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the Chairman of the SMAA

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Maduna –**
The Occupational
Therapist

EDITORIAL • EDITORIAL

Editorial

After a long hiatus, of not having a newsletter to share compelling stories with our Alumni, we are happy to present this new look edition of the Alumni newsletter.

We want to thank the structure led by Dr Sol Motlanthe and Ms Karabo Raphokwane and their collective for agreeing to feature in this first copy of the rejuvenated edition. This is the beginning of a long journey in our quest to share inspiring content about the work our Alumni do in their respective communities.

Please be part of what promises to be an exciting journey. Our immediate activity from now is to rename this publication and we want our Alumni to come up with the name. This process would be coordinated through the Alumni structure and we are hoping that when the next edition is produced, it would bear the new name.



Moving forward, our team of committed storytellers will be in touch with many of you to unearth the interesting stories throughout the country. We plead with you to open up and help us tell the good stories from your respective areas.

We anticipate your feedback and hope it will assist to build the publication to meet your expectations.

Please remember to click on the supplied link to update your details so that you do not miss anything from your Alma Mater.

We are in it together!

In this edition, we remember the fallen heroes who some succumbed to Covid-19. Health care practitioners continue to be at the Frontline of the struggle to defeat this pandemic and our thoughts should be with them at all times as they carry out the important mission of saving lives.

We also bring you interesting stories from Alumni from different areas and fields of work.

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The Message from **Dr Sol Motlanthe,** the Chairman of the SMAA

By Maditsi Matlala

SMU Alumni

When alumni graduate, they become metaphorical babies whose umbilical cords are cut at the SMU and thereby delivered into the world. Their umbilical stumps are buried at the SMU - in Sotho, 'bowela kalana' and their DNA will forever remain permanently connected to it. In Sotho, 'mashopeng go a boelwa', meaning: alumni will always go back to their origins. They will always go back to the university to help through teaching, financial and other supports.

The SMAA Executive Committee members:

- Dr Sol Motlanthe, chairperson
- Dr Matlaila, Deputy Chairperson
- Dr K Motene, Treasurer
- Ms K Raphokwane, Secretary
- Dr Tiny Mhinga, additional Member
- Dr P Makume, additional member
- Mr Lunga Rojie, additional member
- Dr Ntsie, additional member
- Mr Siphon Mapfhumari, additional, member
- Mr Odirile Seshoka, additional member
- Dr Moji Mogari, additional member

Ex officio members

- Prof Peter Mbatj, Vice-Chancellor
- Mr Linda Rojie, Convocation President
- Dr Eric Pule
- Mr David Sedumedi

What has been done so far

Since its establishment, SMAA traced most alumni, managed to build a solid database, a system to enable alumni to make pledges and established an alumni newsletter. Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and class reunions were held. Limpopo and North West Alumni Chapters were established. SMAA funded the feeding scheme for needy students, provision of sanitary products, transport fare for students to return home during

COVID-19 evacuation and donated clothing to needy students. Annual fundraising golf tournaments were held. Due to the COVID 19 lockdown regulations prohibition on events, the 2020 Golf Tournament was postponed to 2021. The SMAA's logo was approved by the university and this ranks as one of the highlights.

To learn benchmark best practice, we held meetings with long established alumni structures from University of Stellenbosch and University Cape Town. Valuable lessons were learnt which would go a long way to enrich the work of SMAA from these universities with many students and offering a broad-spectrum of courses.

Future plans and activities

Whilst the SMAA made the abovementioned breakthroughs, more work still needs to be done. This work includes friendship raising programme targeting the Rosslyn Corporate Sector to raise funds and possible partnership ventures. Selling SMU memorabilia in the form of blazers, ties, caps, track-suits and golf-shirts. Plans to launch alumni chapters in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Free State Provinces were postponed due to COVID 19 lockdown prohibitions on events.

As soon as the lockdown restrictions are relaxed, recruitment drive commence. The SMAA will also arrange a meeting with Prof Mbatj, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor to align plans with those of the university and to sort out budgetary issues.

SMAA needs new alumni to learn from the old alumni so that there can be a succession plan. The new alumni are the champions of the 4th Industrial Revolution. They have the potential to infuse new innovative ideas into SMAA which will catapult alumni work into the new era of decolonized education as they are more placed to liberate education than old alumni.

Remembering

our fallen heroes some due to COVID-19



Dr B Tom
Medical Doctor



Dr T Luthuli
Medical Doctor



Dr P Lomalisa
Medical Doctor



Dr EM Chabula-Nxiweni
Medical Doctor



Dr P Rantloane
Medical Doctor



Dr J Mutsenga
Medical Doctor



Dr GN Msimanga
Medical Doctor



Dr C Mogajane
Medical Doctor



Mr R Matlou
Physiotherapist



Dr Y Asmal
Medical Doctor



Mr MX Mabasa
Physiotherapist



Dr U Bhusa
Medical Doctor



Dr IM Tsoka
Medical Doctor



Mr C Nkuna
Dental Therapist



Mrs LM (Zimba) Ravhuahli
Physiotherapist



Prof M Marivate (Convocate)
Medical Doctor



Mr B Pieterse
Clinical Psychologist

*Your contribution to Healthcare in
our country is immeasurable.
Your spirits will live on forever.*



Dr T Taye
Medical Doctor

Ms Karabo Raphokwane, the Secretary of SMAA speaks about Alumni mobilisation Drives

By Maditsi Matlala

In this interview with Maditsi Matlala, Ms Karabo Raphokwane outlines some of the activities that will be embarked upon and details how the alumni office is adjusting alumni mobilisation programmes due to COVID-19.

