

DUT ENGAGED

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SOCIAL IMPACT NEWSLETTER

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ROBOGIRLS STRIVE TO MAKE THEIR MARK IN THE STEM FIELD

A total of 75 girls from selected schools in the eThekweni region underwent training on coding, robotics and the concepts of the Internet of Things (IoT) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). They are part of the RoboGirl Programme which is hosted by the Department of Information Technology at DUT, in partnership with Lenovo and Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM).

The RoboGirl Programme consisted of 75 girls who are in Grade 10 and Grade 11, who come from 15 selected schools that are mostly located in historically disadvantaged communities.

According to the Project Leader at DUT, Mr Ebrahim Asmal, Senior Information Technology Lecturer, the girls underwent three days of intensive training which culminated into a competition between schools, where the girls were given two days to design and develop an IoT solution. The projects were judged by a panel of adjudicators, and winners were announced at the RoboGirl Gala Dinner which took place at the Elangeni Hotel in Durban.

A Grade 11 pupil at Vukuzakhe High School at Umlazi, Ms Ntandoyenkosi Mbhele (16) shared her excitement about joining the programme. As much as she was nervous about participating for the first time in the programme, she was confident that her team will do well in the competition, since their school has already been taught the basics of coding.

"I am looking forward to interacting with the other remarkable girls from other schools, learning new skills and making friends. I hope I will be able to take what I will learn and pass it on to other girls from my township. I was also fascinated by seeing the beautiful buildings of DUT and I also found the lecturers very welcoming. I do see myself coming back to study at DUT in the future," reiterated Ms Mbhele.

Mr Asmal indicated that the aim of the RoboGirl Programme was to prepare young girls for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and beyond. He believes that by 2030 most of the jobs will be replaced by robots.



Pictured: The group of girls who are part of the RoboGirl Programme.

"We are here to equip them with skills for the future. We want to provide the girls with the skills that will be needed in the new jobs that are going to be there by 2030. From this group of girls, we need scientists and engineers who will make their mark in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field," shared Mr Asmal.

The DUT Executive Dean: Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at DUT, Professor Oludayo Olugbara congratulated the girls for having the opportunity to learn about the emerging technologies.

"Robots, Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are major drivers of digital transformation, giving the world a better way to live and seamlessly conduct business. The combination of these technologies has great potential to change the shape of the working culture of businesses, industries, economies and the society at large," shared Prof Olugbara.

Sharing his message of support, the Relationship Sales Lead at Lenovo, Mr Werner Schoeman said: "As we look at the young female students benefiting from Lenovo's coding and robotics initiatives in South Africa, we see more than just future engineers and programmers. We see leaders, trailblazers, and agents of positive change. The impact of these programmes extends far beyond the classroom, creating a ripple effect that touches families, communities, and, ultimately, the entire nation."

SIMANGELEZUMA





CHIROPRACTIC STUDENTS TAKE THE LEAD IN HEALING ATHLETES AT SAMA HALF MARATHON

The Department of Chiropractic at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) takes pride in its active involvement in providing care for athletes who took part in the South African Medical Association (SAMA) Half Marathon, hosted by the Phoenix Villagers Athletics Club at Kings Park Athletic Stadium.

Under the guidance of clinician, Dr Junaid Shaik, six senior chiropractic students, Imaan Fakir, Jasmine Lloyd, Sarah Milne, Nabeelah Khan, Dayle Swanepoel, Tia Botha, and Huveshan Pillay energetically addressed various musculoskeletal injuries and conditions experienced by participants after completing the SAMA Half Marathon.

DUT student, Swanepoel happily shared her thoughts on her experience. "I found it very enjoyable by being able to help those that had completed a long-distance run and join in their celebrations. I found my hand sensitivity to detecting muscle imbalances is improving as I can detect these by palpation rather than the patient telling me," she said.

For Pillay, treating runners at the SAMA Half Marathon for the first time had been an incredibly fulfilling experience for him as he would never forget the improvements post-treatment compared to when they walked in for treatment.

"The SAMA Half Marathon had a good atmosphere and allowed for gaining invaluable hands-on experience and application of theoretical knowledge to real world situations. It also helped to develop good bedside manner and communication skills which are vital for all medical and chiropractic students to possess when entering the world of work following graduation," added Milne.

Dr Shaik commented that through active participation in prominent events, students acquire invaluable experience and insights that align with their future roles as Doctors of Chiropractic.



Pictured: From Left to Right: Imaan Fakir, Jasmine Lloyd, Sarah Milne, Nabeelah Khan, Dayle Swanepoel (seated), Tia Botha, Huveshan Pillay, Dr Akhtar Hussain (SAMA), and Dr Junaid Shaik (DUT).

