

Rand Aid RAND AID review

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Paw prints on hearts

For residents at Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Ordman Deaf Association, the second Wednesday of every month has become a highlight – thanks to some four-legged visitors. The Paws 4 U therapy dogs, led by Chris Begbie, Moira Dexter, Dora Ingold and Judith Woodward, bring wagging tails, gentle pats and plenty of smiles as they tour the building with Hunter, Fyler, Champers and Sherrie. “It brings back memories and joy, especially for those with dementia,” says Thembalami occupational therapist Tsakani Shihlomule. During the visits, the team moves freely around, stopping by residents’ rooms, lounges and activity areas. The visits are casual and relaxed, much like spending time with familiar friends, giving residents the chance to touch and enjoy the company of the dogs. Pictured: Eunice de Jager and Hunter.



AT YOUR SERVICE!
Keeping Rand Aid ticking over



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Year-end message from the CEO

As we approach the close of another year, it naturally becomes a time for reflection. This year, that sense of reflection has been deepened after seeing Tim Plewman’s latest show, *Epilogue*, which was performed at Tarentaal in November. This prompts a deeper look: Beyond what was achieved or what could have been done better, I consider the impact of our efforts on the greater whole. How are the tireless efforts of Team Rand Aid Association experienced and perceived by our residents?

Highlights and achievements

This year saw several notable achievements aimed at enhancing the lives of our residents and ensuring the continuity of our services. Among these were the installation of grid-tied solar systems at Tarentaal Village and Ron Smith Care Centre. We also completed a water backup and supplementation plant at both Thornhill Manor and the Inyoni Creek–Tarentaal complex.

Furthermore, a conscious effort has been made by management to be more inclusive with regards to the decision-making process, especially when it has a direct impact on our residents.

Navigating challenges

We also faced significant external challenges. After extensive meetings, discussions and even threats, the mandatory electricity reticulation upgrade insisted upon by City Power at the Inyoni Creek–Tarentaal property is now complete. We had to insist on the installation of additional transformers and the replacement of some second-hand units they had initially installed to ensure we meet the required feed. However, no sooner had we sorted out the reticulation than the powers that be commenced with major road construction on Modderfontein Road. This caused not only considerable frustration but also extended electricity interruptions that would sometimes continue for days on end.

Community and gratitude

As always, we celebrate the welcoming of new friends into the fold. Simultaneously, we mourn the loss of some old ones who have passed away. We said goodbye to people who left an indelible mark not only on us as individuals but also on our organisation.

To our residents and their families, please accept a heartfelt thank you for your trust and unwavering support throughout the year. Your loyalty makes everything we do possible, and we are truly grateful to share your journey.

To all Rand Aid staff, thank you for the long hours, the spirit of teamwork, and the immense pride you take in the work you do. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished as a team.

Looking ahead

As we head into the New Year, I look forward with great enthusiasm to what lies ahead and what we, as a combined team of residents and staff, are going to achieve in 2026.

Wishing you and your families a wonderful festive season and a prosperous year ahead.

Gert Coetzee

Remembering Neil Garden (1937–2025)

Neil Garden, one of the first residents at Inyoni Creek village, passed away on October 22, 2025.

Neil and his wife Margaret joined Inyoni Creek in 2007, bringing energy, warmth and commitment to the newly established community. In later years, when their health needs changed, they moved to Rand Aid's Ron Smith Care Centre, where they continued to be part of the wider Rand Aid family.

Throughout his life, Neil was dedicated to community and connection. He was an active member of Inyoni Creek's Naked Chefs team from 2009 to 2020, helping provide lunch for 140–180 residents at Inyoni Creek and Tarentaal village while fostering friendships and social engagement. He was also a founding member of Inyoni Creek Village's Probus Club.

Neil had a distinguished career at First National Bank, where he worked for 43 years and retired as general manager of corporate advances, responsible to the board of directors for the bank's to-



Neil Garden.

tal lending portfolio. His work took him to London twice, and he looked back with pride on a career marked by integrity and leadership.

He also gave generously of his time and expertise to Rand Aid, serving on the board of Rand Aid Association for 12 years and as a trustee of the RA Welfare Development Trust for 14 years.