MM: As the secretary of the SMU-MEDUNSA Alumni Association (SMAA), under normal circumstances, you could have interacted with new SMU alumni and recruited them to join the structure during the 2020 graduations ceremonies. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 Lockdown regulations prohibited that event and instead virtual graduations were held. How are you going to reach out them?

KR: The COVID-19 pandemic is uncharted waters for the whole world. It has had a wide impact on business especially

in South Africa. YES! a great deal of impact in the Alumni Association recruitment drive and running of the University and its offices.

MM: You lost an opportunity to sign them during their graduations. How are you going to make up for this lost opportunity to recruit them?

KR: One thing that is positive about this whole pandemic era is that, we have come to analyse and adapt on how we plan and implement any objectives. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has also afforded us innovative means which include the use of electronic media.

We plan to embark on a nationwide campaign to electronically dispatch application forms along with their degree certificates as part of the recruitment efforts.

MM: When and how are you going to be recruiting them, in terms of a programme of action to be followed?

KR: As soon as the lockdown restrictions are eased. Alumni office on campus is operational and the University is ready to resume duties post the pandemic.

We will telephonically call all the new recruits and send them emails. The office will also use print and social media to reach out. Hopefully our website challenges will also be resolved and forms can be accessed, completed and submitted online.

MM: SMUAA established alumni chapters in the past such as the SMU Limpopo and North West Alumni Chapters. The new alumni would be interested to learn from these existing alumni chapters, what they have been doing since they were established?

MM: These alumni chapters have been providing support to the new graduates in the form of mentorship and also economic empowerment. The programmes of action we were going to embark upon in 2020 was interrupted by the COVID-19 nationwide lockdown.



Meet

Dietitian,

Moloko

Dietetics Brand Ambassador:
Ms Moloko Mehlope

By Tumelo Moila

SMU Alumna, Moloko Mehlope is a registered dietitian, who chose her career path, as a result of a late application for another degree. Today, she is a proud owner of a private practice, trading under the name Dietitian Moloko. “After completing matric, I decided to apply for pharmacy studies at SMU. Unfortunately, my application was late and only a few programmes were available to choose from. I randomly chose the Bachelor of Science in Dietetics (BSc Diet). At the end of my first year, I did not understand what the degree was all about. Things changed drastically during my third year when we started attending clinical classes and witnessed the power of food, and nutrition in preventing, healing, and managing different disease conditions,” explained Moloko.

Her practice offers services specialising in nutrition education, sports nutrition, weight, and chronic disease management for individuals, family, corporate and media consultations. Her devotion in keeping up to date with current nutrition information and research, impelled her to enrol for PhD (Dietetics) studies. Her PhD title: 'Exploring the nutrition knowledge and the application of nutrition mindfulness to exercise performance in soccer athletes', was inspired by the poor nutrition knowledge results she found in the athletes during her Master's studies. “I have realised that athletes are in need of assistance to align their health and performance goals,” said Moloko, a soccer fanatic.



Prior to her PhD enrolment, she has completed an extensive amount of formal qualifications, namely BSc Dietetics Honours (SMU), MSc Dietetics (University of Pretoria), Advanced Certificate in Diabetes Care for Health Care Professionals (Centre for Diabetes and Endocrinology), and Certificate in Good Clinical Practice (Wits Health Consortium).

She appeals to the society at large to separate facts from fiction when it comes to nutrition. "I am all about evidence-based nutrition. There is a lot of opinions when it comes to nutrition, but it is not a fact if there is no approved scientific research done on it. I always make sure that I attend all nutrition's continuing professional development (CPD) sessions organised in my area. I have never missed a single session ever since I have started working, and that is how my nutrition knowledge is always up to date," clarified Moloko, who has special interest in weight management, and sports nutrition.

Moloko uses her knowledge to help patients improve their quality of life, educating and advising them with diet-related disorders in practical ways. Her services for corporate personnel involves engaging and enriching nutrition talks during a question and answer sessions. She attributes the success of modern-day businesses on a healthy, productive, and motivated workforce. "The workplace is one of the important settings to implement nutrition-related interventions, aimed at improving people's health. Most sick leaves in the workplace may be attributed to nutrition and lifestyle factors," said Moloko.

In her line of duty, she comes across plenty of self-proclaimed bogus nutrition 'specialists'. "I have realised that nutrition is the most invaded profession. There is a lot of self-proclaimed 'nutritionist/nutrition consultants', sharing misleading information online. I always make sure that I educate people about reliable sources of nutrition information, subsequently debunking online nutrition myths," said a concerned Moloko.

Her impressive work is recognised within the media industry, receiving regular invites for media interviews. Notably, she is a resident dietitian for various radio stations, such as Metro FM, Capricorn FM, Turf FM, just to mention a few. Besides her radio talks, she is a regular content contributor on various TV shows, SABC 1's Daily Theta, is one of them. There are numerous articles written under her name, for several publications, namely Polokwane Review, True Love, and Bounce magazines, amongst others.

As a philanthropist, she is making a positive impact on public health through nutrition programmes during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In conclusion, she is part of Marotholi outreach, an initiative by young healthcare professionals, combating malnutrition in children under the age of five, by assessing and monitoring their growth, feeding, and donating clothes to them.

