarentaal in August 2024 after six years at a frail care centre, says the transition is eased by the fact that she will continue to serve as social worker while also taking on her new managerial responsibilities. "Because I love the social work aspect of the job so much, I am fortunate enough to continue in that post while serving the village as the deputy manager. Management has put into place an additional person who will assist with admin tasks," she explains.

Looking back on her first year at Tarentaal, Lynn reflects on the strong bonds she has built with residents. "What stands out for me as the Tarentaal social worker is the level of gratitude that the residents portray for any assistance that they receive. For many, their loved ones have moved overseas, and they do not always have someone who can assist them, and this is when they rely on the social worker to step in."

Away from work, Lynn finds joy and balance through her passions – including dancing, gardening and spending time with her family. Her three-year-old dog, Oreo, keeps her active with daily walks, while her granddaughter, 18-month-old Azriella, brings playful energy to weekends. "We roll on the grass, kick and catch balls, and fly kites – this keeps me young and my heart happy," she says with a smile.

As she takes on her new leadership role, Lynn has a clear vision for the village's future. "I would love to see Tarentaal become the retirement centre of choice for people who want to rent in Johannesburg. I hope to fill all vacant units, shorten the waiting list, and keep residents as independent as possible for as long as possible, thereby avoiding the high turnover that we currently experience in our units."

Armed with a Bachelor of Social Science from Rhodes University (1992) and decades of experience in the field, Kensington resident Lynn is excited to continue serving Tarentaal with both compassion and leadership.



Lynn Barrow, the Tarentaal deputy manager.

Anita retires as Melissa takes on salaries officer role

After 17 years of dedicated service, Anita Erasmus retired as salaries officer at the end of September, marking the end of an incredible chapter at Rand Aid.

Anita joined the organisation in June 2008.

Reflecting on her time at Rand Aid, Anita says, "I managed to balance my personal well-being with professional success and developing new skills. Celebrating 17 years of service and mentoring Melissa has been incredibly rewarding."

She adds: "I want to thank my mentor, Ayanda Matthews, for all the wonderful years we worked together, and thank you to Rand Aid for believing in me."

Anita's retirement plans include pursuing her long-loved hobby of quilting for her grandchildren, travelling to America, and spending quality time with her children and grandchildren.



Melissa Botha and Anita Erasmus.

Stepping into the role of salaries officer is Melissa Botha, who moved from the accounts department. Melissa joined Rand Aid in March 2019 as a creditors clerk and has grown through the organisation, embracing challenging work and opportunities for professional development.

Melissa shares: "I love how supportive my colleagues are, the challenging work that allows my skills to grow, and the positive work environ-

ment."

She lives in Brakpan with her father and enjoys reading love stories, listening to music, watching crime and hospital series and spending time with her 11-year-old daughter playing cards and board games.

We thank Anita for her contribution to Rand Aid and warmly welcome Melissa to her new role.

COMINGS & GOINGS

Violet Ngobeni, the new nursing services manager at Thembalami Care Centre.



Thembalami welcomes new nursing services manager

Violet Ngobeni is the new nursing services manager at Thembalami Care Centre, following the retirement of long-serving matron Paulina Namoto.

Violet joined Rand Aid Association in 2023, working as a charge professional nurse at the Max Ordman Deaf Association, which forms part of the Thembalami complex.

"I was mentored by Paulina. We worked very hard together to make sure we give quality care to our residents," she says. "Thembalami is a good fit for me. In my final years of nursing, I want to contribute meaningfully and impact the lives of our residents."

Her career in nursing spans nearly three decades. She first trained as an auxiliary nurse in the late 1990s, later qualifying as an enrolled nurse before completing her nursing diploma. Along the way, she gained experience at Lydenburg Hospital and Rob Ferreira Hospital in Mbombela.

She went on to join the Mediclinic Group, where she became a shift leader in the trauma unit. Colleagues and patients remember her as the nurse who would draw blood from the same site where she had inserted a drip. "I didn't want my patients to be pricked twice. Babies and immunocompromised people are especially challenging when it comes to finding veins," she explains.

Her reputation for skill and care impressed pathology companies that worked alongside her in the trauma unit, and she accepted a post with Ampath, working as a night shift sister. When her family relocated to Johannesburg in 2015, she continued with Ampath, running a one-person depot in Parkwood.

In 2019, Violet began working with a doctor in Linksfield and even started her own practice, managing a team of call-out nurses. Sadly, the venture did not survive the Covid-19 pandemic. Ampath approached her again, and she returned to the company, first as a call-out sister and later in a permanent role.

By 2023, however, Violet felt the pull back to direct patient care. "I realised that the pledge I made as a nurse was not being fulfilled. I was missing bedside nursing – giving that therapeutic touch to my patients is the most crucial part of nursing," she says.

Now leading the nursing team at Thembalami, Violet has a clear vision: "We need to cultivate a spirit of trust and understanding, and make Thembalami a happy place for everyone who calls it home – and for everyone who works here."

Violet is married, has two sons and a daughter, and is a proud grandmother to a young grandson.

A story of connection in later life

When Joan England's husband, Ken, passed away, her children living overseas worried about her being alone. They wanted her to have both companionship and support, someone who could provide practical help as well as emotional presence.

Through the office of Thornhill Manor, the retirement village where she lives, Joan (90) was introduced to Margaret Magodi (52), who stepped into her life in December 2022. What began as an arrangement of care quickly grew into a deep, enduring friendship.