Reflecting on Neil's life and contribution, Rand Aid CEO Gert Coetzee said:

"Neil was a pillar of our community – generous with his time, wise in his counsel and always ready to lend a hand. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched, in the friendships he nurtured, and in the spirit of service he embodied. We are grateful for having known him and mourn the loss of a truly remarkable man."

Neil is remembered fondly by his wife Margaret, his three daughters Mandy, Tracy and Jenny, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren, all of whom were a source of great joy to him.

Rand Aid strengthens its efforts to grow vibrant communities

Introspection, laughter and renewed purpose filled the room as Rand Aid staff and residents came together for Eden Associate training from November 3 to 5.

The 26 participants from all Rand Aid villages and care centres explored what it truly means to care, rediscovering that real well-being comes from connection, respect and joy. The workshop reaffirmed Rand Aid's ongoing commitment to creating homes where older people feel valued, involved and truly at home.

Rand Aid's Eden Alternative journey began in 2012 with Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) embracing the philosophy wholeheartedly. Ongoing training and development will ensure that the Eden philosophy forms the basis of The Rand Aid Way in its four retirement villages, two care centres, and substance use disorder treatment centre. The philosophy focuses on building vibrant, inclusive communities rather than institutional settings.

Inclusive training

Among the participants were two residents – one from RSCC and one from Thornhill Manor – alongside staff representing every level of the organisation, from general assistants and housekeepers to managers, social workers, occupational therapists and nurses.

The course introduced some participants to the Eden Alternative philosophy for the first time, while others deepened their understanding. It focused on how you are in the world and how you view the older person you serve. The aim was to move away from a purely medical model of care towards a relational one that values well-being, relationships and personal growth.

"The training focused on practical ways to bring meaning, growth and connection into daily life," said Thornhill Manor social worker Karen Griessel. "Learning about the 10 principles and seven domains of well-being, especially autonomy, purpose and joy, reinforced that flourishing should be central, not optional."

On November 4, Eden Alternative South Africa praised the group on its Facebook page, writing: "It is always a pleasure to facilitate an Eden Associate workshop at Rand Aid Association, where the employees are deeply committed and passionate about improving the well-being of the residents."

■ **What the participants had to say:**
Key takeaways on page 3

Beloved Marlene retires from Elphin Lodge

Elphin Lodge recently bid a fond farewell to receptionist Marlene Sirchia, who retired at the end of November. Her cheery smile had been welcoming residents and visitors since March 2018, making everyone feel at home in the village.

"My time here has been amazing. I have done quite a bit in my life, from working in a bank to owning my own business, but the experience I had at Elphin Lodge will stay with me forever. It never felt like a job; it was always a pleasure coming to work, and the interaction with the residents and Elphin staff was always fulfilling. I wouldn't swap those experiences for anything."

She described the village as a holiday resort: Secure, with beautiful gardens, and everything residents need on the



Marlene Sirchia in the Elphin Lodge grounds.

premises – from a doctor to a cup of coffee. "I would recommend Elphin Lodge to anyone looking for a retirement home."

While sad to leave, Marlene was also excited to spend more time with her family. Her daughter Gabriella, visiting from London for a 40-day sabbatical, arrived on November 28, and she looked forward to sharing special moments with son Shaun's children, Lily and Rylan.

"I am going to become an 'Uber' driver for Lily, who is starting Grade One next year," she laughs.

To the residents, she leaves this message: "All of you have been very dear to my heart, and I will never forget the time I had at Elphin Lodge. Please show the new receptionist the same patience you showed me when I first started."



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The residents and staff members who attended the Eden training.

For **Simoné Botha**, manager of occupational therapy and recreation at RSCC, the training was 'an intense and deeply emotional three days'. She said: "As occupational therapists, we focus on a person's holistic well-being, not just their medical needs, so much of what we explored resonated with me. One phrase that stood out was 'Nothing about me, without me', a reminder that people should always be included in decisions that affect their lives."

Elphin Lodge general assistant **Nonhlanhla Mabuza** said: "You need to build a strong relationship with residents to anticipate their needs. Knowing them helps you tackle any problems that arise – communication is key."