Social Media Handles: Facebook: Dietitian Moloko Mehlope, Instagram: Dietitian_Moloko, Twitter: Dietitian Moloko, website: www.dieticianmoloko.com

Felix Nkuna -

Sports Physiotherapist

By Tumelo Moila

Felix Nkuna is a living testimony of the narrative, 'knowledge for quality health services'. He recently protracted his knowledge as a Master of Science (MSc) Physiotherapy graduate, specialising in Sports Medicine. "Let me tell you the truth. No matter how intelligent you think you are, if you don't study more in your field, you will be bored, and sometimes lose that quality service you were supposed to give to your patients. So I decided to specialise in sports medicine, to enhance my knowledge, and represent my alma mater, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) well at

the national level, under the South African Football Association (SAFA) medical team," recommends Felix.

His curiosity motivated him to conduct the MSc Physiotherapy research, titled: ***The long-term effect of kinesio tape application on running speed, agility and plyometric performance in amateur soccer players at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.*** "When I was a student at SMU, watching soccer games, I was always curious about why do they put on colourful bandages when they play? So since then, I was interested to be a sports physiotherapist one day. I then decided to do my research on the usefulness of those bandages. I found that they are called kinesio tape because they are named after the person who discovered them. His name is Dr Kenzo Kase, a Japanese chiropractor who wanted a tape that provided support but didn't limit movement the way traditional athletic tapes do. Plenty of athletes in various sports code uses it in treating injuries, supporting weak zones, re-educating muscles, enhancing performances, and managing scars," elaborate Felix.

His professional journey emanated from meeting a physiotherapist, who later became his role-model. "When I was in grade 11, attending the all-night prayer in my village, Mkhuhlu, I came across a Physiotherapist called Edmon Mathebula. I then sent an application to several universities including SMU. One of the universities in Gauteng accepted me to study Mining Engineering degree. Fortunately the following day, I received a call that I must come and register for physiotherapy studies at SMU. With immediate effect, I left in the middle of the engineering class and went to SMU to fulfil my dream career".

His journey to being a physiotherapist was never an easy one. "I remember some of my friends used to ask me 'why did you leave engineering? You should have at least left the engineering for medicine degree'. My reply to them was always that God brought me here for physiotherapy. They would laugh at me hysterically because they believed that every student who is at SMU, is there to study medicine, and nothing else. Against all odds, I managed to pull through with God's grace, and today I am a double SMU graduate," shares Felix.

"Most people when you talk about physiotherapy, automatically they think of massage. Of which, I can't blame them because they don't know the functions of a physiotherapist. If a person doesn't know something, please don't laugh about it, and let them make fun of your profession. Our role is to educate them, than leaving them with their misinformation," said Felix, who hails from Mkhuhlu village, in Mpumalanga.

Taking a trip down memory lane, Felix used to walk several kilometres to attend school, and that did not deter his aspirations of one day contributing in nation building through his profession. "Just work hard and believe that you will make it. You are the best with little resources and don't ever look down upon yourself. Trust God for better days and remember He has created us differently. Always bear in mind that once you are good at something, the next person is also good in something else you don't have. Be humble and work together. We are much stronger when we are united," advises Felix.

During his spare time, Felix spends time at Tshwaranang Orphanage Home in Hamanskraal, Tshwane. He appeals to the society at large to visit and contribute positively to the benefit of the needy orphans.

Social Media Handles: Instagram - @ Nkuna Felix Physiotherapist, Twitter - @felix_nkuna, and Facebook - Nkuna Felix.



Amogelang Bunu – The Speech & Hearing Therapist

By Tumelo Moila

SMU Alumna:
Amogelang Bunu,
flanked by her
proud parents.



Imagine been crowned as a world champion, whereas you are still a teenager, and remain humble to complete your academic journey. A decision which Amogelang Bunu (21), took to continue with her careers in both sports, and healthcare profession. In 2018, Amogelang had the world at her feet, after she clinched the International Championship trophy, at the Karate Dream Festival, in Japan. A feat that did not deter her craving to complete a Bachelor of Speech, Language-Pathology and Audiology (BSLP & A) degree, at SMU.

Two years later, Amogelang is among the essential frontline healthcare workers that are currently fighting against the novel coronavirus pandemic, which is wreaking havoc across the globe. She is serving a mandatory community service as the Speech and Hearing therapist at Heidelberg Hospital, in Gauteng province. "My job includes screening, assessing and providing therapeutic treatment/interventions for patients with speech, voice, language, swallowing and hearing difficulties. I also do community outreach for patients who need speech and language services but cannot reach the hospital on regular basis," said Amogelang.

"When I applied to study at SMU, I was looking for a profession that will empower me to provide solutions to my childhood desire of assisting the elderly. Growing up, I noticed a lot of the elderly people losing their ability to hear or communicate, and that intrigued me into doing a research, on a career that deals with the elderly, hence Speech and Hearing therapy is now my beloved profession," said Amogelang, who also enjoy interacting with children.

Her career highlights include learning the South African sign language. "It was complex but satisfying experience to be able to communicate without being vocal. I am always on a quest to find an ear with the most impacted cerumen," highlighted Amogelang.

"As an alumna of SMU, I miss just being a student, and the atmosphere at campus, including all the events that took place to bring students together. Also my karate teammates, the training sessions we had and priceless moments from sports complex," recalls Amogelang, who get inspiration from different people that she meets.

"On the 7th of March 2020, I took part in the annual Shinkyokshinkai Matlosana cup, and I was able to obtain 3rd position. After lockdown, I will be participating in more karate tournaments and improve my martial art skills, through grading, currently I am in orange belt category," said the former world champion, who was also crowned the Miss Personality during the Miss SMU 2017 beauty pageant.