"This engagement extends beyond the application of theoretical and practical knowledge learned in the classroom, providing students with the opportunity to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Such interactions not only foster networking opportunities but also serve as a platform for honing organisational and technical skills necessary for event preparation," he said.

Dr Shaik further expressed that this multifaceted experience is seamlessly integrated with the vision of DUT and its Faculty of Health Sciences ENVISION2030, an initiative that underscores the university's commitment to societal impact and producing adaptable graduates.

He explained that the allocation of time and access to practical experiences are invaluable resources for students.

"Each event serves as a platform for the application and refinement of their knowledge and

skills, requiring adaptability in addressing patients whose conditions deviate from textbook examples. The exposure to diverse practical scenarios fosters an understanding of interdisciplinary patient care, and aids in cultivating essential bedside manners and communication skills crucial for any healthcare professional," he replied.

Dr Shaik indicated that any support that the university can provide to the chiropractic students and the department to carry out its vital mandate of clinical teaching and community service would be greatly appreciated.

"The department extends its gratitude to the organisers and SAMA for the invitation and support, eagerly anticipating the opportunity to make a positive contribution at next year's race. We also wish to thank Mr Alan Khan, and the Corporate Affairs team in creating awareness of such initiatives," he said.

SUPPLIED/WAHEEDA PETERS

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT HOSTS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS AT A HOMELESS SHELTER

The Department of Human Resources Management in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) recently embarked on a community engagement programme where they provided skills development workshops to residents of Payless Shelter, a homeless shelter in South Beach, Durban.



Pictured: Residents of Payless Shelter during the workshop hosted by DUT's Department of Human Resources Management.

The programme was coordinated by DUT lecturer in the Human Resource Department, Humairaa Mohammed who ran a series of workshops with the aim of helping some of the residents at the shelter who have recently found work with the assistance of the shelter, and others who are actively looking for employment to teach them how to maintain a job, behave in the work environment, labour laws and how to manage money as some of them have never had jobs before. The topics discussed in the workshop for each day from Monday to Thursday were Basic Labour Law, Basic Financial Management, Values in the Workplace and Work Preparedness respectively.

Mohammed said the HR Department was looking for a community engagement initiative and then she came across an advert for a payless shelter online and decided to contact them to see if they could help them in any way possible.

"When we met with them and spoke about the things that they do, they told us that they have residents that they assist to find jobs but when they do join the workforce and get their first salary they have no skills on managing their money or how to even be employees in a company. They

said they need the skills to manage their money and learn how to be employees. We then decided that as an HR department we can offer them the knowledge they need," said Mohammed.

She said their goal is to get homeless people off the streets and help get them out of the extreme poverty that they are living in.

"We want them to maintain their jobs, save their money so that they can rent a place to live in, pay for their basic necessities and get out of the life at the shelter. Many of the residents have grown up on the streets and have struggled their whole lives. We want to help them end those struggles by working and becoming members of society," said Mohammed.

Senior Lecturer at the HR Department, Dr Sifiso Myeni said he volunteered to assist in the programme as it relates with his background since he grew up in the township of KwaMashu and he understands the social pressures the township offers and being susceptible to street life and drugs.

"There is a handful of people I grew up with that are on the streets with various reasons and being involved in the programme is about giving

back to the community the little that one can," he said.

On what he hopes to achieve with his contribution in the programme, Myeni said the programme sought to ensure the people at payless shelter who have been part of their rehabilitation programme are given the tools and techniques to be active contributors to the economy through this work readiness programme.