Tsakani Shihlomule, occupational therapist at Thembalami Care Centre, said: "The training reassured me that our occupational therapy and recreation services are on the right path. I've learnt that 'enough' isn't just measured in stats, but in how much we connect with residents and help them enjoy their days. It starts with me – simple moments, like packing clothes with a resident or sharing family photos, can bring joy and strengthen relation-

Lynn Barrow, deputy manager at Tarentaal Village, said: "It was an intensive three days of training with lots of emotion. The main message I took away is that we must treat all our residents with respect and dignity and involve them in decisions about their future."

Amanda Diener, Rand Aid's GM of commercial and compliance, described the training as 'an emotional roller coaster'. She reflected on the ethical discussions that arose, such as balancing safety and independence: "If you eliminate all risks, you take away a person's life and choice."

Hlumela Anderson, the deputy manager of Elphin Lodge added: "Sometimes we don't have to spend money to improve our service; we can just change the way we do our duties. Knowing that Rand Aid is willing to make changes that benefit staff and residents gives me hope."

Christine Human, Thornhill Manor receptionist, said she learnt how small acts of kindness can make a big difference. "A smile, a shared story, or simply listening with warmth can transform a normal day into something meaningful. The training adjusted how I view ageing – it really is a beautiful journey filled with growth, wisdom and connection."

Michelle Matsolo, the Inyoni Creek social worker, said the training highlighted that care is not one-directional. "It's about relationships between the older person and the caregiver. The older person also has something valuable to offer, making the relationship mutually enriching."

Violet Ngobeni, the nursing services manager at Thembalami Care Centre, said the training underscored the importance of emotional safety in the workplace. "The biggest thing that I learnt is that we work in a place where staff can safely share their feelings. When we face challenges together, it lightens the load and helps us find solutions as a team."

A Thornhill Manor resident and the vice chairperson of the village committee, **André Vosloo**, said the experience left him feeling proud and hopeful. "Seeing Rand Aid's commitment to the wellness of older persons and meeting such dedicated staff made me excited to walk this journey with them."

He added that the Eden principles – particularly the 'three plagues of ageing', the 'human forever' theme and the 'FINGER' method of prevention – broadened his understanding of ageing, support and teamwork. FINGER (Finnish Geriatric Intervention Study to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability) is a lifestyle-based approach that protects brain health through healthy eating, regular exercise, mental stimulation, social engagement and managing health risks.

"Ageing is real for me and my neighbours. Support is growing within Rand Aid, and the encouragement to act as a team is commendable. I've already started talking to residents about the Eden Alternative and will continue sharing what I learnt in my daily interactions. The three words that best describe how I felt at the end of the training are gratefulness, respect and humility."

INSIGHTS from Eden workshop participants

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Pictured: Zavier Fonseca (1st Edenvale Cub Pack) with Pieter Van der Westhuizen. On Saturday, November 8, residents of the Max Ordman Deaf Association welcomed the 1st St Benedict's and 1st Edenvale Cub Packs and their parents for a fun-filled visit. The afternoon was spent baking cupcakes, playing games like cards, dominoes, and Rummikub, and sharing laughter, creativity, and connection between generations.



Pictured: Jane Ngwenya and Hlumela Anderson cheer on walkers at the rest stations during Ron Smith Care Centre's 1 km fun walk on October 17. Residents enjoyed a morning of exercise, fresh air, and friendship as they strolled through the beautiful Elphin Lodge grounds. Despite a chilly start, the sun soon shone, and walkers were rewarded at the finish line with medals, ice-cold Coca-Cola, and sweet treats, making it a joyful celebration of life, fitness, and community.