She credits SMU for giving her the opportunity to explore and grow. "Thanks to SMU for its diversity, student politics, and different sport codes, I have explored (dance, body building and karate), and I hope in near future, its sport equipment will match those of other institutions. Since moving to Heidelberg, I have been trying out kickboxing and fitness training 'body goal', cycling and good health," said the multi-talented Amogelang.

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Engine Munyai – The Mathematician

By Tumelo Moila



In the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), mathematician Engine Munyai, envisages a digital transformation for his alma mater, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). “I would like to see SMU as a digitally enabled institution, with each and every Bachelor of Science (BSc) graduate being recruited, across all industries in South Africa, Africa and globally. I know people may think it is not achievable, however I believe we can, and I am willing to help in any possible way I can to accomplish this vision,” said Engine, SMU BSc graduate.

Engine believes SMU need to undertake an academic transformation, underpinned by the 4IR objectives. “Part of the envisaged process includes, reconfiguring and transforming all departments driven by 4IR pillars; building an innovation hub; driving and enabling all graduates to be employable everywhere, particularly BSc graduates; reposition SMU as a digital enabled institution; be a go to university in the market; and be among the top performing universities in SA, in almost all programmes,” illustrates Engine, Manager of Strategy and Operations.

Engine explains his role as a Manager, “I solve complex problems, devise invaluable strategies, and improve the financial and operational health of our clients (organizations), using my problem solving abilities and logical objectivity, ultimately improving chronic complaints and permanent problems. Depending on the volume and complexity of the project, I use multiple management styles like consultative, participative, inspirational, and results-based, with these four styles, I am able to get the best results on any project and satisfy our clients, as well as my team,” indicates Engine, who is touted as a Mathematics expert.

“I chose a career in Mathematics because I am a natural problem solver, and it enables me to exercise my skills. It is the key to countless opportunities, not only in science, it also contributes directly, and fundamentally to business, finance, health, and defence. Often, a company's vision and mission have some degree of vagueness, one purpose of strategic objectives is to simplify that ambiguity, with specific and quantified targets,” clarifies Engine, a multiple award winning employee. His awards include, Africa Consulting Aspiring

Leader, Deloitte Game Changer, Galactic Gratitude, Top Learners Awards, Leadership Impact, Team Impact Award and Best Delivery.

Engine is a big sports fanatic, ranging from pool to soccer. He names football icon, Cristiano Ronaldo as his role model, “Apart from being one of the greatest soccer players of all-time, and the first soccer player to become a billionaire, Cristiano Ronaldo is still the first player to go to the gym and the last one to leave. He is the most charitable athlete in the whole world, and spend most of his time with his family. He hates losing with passion, be at training or during an official match, which is why he transformed himself, from being a sassy player into a goal scoring machine, because goals win the games, not the flair. Subsequently, I believe, I possess similar attributes. Trust me, I hate losing. I would make a presentation at work and everyone will be praising me, but deep down, I will be worried about the little things I feel like I could have done them better. I am also family-oriented, spend most of my time with my granny, mom and siblings, if not with my lady,” relates Engine.

“In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been buying food and donating blankets for the homeless people around Sandton area. I do not share that on social media platforms because I do it to help, not for fame. I am also teaching mathematics virtually to struggling grade 12 learners because soon they will be going back to school and catch up on their syllabus. I want to boost their confidence and keep them on their toes,” Engine said.

“Quite frankly, I feel like it was destined to happen that I am an SMU alumnus, now that I am where I am in life. Growing up from a disadvantaged family in Letlhabile township (North West), SMU made studying easy for me, as much as I never had a penny after registration. I never slept on an empty stomach, I never felt the need to adapt, from the first day, and it felt like I never left home. Personally, I believe SMU has a culture that no other institution has in South Africa, and can cater for any race irrespective of their background. It produces terrific leaders who can thrive and prosper through difficulties,” concludes Engine.

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Twitter: @Engine.I**



Felicia Maake — the Radiographer

By Tumelo Moila

Fulfilling her childhood ambition of working in the medical field, Felicia Maake (22), wrote an aptitude test that led to a career in Diagnostic Radiography. "In high school, every learner was required to take an aptitude test, in order to help them identify the career paths they are interested in. I did some research about the careers on my test results, and loved radiography more. I loved the fact that one doesn't work in the office, in consideration of the fact that I am always full of energy. I also liked that the course takes 3-4 years, meaning I would be able to study music as well while I am still young," said Felicia, the Community Service Radiographer at Job Shimankana Tabane Hospital, in Rustenburg.

Her responsibilities as a Community Service Radiographer entails producing diagnostically acceptable x-ray images, and more importantly to perfect her radiographic skills on different modalities. Furthermore, she is playing a critical role in containing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. "My role in this pandemic is to prevent the cross-infection to myself, my colleagues, and also my patients at all cost. I also take mostly chest x-rays of the Covid-19 suspected and/or the infected patients. My challenge is that it sometimes gets scary to work with patients of COVI-19. I will uphold my oath and give my patients the best service they deserve," elaborates Felicia, a staunch Catholic member.

In 2018, she entered the **SMU's Got Talent Show* as a violinist, and won third prize, and the best instrumentalist of the year award. "My sister played violin, and my dad encouraged me to try it out too, since he did not want us roaming around the streets. I then did what he had suggested and to my surprise, I fell in love with music. In 2019, I volunteered at Moribo music school to tutor the little ones, and they definitely made me love teaching," narrates Felicia, who promised herself that she will pursue a career in music, in addition to Radiography.