Each day unfolds with simple routines, tea in the morning, breakfast together, and discussions about the day's plans. Sometimes the pair goes shopping, other times they enjoy window shopping at the local mall. Mondays are a highlight, reserved for OT games and shared laughter. Walking is another cherished ritual, with Joan and Margaret deciding each day whether to turn left or right, letting the rhythm of their steps and conversation guide them, sometimes even three times a day.

Food also anchors their companionship. Margaret prepares pap, while Joan prefers her cereal, but their real joy comes from cooking together, especially their homemade soups and baked goods. Joan, who once considered giving up baking at age 90, rediscovered its value after finding store-bought treats too sweet and unhealthy. Returning to her favourites like rock buns became both a comfort and a way to stay busy.

Their relationship extends far beyond the practicalities of daily living. Margaret describes Joan as 'like a mother', someone easy to talk to, with whom she can share stories and emotions. They reminisce, laugh, sometimes shed tears, and even break into spontaneous song. Music, television and storytelling fill their days, turning ordinary moments into shared joys.

Margaret's role as a carer is deeply meaningful to her. "When you appear to an elderly person with a smile, it means a lot," she explains. "It makes them comfortable and willing to ask for help." For her, caring is not a job but a vocation. She is attentive not only to Joan but also to other residents in the village, often stepping in to assist others.

For Joan, Margaret's presence was life-changing. "I don't think I could manage without her," she admits. Her days are fuller, healthier and more meaningful with companionship. Margaret, in turn, feels rewarded by the trust, joy and sense of purpose the relationship brings her.

Their story illustrates that caregiving in later life is not a one-sided arrangement of dependency. Instead, it is a reciprocal relationship where companionship, trust and care enrich both lives. Joan gains security and social connection, while Margaret finds fulfilment and belonging.

"In a world where older adults often face loneliness and challenges like Alzheimer's and other diseases, the relationship between Joan and Margaret demonstrates the profound impact of compassionate caregiving. Their partnership is not defined merely by tasks completed, but by the human connection that sustains them both. It is a testament to how care, when grounded in respect and companionship, can transform ageing into a chapter of shared joy and resilience," says Thornhill Manor social worker Karen Griessel.



Joan England and Margaret Magodi.

‘Serve our City’ brings joy to local elders

Acts of kindness took centre stage on July 26, when a team from Christian Family Church Johannesburg visited Thembalami Care Centre and Max Ordman Deaf Association as part of the church’s annual Serve Our City initiative.

The project mobilises church members to make a tangible difference in their communities, with more than 70 initiatives running this year – from repairing potholes to feeding the homeless. For this team, the mission was simple: To share love, hope and encouragement with the elderly. “They may be older, but they are not forgotten,” says team leader Ps Logan Munsamy. “There is still a purpose for them. Some may feel like this is the end, but we brought a message of hope that I believe uplifted their spirits.”

“They served a wonderful meal, did spiritual upliftment and shared beautiful music. It was a fantastic day,” says Thembalami manager Esmé van der Walt.



The Christian Family Church visitors.



Sarah Giovannoni at her private stall, selling items she made herself.



Tim Lord and Graham Barnes served delicious boerewors rolls.



Jarid Steynberg serves Ida Bethwaite at the egg-and-bacon stall.

Fun, food and festivities mark Thornhill Manor’s family fun day and fete

Thornhill Manor Retirement Village welcomed residents, families and visitors to its much-loved family fun day and fete on Saturday, October 4, with a morning full of shopping and entertainment.

“It must have been one of the coldest days of the year, but that did not stop us from having the most wonderful, fun-filled day with great enthusiasm from all residents, families and visitors,” says Jackie Scott, deputy village manager.

Guests were treated to a lively market atmosphere, browsing stalls that offered an array of goods including baked treats, preserves, handcrafted items, books, jewellery, kids’ clothing, deli favourites and home décor. Shoppers also found recy-

cled cards, handmade Christmas tags and crowns, perfumes, honey and other bee products, leather goods, handbags and pampering treats.

Food lovers were spoilt for choice with boerewors rolls, egg and bacon rolls, curry and rice, pancakes, German cuisine and refreshments in the tea garden. Children enjoyed the jumping castle, soft serve ice cream and face painting, while live music from popular singer Rudi van Niekerk added to the feel-good, festive atmosphere.

All funds raised from the fete go directly to the Thornhill Manor Village Fund, allowing residents to choose projects that enhance the quality of life within the village.



LEFT: Joan Muller, Caryll Richardson and Carol Foulis at the Knit & Natter stall.



RIGHT: Priscilla Randall with home-made goodies.

Thembalami and Thornhill unite for joyful OT day

Sunshine, classical music and the whack of mallets set the tone on August 25 as residents from Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association visited Thornhill Manor for outdoor occupational therapy (OT) games.

The programme, featuring croquet and other fun activities, was led by Thembalami OT Tsakani Shihlomule and her team, alongside Thornhill’s retired OT Vicky Keenan, who runs the Happy Chatters OT group.

Five games rotated in small groups to ensure safety and engagement, with snacks between rounds. “It’s always special when former Thornhill residents return to visit old friends,” said Thornhill social worker Karen Griessel. The gentle, low-impact games encouraged coordination, balance, strategic thinking and social connection, supporting mobility, independence and overall well-being.



Vicky Keenan shows Robbie Webster of Thembalami how to play croquet. Robbie is a former Thornhill Manor resident.