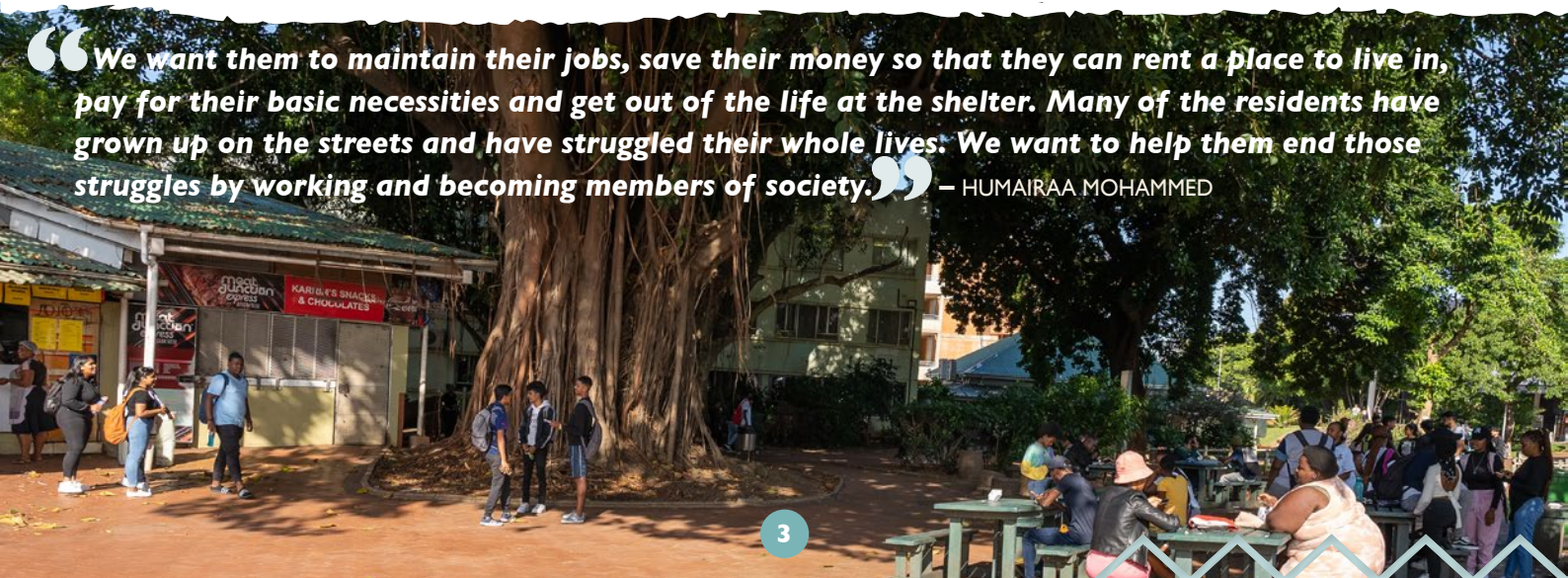
"We are expecting them to be responsible citizens who will also impact others positively through their own experiences," said Myeni.

Mohammed added that they are working on getting participants certificates of attendance to put on their CVs and that they plan to keep the project up with the shelter every year as they continuously help residents get jobs every year.

The participants in the programme and homeless residents at the Payless Shelter, Maralaze Visser (46) and Nickolas Matsvairo (41) from Zimbabwe said they are grateful to DUT for the opportunity, and they hope to use the lessons learned from the programme to change their lives.

THULASIZWENKOMO

"We want them to maintain their jobs, save their money so that they can rent a place to live in, pay for their basic necessities and get out of the life at the shelter. Many of the residents have grown up on the streets and have struggled their whole lives. We want to help them end those struggles by working and becoming members of society." – HUMAIRAA MOHAMMED



Through events like the Readathon and the Bookathon, the University continues to contribute to the development of future generations, one page at a time.

DUT CELEBRATES WORLD READ ALOUD DAY WITH A READATHON IN BERGVILLE

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Engagement Office hosted a Readathon in Bergville to commemorate World Read Aloud Day. The event, brought together enthusiastic learners who are members of the Bergville Book Club under the DUT Bergville Schools Programme. The Readathon was a vibrant celebration of literature and a testament to the power of reading as a tool for learning and community-building.

World Read Aloud Day, celebrated annually on February 5, encourages the joy of reading and promotes the importance of reading aloud to an audience. This year's Readathon saw participation from two local schools: Bambanani and Sbavana Primary Schools. Learners from these schools came together for an inspiring day of storytelling, where they read aloud and shared stories in a fun and engaging way, reinforcing the power of reading as a means of connecting with others.

In addition to the Readathon, the event served as a platform to recognise the winners of the 1st Annual Bookathon 2023 competition. Throughout the year, members of the Bergville book club were given a curated selection of books to read, and in turn, they wrote poems and book reviews inspired by their reading. These creative works were then presented during the Bookathon, which took place at the end of the year. The competition encouraged learners to deepen their engagement with literature while developing their writing and presentation skills.

The winners of the Bookathon competition were awarded prizes, including uniform vouchers to support their educational needs. In a special highlight of the day, the winning school was presented with a laptop, an essential tool that will support the school's ongoing educational efforts and provide access to a wealth of digital resources.

The event reflected DUT's commitment to community engagement and educational empowerment. By fostering a love for reading and



Pictured: A Learner and a Principal from Sbavana Primary School receiving the awards won during the Bookathon 2023.