She considers her dad, Raymond Maake, as a role-model. "This is because he is not focused on one thing. As old as he is, he still sets goals for himself and makes sure he reaches them," explains Felicia.

Born at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH), which later fine-tuned her craft in her Radiography career, brings fond memories to Felicia. "I would also say I miss how 'homey' SMU is; everyone could blend in very easily without so much effort, and be themselves," said the SMU alumna and Mabopane resident.



NB: ** SMU Got Talent Show (is now known as SMU Explosive Talent).*
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and Instagram: @Rad_Violinist.

Mcebisi Maduna — The Occupational Therapist

By Tumelo Moila

Born and bred in the deep rural area of *Emmaus, in KwaZulu-Natal, Mcebisi Maduna dreamt of working under the Department of Health. A dream which eventually became reality, after a stormy nine years of studying Bachelor of Occupational Therapy. His expedition to attain the elusive trance was not a rosy one, as he stumbled across various hindrances, ranging from financial to academic



difficulties. "It really took me nine years, instead of a minimum four years to become an Occupational Therapist. I took pride from the fact that I didn't give up on my dream. That is why I have fallen in love with my profession, because in most instances, once you take long in getting what you want, you end up being the best in it," said a jubilant Maduna.

Against all odds, the desire of becoming a healthcare professional propelled Maduna to develop a never give up attitude. He recalls his gloomy days. "Well firstly, I failed all my academic levels, except for final year, and that is precisely because I didn't have financial support of any kind. I was struggling to even get something to eat and push me throughout the day, which made things more difficult as far as studying is concerned. I used to have one meal per day through the mercy of the staff working at cafeteria. It used to become more difficult at times when those who were generous to me were not at work because I would go a day without food. I am really thankful to the cafeteria staff, if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't have made it this far," remembers Maduna.

"I never had the prescribed textbooks to study because I didn't have money to buy them. National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) rejected me until I stopped applying. In 2016, I was academically excluded and it really took a serious sweat to come back, thanks to the then SRC deputy President Dr. Ernest Mametsa, who fought his lungs out to ensure that I was reinstated when everyone had given up on me. May God bless

him continuously. I can write a book about my struggles but in summary those are the challenges I faced during my university days," said Maduna, in a sobering tone.

"Well, occupational therapy is a very interesting career. Honestly, it needs someone who is passionate and patient because it is a difficult degree to complete on record time. I always regard those finishing it on record time as the lucky ones. It took me nine years to get the qualification so I know what I am talking about," he said confidently.

Today, he is well-positioned to understand and educate his patients with great ease. His educational background is a lifetime ticket for treating his patients with dignity, a promise which Maduna made in upholding throughout his professional career. "Working under the department of health was my childhood dream, and honestly I didn't know what Occupational Therapy was, I just randomly chose it and here I am today. Well I am now a production Occupational Therapist that rehabilitate patients receiving intervention at Christ the King Hospital, Ixopo (KZN). . In addition, I do a lot of supervision of the 2020 Community Service Occupational Therapists," he said.

**Emmaus is a village (under UMzimkhulu local municipality, in KZN)*

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Maano Ramuthaga –

The Professional Nurse

By Tumelo Moila

A combination of perseverance, resilience and grit, compelled Maano Ramuthaga to fulfill her ultimate quest of becoming a Professional Nurse. A career that took several years to kick-start and accomplish, despite the odds stacked against her. "In 2010, when I was in grade 12, I applied to study nursing at one of the universities, and unfortunately I didn't meet the minimum requirements. In 2011, I had to repeat grade 12, and again I applied at another university, still history repeated itself. The following year, I had an opportunity to upgrade Mathematics and Physical Sciences, I then applied to study nursing at SMU, for 2013 enrolment. Finally, I was accepted to study nursing at SMU," explains Maano.

Her academic journey at SMU, was not smooth sailing, as she experienced several pitfalls, in her pursuit of becoming a Professional Nurse. "Even though it took me more than six years to complete a minimum four year nursing degree, my passion forced me not to give up. I love nursing and there is no other career I would enjoy as much as nursing," emphasises Maano. "During my first year at SMU, after first semester, I found out that I had failed all my registered modules. I was even afraid to tell my dad that the following year, I will be repeating. Around October of the same year, I gathered courage and called him to explain my previous semester results, and to my surprise, he just said 'it is okay my girl', that was a huge sigh of relief," said a consoled Maano.



In 2014, the fear of facing an academic exclusion struck Maano, making her to have sleepless nights, thinking of the years it took her to qualify for a space in a nursing programme, and now was on the brink of losing her life-time opportunity of becoming a nurse. "In 2014, I was repeating my first year studies, and the challenge was that I was repeating almost all the modules I registered for, except for a second semester, Psychology course. I also repeated an English course, which most people found it funny, but the truth is I almost got excluded from the university because of the same English module. Lucky enough, we had extra classes during lunch times to attend English lectures, and the points we gain would help in the year mark. Even though it was five points, it really helped me to pass, without re-writing. For the record, I survived two academic exclusions in 2014 and 2016," said Maano.

She further recalls her adversities, "I also remember two sets of students, who happened to be my former classmates, graduating while I was still struggling to pass my modules. The following year in January, it was more painful to attend classes, knowing that I am repeating with new classmates, who also passed and leave me behind. It was hard to accept all these, I also remember some students who used to tease me, saying I am a failure. Only my family stood by me and never gave up on me. They kept on telling me that 'nothing is impossible in life, we believe in you, be patient and one day you will finally achieve your goal'. Those words gave me courage and strength to soldier on, towards my ultimate goal of becoming a Professional Nurse," acknowledges Maano.

