

Ron Smith Care Centre

@ Elphin Lodge



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With friendly rivalry and a few well-earned treats, the gentlemen of Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC) took centre stage during a special celebration held in their honour on Friday, June 19.

The morning was dedicated to recognising the fathers, grandfathers and father figures who contribute so much to the centre's community and ensuring they felt appreciated and celebrated.

"While we often enjoy spoiling our ladies, it is equally important to celebrate the men in our lives and ensure they know how much they are appreciated," says Simoné Botha, RSCC's occupational therapy and recreation manager.

The celebration began with several lively rounds of Bocce ball led by occupational therapist Karabo Matlaetsa. According to Simoné, the game quickly sparked impressive displays of skill and healthy competition among residents.



"The game provided an opportunity for everyone to relax, connect, encourage one another and enjoy each other's company," she says.

"With several residents displaying excellent bowling skills, the competition was fierce."

One team ultimately claimed victory and celebrated with a chocolate prize, but Simoné says the atmosphere ensured everyone left feeling like a winner.

After the game, the gentlemen gathered to enjoy non-alcoholic beer or Coca-Cola and a variety of snacks, with the biltong proving especially popular. Each father figure received a chocolate shaped like a hammer, saw, wrench or pair of pliers, and a handmade card thoughtfully created by the ladies of RSCC earlier in the week.

"It was wonderful to bring all the men together to share laughter, conversation and good cheer," says Simoné.

● MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 3



Slippers and smiles mark day of giving

Residents and staff at Ron Smith Care Centre traded shoes for slippers and shared smiles and music as they came together on Friday, May 29, to support the spirit of giving through Slipper Day in aid of the Reach for a Dream Foundation.

Participants arrived in cosy slippers and bright, funky socks, setting the tone for a relaxed morning of connection.

Everyone gathered in the dining room, where marshmallow-topped hot chocolate and freshly baked biscuits prepared by the recreation team were served. Conversation cards placed on each table sparked lively discussions between residents and staff.

Occupational therapy and recreation manager Simoné Botha says the event reflected the heart of the centre's approach to care and well-being, bringing residents and staff together in a shared moment of joy.

Resident Vivien Michler took a moment during the morning to express her appreciation for the staff, thanking them for their consistent kindness and dedication. She praised the way they remain attentive and compassionate in their daily care.

The celebration ended on a joyful note with spontaneous dancing as care partners Tshepo Malatjie and Germinah Baloyi played lively music and joined residents on the dance floor, bringing plenty of smiles and laughter to the end of a special morning.



The importance of early diagnosis in dementia care

Most of us have misplaced our keys, forgotten a name or walked into a room and forgotten why we went there, says Nadine Radford, Ron Smith Care Centre's social worker.

"While occasional forgetfulness is a normal part of ageing, persistent changes in memory, thinking and daily functioning may be signs of dementia, a condition clinically referred to as a neurocognitive disorder," she says.

Neurocognitive disorder is not a normal part of ageing. It is a condition caused by diseases that affect the brain, resulting in a decline in memory, reasoning, communication, judgement and everyday functioning. Nadine explains that Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, although there are several other types, including vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia and frontotemporal dementia.

Symptoms can vary from person to person but often include changes in memory, confusion, difficulty finding words, changes in mood or behaviour, impaired judgement and challenges in completing familiar tasks. "These changes usually occur gradually and become more noticeable over time," she explains.

Early diagnosis is key

One of the most important messages for families is not to dismiss early signs of dementia as 'just old age'. Seeking professional advice early can help families understand the condition, access support and make informed decisions about the future.

"An early diagnosis also gives the person living with dementia the opportunity to share their wishes and participate in decisions about their future care while they are still able to do so," says Nadine.

Receiving a dementia diagnosis can feel overwhelming, but planning can make the journey more manageable.

"Planning also gives families time to explore support services and care options before a crisis occurs. Although these conversations are not always easy, they can provide reassurance and help ensure the person's wishes remain central to future decisions," she says.

Managing behavioural changes

One of the most challenging aspects of dementia for families is learning how to respond to behavioural and emotional changes. As dementia progresses, a person's ability to reason, process information and remember events be-

comes impaired. This means that what may seem logical to us may no longer make sense to them.

It is important to avoid arguing or trying to convince a person that they are wrong, advises Nadine. "Rather than focusing on correcting facts or memories, focus on the emotions behind what they are saying. Offering reassurance is often far more effective than trying to reason with them."

When a loved one refuses to bathe, take medication, get dressed or participate in an activity, she says it is often best not to force the issue. Instead, step away, allow some time to pass and try again later. A different approach, a different caregiver or simply a change in mood can often lead to a more positive outcome.

Tips for caregivers

Caring for a loved one living with dementia can be emotionally, physically and practically challenging, says Nadine.

Families need to remember that seeking support is not a sign of failure – it is an essential part of providing sustainable care. Education, support groups, respite opportunities and professional guidance can all play an important role in helping families navigate the dementia journey.

At Ron Smith Care Centre (RSCC), the team understands that every person living with dementia has a unique story, history and set of needs. "Through our dedicated River Lodge 3 Memory Care Wing, we provide specialised care for residents living with advanced dementia within a safe, supportive and homely environment," says Nadine.

"Our approach is rooted in person-centred care, meaning that we focus on the individual rather than the diagnosis. We strive to preserve dignity, promote independence where possible, and ensure that each resident feels valued, respected and understood."

If you are concerned about a loved one's memory or cognitive changes, do not wait to seek professional advice. Early intervention and planning can make a significant difference to both the individual and their family.

