

THEMBALAMI & MODA

CARE CENTRE



Place of hope

NOVEMBER 2026

Farewell to Thembalami's longest-serving resident

Thembalami Care Centre has said goodbye to one of its most familiar faces.

Freddy Buytendag, a resident since January 1997, died on October 26 at 59. He had lived at Thembalami for 29 years, making him the centre's longest-serving resident.

Freddie was part of Thembalami through many changes.

■ Continued on pg 2

FLIPPING good fun at Pancake Friday

Residents mixed and flipped at Max Ordman Deaf Association (MODA) on October 9, rolling up their sleeves for a special Pancake Friday.

Kirsten Rodrigues, a volunteer at MODA, arranged the event, which is part of Thembalami Care Centre.

The residents joined Kirsten, occupational therapy assistant Peggy Kupa, and Thembalami manager Esme van der Walt in the kitchen, where they helped mix the pancake batter, cook the pancakes, and choose their own toppings.

Esme says events specifically designed to include deaf residents are particularly meaningful. "It is wonderful to have activities where our deaf residents can be fully involved and

enjoy themselves together. And, of course, food always goes down well – especially when you get to choose your own toppings!"

Kirsten volunteers at MODA every Friday while studying psychology. She says she has always had a passion for working with both older people and the deaf community.

"I joined both passions together," she says. "Being able to advocate and form connections with the residents has been so fulfilling. I am continuously learning."

As part of her commitment to the community, Kirsten is learning South African Sign Language and has done a few basic sessions with our staff.

RIGHT: Sidney le Sueur, Cecilia Röttcher and Shaun White.

BELOW: Front: Gail Lester and Cecilia Röttcher. Back: Annette Verskin, Shaun White, Sidney le Sueur, Kirsten Rodrigues and Pieter van der Westhuizen.



'I would live here!' says nurse during open day

2

For more **Thembalami and MODA news**, keep an eye on Rand Aid's Facebook page. Scan the QR code and click 'follow'.



NOV BIRTHDAYS

Residents:

10 Nov	Martha Robinson	95
11 Nov	Kevan Harris	80
12 Nov	Nokwazi Mthembu	76
15 Nov	Robert Webster	85
19 Nov	Maureen Wigoder	91
22 Nov	Ria vd Westhuizen	79
25 Nov	Lydia Batchelor	79

Staff:

06 Nov	Lungile Hlongwane
11 Nov	Rallie Khowana
12 Nov	Esme van der Walt
14 Nov	Yvonne Mudau

REST IN PEACE:

Mary Erdis	Stuart Brown
Freddie Buytendag	

WELCOME TO:

Margaret Connolly	Helen Marais
Lucas Niemann	



OPEN DAY: Thembalami welcomed visitors during Rand Aid's open day on October 17, giving families a chance to see what make the centre more than just a place to live. Visitors toured the centre, including the gardens, accommodation and sensory stimulation and occupational therapy room, where staff demonstrated how activities support residents' well-being and engagement. Thembalami deputy manager Elize Raath said one visitor, an 82-year-old professional nurse, explored the care centre with her son and was so impressed that she told him Thembalami was where she wanted to come should she ever need care. The centre provides person-centred residential care, including 24-hour nursing support and memory care. To find out more or arrange a visit, email thembalami@randaid.co.za or call 010 534 8771 / 011 882 4434.

Thembalami loses much loved and familiar presence

■ Continued from pg 1

Freddie saw the centre move to its current premises in 2007 and, over the years, watched managers, staff and residents come and go.

Through it all, he remained a familiar and much-loved presence.

Before mobility problems meant he needed to use a wheelchair, Freddie was often one of the first residents to greet visitors arriving at the centre. He was talkative, outgoing and always ready for a conversation.

"He was such a big part of Thembalami that it is difficult to imagine the centre without him," says manager Esme van der Walt. "Freddie had a way of making himself known and connecting with people. He will be deeply missed by the residents and staff who knew him over so many years."

Deputy manager Elize Raath says: "He was synonymous with Thembalami. I am going to miss him so much! He always told me I was like a mother to him. My big boy's voice is now quiet forever."

Social worker Lara Swanepoel says Thembalami will not be the same without Freddie.

Life-changing accident

Freddie's own story was eventful. In a May 2025 profile, he described himself as both the youngest and longest-serving resident. He was 58 at the time.

Born on December 20, Freddie was the middle child of three brothers and a sister. He left school in Standard 8, then completed an apprenticeship and training in electronics, specialising in business machines and photocopiers.



Then-matron Paulina Namo, manager Esme van der Walt, deputy manager Elize Raath and social worker Lara Swanepoel with Freddy Buytendag in 2025.

He later worked for Canon, the only company he ever worked for.

He never married or had children, but, in typical Freddie fashion, he added that he had 'many girlfriends'.

A keen sportsman in school, Freddie earned provincial colours in wrestling and won medals in other sports. He loved music and singing, even if he joked that his voice was 'not the best'.

He also had a mischievous sense of humour. If he made staff angry, he said, he would sing Jesus loves me to soften their hearts again.

His life changed dramatically at 28. On the night of his birthday, he was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident that left him with a traumatic brain injury. He spent seven months in intensive care.

"I almost did not make it," he said in 2025.

With his family's support, Rand Aid provided him with a home from January 1997. He was initially accommodated at moving to Thembalami.

Freddie also travelled abroad before his accident, spending a year in America and visiting Mexico and other countries.

Freddie leaves behind his brothers Anthony, Kevin and Brent, and his sister Evelyn.

For almost three decades, Thembalami was Freddie's home. He became part of its history, watching the centre change and grow, and became a familiar face to generations of residents, staff and visitors. His passing leaves a void for the many people who knew him and cared for him over the years.