Born and bred in Mukondeni village (Venda), into a polygamous family, Maano further explains how her family, which is big and united, support each other through thick and thin. "I am a product of a polygamous family, comprising of a father, three wives, blessed with 21 children. All in all, I am

child number 15 out of 21. Growing up in this family was a true blessing. We motivate each other since childhood, as we all grew up under the same roof. The best opportunity that our father gave us, was to make us prioritise education. Whenever our elder siblings graduate, it became a motivation to the entire family, more especially the younger siblings," said Maano.

In 2019, Maano's dream came through when she finally graduates, and live up to the family slogan which says, 'to graduate is not a choice it is a must'. "My professional goal as a nurse, is to achieve an optimal health status for everyone. Increase my ability, in helping patients to access quality evidence-based, and cost-effective health services. Continually conduct research and serve in a multi-disciplinary team of health professionals, in a fight against different diseases, such as COVID-19," said Maano, who recently completed a compulsory community service at Helene Franz Hospital, in Limpopo, and now patiently waiting for her next assignment as a Professional Nurse.

She plans on furthering her studies in Advanced Midwifery and Neonatal Nursing Science. "I developed passion of working with the pregnant women and neonates. During my community service, I spent eight months, working in the labour ward, which involves working with high risk pregnant women. I enjoy welcoming the new born to the world," recites Maano.

As she concludes the interview, Maano offers advice to everyone who may find themselves in similar situation. "I am a living proof that dreams delayed, are not dreams denied. It seems impossible until it is done. For instance: during athletics meeting, we start all-together but we reach the finish line in different times. It was not an easy journey, but it was worth it. Stand and walk tall towards your dreams," said Maano.

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Selbie Mukhwathi –

The Oral Hygienist

By Tumelo Moila

Twenty-seven years ago, the Mukhwathi family in Tshaulu (Venda), was blessed with a baby boy, named Selbie, who is now an Oral Hygienist, working under the Gauteng Department of Health. "Since childhood, I have



Selbie Mukhwathi –
the oral health activist

always liked to be in a health industry. I remember a year after passing matric, I met one of our church members who had recently graduated. That inspired me, and applied to study for a qualification in Oral Hygiene,” said Selbie, SMU Alumnus.

Selbie advocates for oral health awareness campaigns, with the aim of making people pledge to the notion of 'prevention is better than cure', “I think it is pretty simple, life stops when you have a tooth ache. Neither you can go to work/school, nor eat well. It also affects your confidence, mental health, and your entire physical wellbeing. You will be surprised as for how many people still don't have knowledge on what causes dental pain. Through dental educational campaigns, I do free dental screenings and check-ups, so that people know how to prevent the pain. I try by all means to make people aware of what to eat and not to eat, how and why they should brush their teeth. For instance, a tiny hole on the tooth, can lead to a person losing that tooth easily and quickly, from eating acidic food, and to fix that, it can be costly,” said Selbie.

In February 2018, Selbie was inducted as a Clinical Director of Special Smiles, under the Special Olympics South Africa (SOSA), which was established in 1991. SOSA is a home to more than 45 000 talented athletes, trained in several competitive sports codes. “In 2014, I saw an advert on social media platforms, and made inquiries about it. Then started volunteering my time over the weekends. We go to different provinces and spend our valuable time with persons living with *intellectual disabilities, offers them free dental screenings and instructions, on correct brushing and flossing techniques,” said Selbie, a Clinical Director of Special Smiles. Selbie's career highlights also include receiving an invitation from Dr Cathy Mokobe-Chiloane, a member of the Presidential Working Group on Disability. “She invited us to make provision for dental health education, screening and dental care tools, targeting persons living with disabilities, and elderly patients in rural areas of the Eastern Cape,” recounts Selbie.

He makes a passionate plea to the Department of Health, to consider large intake of Oral Hygienists. “My recommendation to the national ministry of health is that we need a lot of Oral Hygienist in the public sector, to help ease the burden on the oral health services as we move into the National Health Insurance (NHI),” said Selbie, who considers Dr Alexandra Rawhani as one of his role-models. “Dr Alexandra Rawhani, affectionately known as 'Dr Smile', motivates me a lot. He is a hard worker, who positively influence the lives of others, and also uses his talents to serve humanity. Every time we have a chat, he leaves me with words of wisdom, and I feel blessed,” said a thrilled Selbie.

NB: *Intellectual disability refers to an individual with certain limitations in cognitive functioning and skills, such as communication, social skills and an ability to adequately care for his or her personal needs.

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Lethabo Maake – The Pharmacist

By Tumelo Moila

At the tender age of 24, Lethabo Maake was appointed as the new Manager of Clicks store (H14 group) in Mahikeng, North West. Equipped with a Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm) degree from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), and vast working experiences from both public and private pharmaceutical institutions, Lethabo rose to the occasion and led her branch to lofty heights. “At first, there were conflicts between my staff and I. They were adamant that they can't be managed by a young person and laid grievances against me. Eventually, the staff got used to my management style and accepted me. Under my leadership, we started building a formidable team, and fix some of the challenges that I inherited when I took over,” Lethabo recalls vividly.