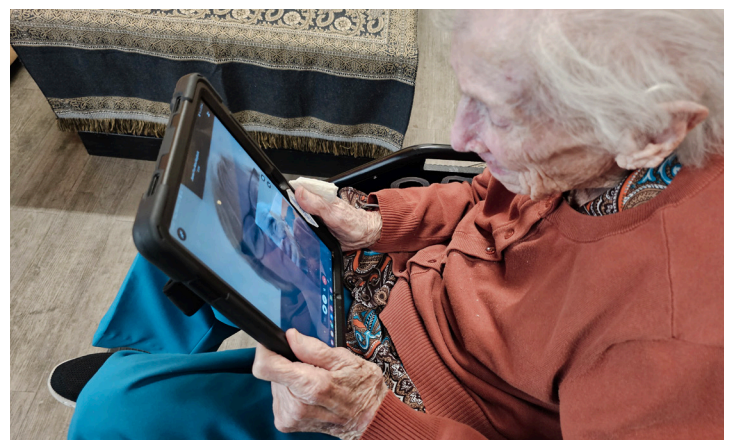
Pictured: Ria van der Westhuizen (78) at Thembalami Care Centre's November birthday bash on November 19. The lively celebration, held in collaboration with the Max Ordman Deaf Association, honoured eight residents and four staff members, including centre manager Esme van der Walt on her 60th birthday. With music from Pastor Roy Edwards, dancing, singing and small gifts for all, the event was filled with joy.



Pictured: The new residents' lounge at Tarentaal village, officially opened on November 10. Designed by the residents' committee, the space features a variety of comfortable seating options, colourful décor, and thoughtful personal touches, providing a cosy, welcoming area for residents to relax, unwind, and connect inside the main hall.



Pictured: Nel-lie Dlamini and Jane Mogwale at Thembalami Care Centre and MODA's Stress Awareness Day on October 5. Staff were treated to a morning of relaxation and appreciation, including coffee, tea, muffins and guided relaxation sessions in the Snoezelen room led by hypnotherapist Elvis Ademba. The event highlighted the importance of slowing down.



Thembalami resident Joan Keylock (97) connects each week with her daughters in Canada and New Zealand, with caring staff on hand to help make every call possible. These regular video chats play an important role in easing loneliness and keeping families close, no matter the distance. Thembalami Care Centre provides compassionate, 24-hour nursing care for 114 elders, set within tranquil grounds featuring walking paths, lapas and calming water features. To find out more, call 010 534 8771 or 011 882 4434.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Pictured: Elaine Horwitz, Charmaine Datt, Tim Plewman, Amanda Diener, Jackie Scott and Michael Lewis at Tarentaal village. Laughter and heartfelt moments filled the hall from November 13–15 as Tim Plewman's one-man show, *Epilogue*, entertained and moved audiences. "The show was out of this world. Tim is an exceptionally talented actor, and his performance left us all with so much to think about long after the curtain fell," said Tarentaal manager Tammy Neilson. Inyoni Creek's Jenny Tonkin added: "It was brilliant! Tim has definitely not lost his magic. A very professional, entertaining show that took us all back many years." Residents, friends and family enjoyed the perfect mix of humour, storytelling and emotional depth, making the performances a joyful and memorable gateway to the festive season.



Pictured: Myra Forfar at Ron Smith Care Centre with her handmade teddy bear. Residents from Ron Smith and Thembalami care centres each received a lovingly crafted teddy from Carol Foulis of Thornhill Manor's Knit and Natter group, while two Thornhill Manor residents also received teddies. The soft toys brought joy, comfort, and a sense of companionship, offering warmth, nostalgic memories and soothing tactile comfort. Residents and staff alike appreciated the thoughtfulness and care behind each lovingly made gift.



Pictured: Resident Jo Bayliss (right) with her son David, granddaughter Erin, and Erin's boyfriend John Kinghorn at Thembalami Care Centre and MODA's recent family day. The gathering brought residents and loved ones together over braai aromas, shared meals and warm conversation, turning a slow morning into a lively celebration. Regular visitors and new families alike enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere, while the dedicated braai team ensured everyone was well fed.

Pictured: The serene grounds of Ron Smith Care Centre provide residents with daily moments of calm and connection to nature. Shaded by mature trees and surrounded by lush gardens and tranquil dams, the centre offers a peaceful outdoor haven that many residents enjoy throughout the day. Ron Smith Care Centre believes that a beautiful, restorative environment is essential to well-being. Located near Greenstone in Edenvale, the centre offers personalised, high-quality frail care across several dedicated wings. To find out more about our compassionate care, please call 011 882 6296.