For more information about dementia care and support services at RSCC, phone 011 882 6296 or 010 534 6595. Alternatively, send an email to ubeukman@randaid.co.za or lbessinger@randaid.co.za.

■ **FOR THE FULL ARTICLE, GO TO RAND AID ASSOCIATION'S WEBSITE BLOG**



Get to know me

GILLIAN LAZARUS: RIVER LODGE 2 RESIDENT

I was born in 1945 in Johannesburg and completed my schooling at Johannesburg High School for Girls. I loved domestic science and was proud when the headmistress bought many of the items I made. I enjoyed hockey and tennis and continued playing tennis after school. After leaving school, I studied for a year before realising it was not for me. I did some modelling and qualified as a speech and drama teacher through the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. Although I taught briefly, theatre was my real passion. I performed in *Stop the World – I Want to Get Off* when it came to South Africa from London and also appeared in productions at the Jabula Amateur Theatre. At 21, my parents gave me an around-the-world ticket. A friend and I travelled through Israel, Turkey, Greece and across Europe. I extended my stay in the UK, worked as a recruiter, toured the United States and later worked in France as an English tutor for the South African ambassador's children. What was meant to be one year became a wonderful adventure. Back in SA, I joined Liberty Life and worked there for 38 years. I married Vernon in 1971 after a chance reunion in Cape Town. We had three children and I am now grandmother to eight grandchildren.

FAVOURITE THINGS AND SIMPLE PLEASURES:



I am a friendly, caring person who enjoys meeting people and making friends. My work introduced me to many different people over the years, and I have always considered myself a good listener. I love dancing and enjoy jazz, rock and roll, and music from the 60s, 70s and 80s, especially The Beatles and Elvis Presley. My favourite meal is sweet and sour prawns from our local Chinese restaurant. I still enjoy playing bridge, both online and with friends, and have always loved travelling and exploring new places. Above all, I am grateful for my children and grandchildren and live by a simple philosophy: always be kind and understanding.

NADINE RADFORD: RSCC SOCIAL WORKER

I was born in Barberton in 1985 and moved to Johannesburg at about one year old. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of my father singing, playing guitar and reading bedtime stories, and of my sister and me chatting with my mother while she relaxed in the bath. We first lived in Witpoortjie before settling in Krugersdorp, where I matriculated. Looking back, I realise I was often the friend others turned to for a listening ear. During that time, watching *Judging Amy* introduced me to a character who was a social worker, and I believe that was when I first recognised my own calling. After school, I studied social work at the University of Johannesburg (then the RAU campus). While studying, I worked part-time at a crèche. After graduating, I worked for four years at the Department of Social Development to fulfil my bursary obligations. In 2014, I joined Residentia Moria, where I developed a passion for working with older persons. In 2019, I moved to Chevrah Kadisha and in 2022, I began my journey with Rand Aid. Beyond my career, my greatest joy is my family. In 2016, my daughter, Amelia, was born, and six years later, in 2022, my son, Stevie, arrived. They are the absolute light of my life, bringing immeasurable love, purpose and happiness.

FAVOURITE THINGS AND SIMPLE PLEASURES:



I am level-headed and hardworking, with a stubborn streak and a soft heart. I enjoy reading murder mysteries, although these days bedtime stories are more common. I love Hyacinths and Cymbidium orchids, prefer baking to cooking, and enjoy Malva pudding, spaghetti bolognese, morning coffee and the occasional gin and tonic. Animals have always held a special place in my heart, a love my children share. My ginger cat, My Love, was my companion through university. Family holidays to the Kruger National Park, Cape Town and caravan trips remain treasured memories. I enjoy crocheting, especially stuffed creatures, and find peace in nature.

Birthdays

RESIDENTS

01 July – Michael O'Toole	(RL1)	87
07 July – Robert Miller	(CP)	87
07 July – Noeline Aspeling	(RL1)	92
13 July – Neville Branthwaite	(RL2)	89
14 July – Irving Aremband	(RL1)	84
17 July – Willem Meyer	(RL2)	95
23 July – Warwick Silverthorne	(WL)	79
24 July – Evelyn Krupke	(RL3)	66
30 July – Dawn Smith	(LS)	88

STAFF

05 July – Khodani Khuthe	(RL3)
09 July – Mokgaetji Mashaba	(WL)
13 July – Bongeka Zwane	(LS)
16 July – Lilly Mathebula	(RL3)
22 July – Mary Kekana	(Elphin)
23 July – Meltah Molefe	(LS)
26 July – Dinah Molamu	(Call centre)
27 July – Lebo Matloga	(RL1)

* Staff members must please remember to collect their birthday chocolates from reception.

WELCOME TO...

Olaf Magnussen	RL2	Rea Woolfson	LS
Joyce Lockhart	RL2	Shirley Smith	WL
Carol Ann Olive	CP	JT Pieterse	WL
Peter Olive	CP		

FONDLY REMEMBERED

Fred Shaw	RL1	Sven Bauer	RL2
Kay Stott	RL1	Elaine Judes	CP
Monica Russel	LS	Joy Smith	RL2



Esmeralda Rusike, a professional nurse at River Lodge 3, receives this month's HEARTS in Action Award for being an exceptional team leader. She always sees the best in others and inspires those around her to reach their full potential. Her creativity, initiative and positive attitude shine through in everything she does. She is approachable, polite and willing to lend a helping hand, consistently going the extra mile without hesitation. Her warm smile and uplifting presence have a meaningful impact on everyone she interacts with, and her absence is truly felt when she is not around. Pictured: Khodani Khute, Esmeralda and Leanie Bessinger.