The Manager:
Lethabo Maake

Her job description involves, staff management, stock control, skills transfer (since she is a tutor for both the Pharmacist Intern and Assistant); Responsible for the pharmacoeconomics of running the pharmacy; Making sure that the pharmacy aligns with the rules and regulations of the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) and South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA); Dispensing of medication and receiving stock; and last, but not least, opening and closing of the pharmacy. Her tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic are more focussed on the safety of her staff and patients. "I screen my staff members twice a day, also ensuring that all of them receive personal protective equipment (PPE), and adhere to the necessary recommendations as endorsed by the SAPC and World Health Organisation (WHO). Strictly, no patients are permitted into the pharmacy without wearing a mask and their hands being sanitised."

Pharmacy is a continuous professional development career, which keeps Pharmacists on their toes, and wanting to learn more each day. "In 2021, I am planning to enrol for the prescribing pharmacist course, and will also apply for the Master of Pharmacy degree, specialising in pharmaceutical economics. However, after the completion of my BPharm degree, I was trained as an Immunization Pharmacist. Recently, I passed the Pharmacist Antiretroviral prescribing course, under Pharmacy Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Treatment (PIMART) and I am waiting for certification.

Lethabo took a trip down memory lane, she said, "While growing up, every month I would accompany my grandmother

to Lombard Pharmacy in Tzaneen, to get her arthritis medication. I was fascinated by the service, presentation and the mere fact that my grandmother will feel better after receiving the medication. Fortunately enough, owner of the Pharmacy, Mr Lombard helped me with my third year clinical training."

Furthermore, she remembers her heydays at SMU. "The culture of the SMU School of Pharmacy, freedom of expression, history, location and affordability. Most importantly it is known for producing quality and reputable pharmacists. The peace of being a student, the ward rounds at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH). The unity amongst students on campus, the SMU lingo, and my former Residence 1D," said Lethabo, who was born in Madombidzha, Venda, and later grew up in Ga-Maake, outside Tzaneen.

On her blossoming career, Lethabo said, "Being a pharmacy manager at the age of 24 years in an H14 store, which was the biggest in my town. Managing people who are 20 years older than me. My transition from hospital into community pharmacy, and still being competent in both. Being recognised and appreciated by my geriatric patients, whenever they come for their prescription in the pharmacy. I get to meet different patients from paediatrics to geriatrics, and they become family. All I have is nothing but love for pharmacy".

NB: Lethabo was recently appointed as the Dispensary Manager of Dischem, in Kuruman, Northern Cape.

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Moshe Tshesana – The Dental Therapist

By Tumelo Moila



Bachelor of Dental Therapy graduate, Moshe Tshesana, aspires to venture into an oral health business. "In near future, I will be fulfilling my desire of being a business magnate in a dental industry. Currently, I am working towards the establishment of a dental laboratory. Together with a group of private dental practitioners, we will make a provision of dental services to the public," said Tshesana, who obtained qualifications in both Dental Therapy and Dental Technology.

"Dental technology is a very good profession, though it has limitations. Thus why, I decided to study dental therapy, to acquire clinical expertise, which is not the case with dental technology. Dental therapy makes provision for preventive and restorative dental care, with procedures performed directly and limited to the mouth. On the other hand, with a prescription from a dentist, a dental technologist performs indirect dental procedures, dealing mainly with custom made construction of restorative, and dental appliances in a dental lab," differentiate Tshesana. He regards his independent practice registration certificate, as his greatest highlight, and a step closer to his dream of becoming a business mogul. "The certificate signifies freedom and full control in realising my

dream of becoming a business man, and independently practise my profession. It is saddening that most of new dental therapy graduates are obligated to work for a year under supervision, though the system is not regulated at all. As to whether it contributes necessary skill development for the graduates, that can't be measured or calculated. The obligation results in many graduates being under-paid and forced to work in environments, where infection control protocols are not observed. Obtaining an independent registration, frees the Dental Therapists from this obligation," explains Tshesana, a resident of Rethabiseng Township, in Bronkhorstspuit (under Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality). He further said, "Another burning issue is the lack of post-graduate studies that advances our clinical skills as Dental Therapist, resulting in many Dental Therapists returning back to university to enrol for degree in Dental Surgery."

Tshesana believes that professionals are well positioned to make positive changes in their respective professions, instead of complaining. "You shouldn't have a naive consciousness, being aware of the situation in your profession and do nothing. Do not take a conformist stance, and consider your

situation as normal, to the point of supporting it. Instead of supporting those who are trying to bring positive changes, and justice in your profession, you complain silently and achieve nothing," he said.

On a positive note, Tshesana acknowledges what his alma mater did for him. "Studying at SMU is an honour and privilege. This is the only university that values and understand the struggle of a black child. Moreover, it has a proven track record of producing reputable and great healthcare professionals. As graduates, we should make it part of our lifetime mandate to contribute in the development of our alma mater," said Tshesana.

In his closing remarks, Tshesana said, "SMU has an amazing team of lecturers, who love their work. These lecturers would go beyond their call of duty, and ensure the provision of lunch to students. This was indeed a great seed of love to most of us. There was no better feeling than that of providing healthcare services to the needy, during the community outreach programme."

Social Media handle – Facebook: Moshe Buti Tshesana

Dr Lawrence Makgoke – The Medical Practitioner

By Tumelo Moila

Dr Lawrence Makgoke, defied all odds stacked against him, to become a medical practitioner, currently plying his trade, at the Impala Platinum Hospital, North West. "I repeated a grade during my studies at SMU. I lost a bursary, gave up studying for a month. Consequently, suffering malnutrition, and severe psycho-academic stress. Balancing between my academic responsibilities, and attending my mother's illness, was the greatest challenge of them all, however, with the grace of God, I pulled through," said Dr Makgoke.