Madison Love, granddaughter of Elphin Lodge resident Louise Randall, meets the village's newest residents – four rabbits named Orlando, Gigi, Stu, and Tiggy. The adventure began when resident Marlene Gordon found a lone, pregnant rabbit and contacted social worker Nadine Radford, who took her home, cared for her and her babies, and had her sterilised. The mother rabbit now lives with Nadine, while her four babies have settled into a cosy hutch near the village dam, quickly becoming stars of Elphin Lodge and bringing smiles and a little extra hop to daily life for residents and visitors alike.



Pictured: Neville Harvey and Brian Berry at Inyoni Creek's monthly birthday tea on October 9. To commemorate Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the event was awash with pink, symbolising hope and solidarity in the fight against breast cancer. Residents joined in the celebration, enjoying sweet treats, laughter, and heartfelt conversations, while raising awareness of the importance of early detection and community support.



RSCC resident's 103 years of creativity and community

Isobel Kohll marked her 103rd birthday on November 13 at Ron Smith Care Centre, surrounded by family, friends and staff who celebrated her remarkable life and enduring positivity.

Sr Leigh Kotze described knowing Isobel as 'a privilege and a joy', while friend Stella Murray said she is 'truly one of a kind, always positive and ready to try anything'. Her son Malcolm added: "My mother has always been a remarkable woman. Characterised by her cheerfulness and ability to find pleasure in the small things, she continues to inspire everyone around her."

Born in Boksburg North, Isobel married Raymond in 1947. The couple lived in Zimbabwe and South Africa and raised two sons, Malcolm and Jeffrey. A talented actress, dancer, and dedicated teacher of speech and drama, she has enriched countless lives with her love for the arts.

Isobel spent over 21 years at Rand Aid's Elphin Lodge before moving to Ron Smith Care Centre in 2024. Even in her later years, she embraced new pursuits, taking up painting and earning a reputation as a formidable Scrabble player.



Family members Annette Wallis, Sharon Cort and Malcolm Kohll with Isobel Kohll.

Elphin Lodge resident celebrates 102nd birthday

Joyce Lockhart, a resident of Elphin Lodge, turned 102 on October 16. She is the last remaining original resident of the retirement village, having moved in in 1991 with her late husband, Ken.

Although she has a full-time carer, Joyce continues to live in her cottage.

Born in 1923 in Sea Point, Cape Town, she has three daughters – Barbara, Pamela and Myrtle – and a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Pam and Barbara both visited their mom on her big day, with Pam coming in the morning and Barbara in the afternoon – which meant a double serving of celebratory tea and cake.

After finishing school in Vereeniging, Joyce worked as a secretary for Stewarts and Lloyds in the town until 1945, when she married Kenneth, who was a mechanical engineer at Klip Power Station.

On Joyce's 100th birthday, her daughter Barbara said that her mother was a 'full-time mom', sewing, knitting, cooking and ferrying her children around. Joyce and Ken served on various school and community committees, which continued when they moved to Elphin. Before retiring to Elphin, the couple settled in Kensington. They travelled locally and abroad and Joyce served as chairperson for the Anglican Women's Fellowship and was active in the Mothers' Union.



Shirley Cosser (chairperson of the Elphin Lodge residents' committee) Joyce Lockhart and Hlume-la Anderson (deputy village manager).

Wits students learn the value of compassionate care at RSCC

Eight first-year medical students from the University of the Witwatersrand gained hands-on experience at Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) during September and October as part of a community-based project for their Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree.

Leanie Bessinger, nursing services manager at RSCC, explains the course includes community-based learning, healthcare professional shadowing, and patient follow-ups. "The project focuses on experiential learning through service and data collection in collaboration with community-based and not-for-profit organisations," she says.



The Wits medical students with RSCC nursing services manager Leanie Bessinger.

Students are divided into 25 groups, each required to make four site visits. Activities include service tasks such as kitchen duty and assisting with daily routines, alongside data collection through surveys, interviews, and community mapping. Over four days, students prepare, gather and analyse data, then present findings and recommendations.

"The partnership is mutually rewarding," says Leanie. "Residents enjoy interacting with students, who in turn learn about the realities and rewards of long-term care. It's a wonderful example of how community-based learning benefits everyone involved."