Makgoke is presently in the forefront as an essential worker, in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. "I am consulting and managing people under investigation for possible infection, and confirmed cases in the isolation wards. I also participate in mass testing of mine employees, including contributions to strategies of curbing the spread of COVID-19. I successfully managed the first 32 cases of coronavirus at Marula mine, in Burgersfort (Limpopo)," shares Makgoke.

His special interest in Medicine was inspired by healing and teaching people to take care of themselves, given the health circumstances in South Africa. "What stands out in my career is my effort to save my mother's life from harm of the world, even though she is now late. If I make a contribution using specialised skills, I can eliminate psychosomatic illnesses, which are responsible for manifestations of several diseases. This pertains to my belief that prevention is better than cure," said Makgoke.

In 2004, Makgoke's mother suffered a major depression, with psychosis, eventually that made him to inspire change. "I made a vow that if I have to do anything to defend my mother's life, it has to be a career in medicine. I also made observations in my community of Marapyane/Skilpadfontein, northern part of Mpumalanga, and realised a shortage of medical services. That was in addition to the fact that health

care service delivery in the community was poor," said Makgoke, who desires to specialise in internal medicine. "My ambition in life is to enrol for post-graduate training, in Internal Medicine, and teach students in medical school," visualize Makgoke.

Makgoke was a staunch member of the Peer Education society, during his heydays at tertiary. "I remember winning a cheque of R20 000, when I was serving as a chairperson of Peer Education (HEAIDS project), and Gentlemen's club. Nowadays, I am mentoring a group of young boys regarding various aspects of life. We have an establishment called Trooper (LAWPAT Trooper) which is within entertainment scale. I wish to bring the live performance to SMU soon. I also do motivational talks to young people at local high schools, and Marapyane Youth Development Centre," said Makgoke.

"The turning point of everything I achieved during my heydays at varsity, was my involvement in establishing and acquiring a broadcasting licence for SMU FM 97.1, together with my then fellow students, now qualified medical doctors, Elias Temane, and Doctor Dolo," reminiscences Makgoke.

Social Media Handle: Facebook: Prof-Lawrence Makgoke



Dr Thabo Gwebu – The Dental Surgeon

By Tumelo Moila

An assignment in high school, was key for Dr Thabo Gwebu to select his career path. "When I was in grade nine, we were given an assignment to shadow any employee at their work place for few

hours. I chose to do my assignment at Mokopane Hospital because my mom was working there at that time. However, when we got there, we were given an opportunity to visit all the hospital departments. I then developed an interest in the oral health department. Afterwards, I did a bit of research about it and the rest is history," said Dr Gwebu, who recently graduated in absentia, during the 2020 SMU virtual graduation ceremonies.

His interest in dentistry developed into a mission to change a perception of taking the oral health lightly, more especially in the black community. "Dentistry is both art and science. Don't mistaken it as a profession that focuses only on teeth. It focuses on the general health of a human being. A tooth is just another organ which is vital for the body. A mouth is an indication of a healthy or unhealthy body. So, I wanted to change that perception more especially in the black community because most people take oral health lightly," explains Dr Gwebu.

Currently, Gwebu is serving his community service, as a dental surgeon at the very same Mokopane Hospital, where he discovered his career. "I provide oral health clinical services; and ensure functional integration of oral health services into primary health care, the list is endless," Gwebu shares.

In his department, there is a service register book, which gives patients an opportunity to write their comments about the service they receive from the dentists who treat them. "I remember a time when one of my patients requested a pen from me to write her comment. Honestly, I was nervous, thinking that I may have done something wrong to the patient. Immediately after she left, I rushed to the register book to check what she wrote in there, only to find that it is written, 'Excellent service, thank you. Keep it up.'

Afterwards, I received two more positive comments from other patients. I took pictures of the comments, just to remind myself that my patients appreciate my services. To

date, I consider that as my best highlights in my career," said a chuckling Gwebu.

Lately, he started fishing, which he was introduced to by a friend from SMU. "I have learned that fishing helps to build hand-eye coordination, which is very important in dentistry career. It is also relaxing and exciting at the same time," indicated Gwebu.

A beaming Gwebu explains his unconditional association with his alma mater, SMU. "Well I applied at few universities. I would say SMU chose me and I didn't choose it, however knowing what I now know I would still choose SMU. It is one of the universities where a black child can realise his/her dreams, without being threatened with financial exclusion," he said.

"I miss the love and camaraderie that exist amongst the SMU community members. It is one of the underprivileged universities but the respect and sense of humility that emanate from SMU is immeasurable. This is the only university where the poor become comfortable, and forget about their poverty, while striving to achieve more and empower themselves to earn a living," continues Gwebu.

In his closing remarks, Gwebu makes a passionate plea to the entire SMU community. "Management needs to remember that the SRC is not a body that is anti-progress but a body that advocates for livelihood of students. Let's bear in mind that management members are former students and fully understand the challenges faced by students. Everyone should work together and pull in one direction that aims to take SMU to greater heights. We have a huge potential to grow as the university and for that to happen, all of us must share the same vision and work towards making this institution much greater, under the slogan, 'Knowledge for quality health services'," appeals Gwebu, who aspires to be a labour unionist in future.

Social Media Handles: Instagram - nuz_thabo, Twitter – Nuzthabo, and Facebook -Thabo Gwebu.

You should **wash your hands regularly** for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water or sanitiser.

You should **wear a cloth mask** whenever you leave home.

Social distancing should be maintained, and you should **keep a distance of at least two metres** from other people.

#StayHome #StaySafe!!!

**HELP
STOP THE
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