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Centralised services streamline care for around 1 350 residents

Rand Aid's centralised services play a crucial role in supporting the organisation's ±1 350 residents across its retirement villages and care centres, ensuring efficient operations and consistent service quality. With an average of 420 permanent staff, the organisation relies on centralised storage, workshops, laundry and fleet maintenance to keep day-to-day functions running smoothly.

"In the first half of October alone, we had 42 refurbishments underway across our villages," says John Switala, Rand Aid's maintenance manager. "Our centralised approach allows us to manage resources efficiently while maintaining high standards across all facilities."

Centralised services at a glance

Rand Aid's storage and warehousing functions manage general maintenance items, medical consumables, and bulk stock, such as cutlery, crockery, and linen. These are distributed to the frail care centres and the rehabilitation centre, ensuring that each facility receives supplies on time.

The workshops handle a wide range of repair and maintenance tasks, including carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, and other technical support. Refurbishments and renovations are carried out centrally, with 70–80% of units requiring a complete overhaul – new kitchens, bathrooms, light fittings, switches, plugs, flooring, and repainting. In 2024, 87 units were refurbished over 11 months, with each project taking roughly three months.

"Our goal is to make residents feel at home," says Switala. "People are diverse, and while we can't please everyone, we do our utmost to accommodate requests and maintain quality."

The industrial laundry service handles all linen for Ron Smith and Thembalami care centres, linen for Wedge Gardens, as well as residents' personal laundry. Processing around



The queens of clean: Nokubonga Mxhineni, Julia Tlhopile, Ongeziwe Tshayisa, California Moila, Tshimangadzo Nemutanzhela, Abigail Mashapa and Andiswa Mtyenene in the laundry.

121 700kg annually – approximately 666 loads per day in household machine equivalents – the laundry operates with strict hygiene protocols and daily quality checks. Seven staff members are responsible for maintaining these standards.

Fleet and equipment maintenance keep Rand Aid's 30 registered vehicles and eight golf carts roadworthy and reliable. All servicing and most repairs are conducted in-house, with preventative maintenance scheduled weekly. A contracted mechanic supports the team for additional repairs or emergencies. "Reliable vehicles reduce downtime, lower costs, and enhance driver morale, ultimately improving operations across our villages," Switala notes.

Leadership and teamwork

Switala, who started at Rand Aid in 2011 and has been maintenance manager since 2019, oversees a team of assistant managers, senior and maintenance assistants, and specialised staff in stores, workshops, and laundry. Long-serving team members, such as Riaan Joubert (17 years in stores) and Peter Ralefeta (17 years in workshops), bring invaluable experience to the operation.

Staff are regularly trained and up-skilled through courses such as the Ekurhuleni Artisans & Skills Training Centre programmes, scaffold building, and work-at-height safety. Switala emphasises open communication, fairness and trust as the keys to maintaining motivation and high standards.



Rand Aid maintenance manager John Switala and buyer/stores supervisor Riaan Joubert.

Ekurhuleni Artisans & Skills Training Centre programmes, scaffold building, and work-at-height safety. Switala emphasises open communication, fairness and trust as the keys to maintaining motivation and high standards.

Challenges and innovations

Managing centralised services across multiple villages presents challenges, particularly in ensuring accurate communication and consistency of service. Innovations such as improved stock control, tracking systems, and streamlined maintenance scheduling have enhanced efficiency and quality.

"The most rewarding part of my work is seeing the smiles on residents' faces when they see the results of our refurbishments and maintenance projects," Switala says. "Completing projects and meeting team goals gives us a strong sense of accomplishment."

Through its centralised services, Rand Aid demonstrates how careful planning, skilled staff, and efficient processes can significantly enhance the quality of care and support for residents while reducing operational costs.



Pictured in the workshop are Vincent Jalabo, Dziandwela Ratshilume, Oliphant Kekana, John Switala, Elias Mkhabela, John Makamanise, Dirk Swiegelaar, Tumelo Langa and Itumeleng Rabogale.

Staying sober during the festive season

The festive season is often seen as a time of joy and celebration. But for individuals in recovery, it can also bring unique challenges – temptations of alcohol, emotional stress, financial pressure and family tensions can all increase the risk of relapse. Yet, with preparation, self-awareness and support, it's possible to navigate the holidays while protecting your hard-earned sobriety.

Acknowledge your feelings

Caryn Berman, occupational therapist at SANCA Wedge Gardens, reminds us that the holidays can be emotionally intense. "Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your recovery. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can reduce the effects," she says.

It's normal to feel sadness, grief, or regret. Allow yourself to feel and express these emotions without judgement.

Plan ahead and set boundaries

Preparation is key. Think through events, gift-giving and family visits to reduce last-minute stress. Learn to say 'no' when needed and avoid situations or people that trigger cravings. Caryn suggests simple strategies, such as carrying a non-alcoholic drink at parties or having an exit plan if things become overwhelming.

Maintain healthy habits

Routine supports recovery. Eat nutritious meals, get enough sleep, exercise and practice relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep breathing. Avoid abandoning these habits, even during busy celebrations, and limit exposure to social media, which often presents a misleading picture of others' festive happiness.

Avoid social media because everyone looks so happy; posts don't show underlying unhappiness, depression, anxiety, stress or family fights.

Stay connected

Isolation increases relapse risk. Laetitia Goosen, contracted social worker at SANCA Wedge Gardens, stresses the importance of maintaining contact with your support network. "Connection is the opposite of addiction. Reaching out, even when it feels uncomfortable, can make all the difference," she says. Attend festive support meetings, speak to sponsors or peers, and involve yourself in community or volunteer activities.

Create new traditions

Recovery doesn't mean missing out on the joy of the holidays – it means creating meaningful, sober celebrations. Host a game night, a nature walk or a charity activity. By building new traditions, you reinforce your commitment to sobriety and enjoy the season on your terms.

Remember your 'why'

Whenever temptation arises, take a moment to reflect on why you chose recovery. Sobriety is not just about avoiding substances – it's about saying 'yes' to life, relationships, health and purpose.

The festive season can either be a time of risk or a time of renewal. With self-awareness, preparation and support, you can celebrate your strength, protect your progress and step into the new year with pride.



The Inyoni Creek residents who toured Rand Aid, with driver Timothy Mapheto on the left, and deputy village manager Marinda Looyen, fourth from the left.

Inyoni residents gain new respect for scale of Rand Aid

Residents of Rand Aid's Inyoni Creek retirement village recently took part in a tour of the broader Rand Aid organisation, discovering the full extent of its operations and services.

Founded in 1903 to assist those left destitute or jobless after the Anglo-South African War, Rand Aid has grown into a non-profit organisation serving older persons and people in need. Today, it operates four independent-living retirement villages with a combined 792 units of freestanding homes and apartments, two frail care centres, and a rehabilitation centre for substance abuse, all situated in Edenvale and the surrounding areas.

Across its multiple properties, Rand Aid supports approximately 1 350 residents and employs an average of 420 permanent staff. Its centralised services, including storage, workshops, laundry and fleet maintenance, ensure efficient day-to-day operations.

A look behind the scenes

The tour, held on October 7, was led by Inyoni Creek deputy manager Marinda Looyen and offered residents an insider view of the organisation. It began at Rand Aid's head office, where CEO Gert Coetzee presented on the organisation and the RA Welfare Development Trust. Adel Grobbelaar also explained to participants the substance abuse rehabilitation services offered at the SANCA Wedge Gardens Treatment Centre.

The group toured central stores and workshops, including the men's shed, where residents of the retirement villages engage in hands-on DIY projects. These facilities form part of Rand Aid's centralised services, which underpin the smooth operation of its villages and care centres.

The tour continued with a visit to the laundry, which handles around 121 700kg of laundry annually, and then to Ron Smith Care Centre, guided by manager Ulricka Beukman, to view the frail care facilities.

A light lunch was enjoyed at Good2Go, based at Inyoni Creek's clubhouse, before the final stop at Thembalami Care Centre and the Max Orman Deaf Association, where deputy manager Elize Raath provided an overview of services.

Marinda said the residents were impressed by the organisation's size and the efficiency of its operations.

"Many residents didn't realise how large and well-run Rand Aid is. They were all highly impressed by the scale of the organisation and the dedication of its staff," she said.

"The tour offered residents a renewed appreciation for being part of an organisation with a long-standing history and meaningful impact on the community," she says.