Pictured: Learners from Bambanani during the Readathon.

creating platforms for young learners to showcase their talents, the initiative aims to inspire a lifelong passion for literature. Through events like the Readathon and the Bookathon, the University continues to contribute to the development of future generations, one page at a time.

This year's World Read Aloud Day celebrations in Bergville not only highlighted the importance of reading but also underscored the collective efforts of teachers, learners and the community in promoting literacy. The success of the event further strengthened the relationship between DUT and the Bergville community, setting the stage for future initiatives aimed at advancing education and empowering learners.

PHUMEZAMSONGELWA

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOGNISES STAFF AND STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS THAT POSITIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITIES

The Engagement Office under the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement (DVC: RIE) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) hosted the hybrid Engagement Showcase and Pitching Awards Ceremony 2024 at the DUT Hotel School, Ritson.

Programme Director, Ms Runyararo Marima gave context to why the Engagement Showcase and Pitching Awards 2024 was held which was to recognise and award engagement projects that positively impact communities while aligning with the values, principles, and objectives of ENVISION2030 initiated by DUT staff and students. "We want to celebrate each and every one that brought their work forward, to let us know about the impactful work that DUT is doing for its surrounding communities," she said.

In terms of prizes to the project awardees, third runners-up received R3000, third position obtained R10 000, the second position winner received R20 000, and first position got R30 000.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of Professor Fulufhelo Nemavhola, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement, was Mr Alan Khan, Senior Director of Corporate Affairs at DUT.

"It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we convene to celebrate the innovative spirit and dedication to engagement that characterises all that is best of the Durban University of Technology. This event marks a pivotal moment as we witnessed the culmination of hard work, creativity and dedication from our students and staff. The core of our assembly resides in the exchange of ideas, the exploration of possibilities and ultimately in the celebration of achievement," he stressed.

Khan further commented that the first segment where DUT staff and students pitched their engagement activities and projects was nothing short of inspiring.

"We celebrate those who have dared to innovate, those who have dared to lead and those who have dared to make a difference. To our finalists, I say this, you are the architects of tomorrow, the visionaries of the future. Your ideas have the power to shape the world around us and to inspire generations to come. As you stand on the cusp of greatness, remember that success is not merely about achieving your goal; it's about the journey, the resilience and the unwavering



Pictured: The first prize staff and student winners at the awards event.

belief in one's self," he said.

Following his opening remarks, the keynote address was then delivered by Professor Firoza Haffee: Interim Head of Department (HOD) for the Department of Basic Medical Sciences, where she lectures undergraduate Epidemiology and Physiology. Prof Haffee has supervised over 20 master's and doctoral students as well as an international postdoctoral fellow. With a PhD in women's health, she is an avid researcher in public health, with particular emphasis on HIV, women's health issues and disease prevention. She spoke of her engagement project with students at the herbal area of the market. The students worked with the women in this market, looking at their lives and how living and working within the market is impacting on their health.

"We need to reflect very critically on our roles and relationships within our community engagement and we should try and include teaching and learning as well as research and triangulate these three factors together. And in doing so, we can work with the communities, gain knowledge from them and let them gain knowledge from us as well, and let them be mutual learning going forward," she said.

After the exhilarating presentation by Prof Haffee, the much-anticipated presentation of the Engagement Showcase and Pitching Awards 2024 winners: Students Category, was announced by Nkululeko Mbatha, Administrative Assistant at the Communications unit.

List of winners

Runner-ups in Students' Category

- The Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation, Project Leader: Sinalenjablo Ndlovu.
- Siyakhula Msinga Empowerment (NPO), Project Leader: Simphiwe Thembelani Mnyandu.
- Maswamale Youth Development (NPC), Project Leader: Sphelele Dlamini.
- EduCareConnect: Integrated Health and Education Hubs for Rural Empowerment, Project Leader: Nkanyiso Mhlongo.
- Let's Do Tech, Project Leader: Sanelisiwe Thwala.
- Digital Discovery, Project Leader: Lungile Madi.
- Bookworm, Project Leader: Luyanda Shabane.

Third prize winner

- Africa's Waw (AW), Project Leader: Kyungu Lubaba Lubadi.

Second prize winner

- Project Green, Project Leader: Mzomuhle Msweli.

First prize winner

- Coding and Robotics, Project leader: Thembelihle Queen Hadebe.

Following the exciting announcements of the student winners, Ms Noluthando Mchunu, Design Studio Manager, shared the names of the winners in the Staff Category of the Engagement Showcase and Pitching Awards 2024.

Runner-ups from the Staff Category

- VantshwaVa Xivono (Youth with a Vision), Project Leader: Samuel Ntsanwisi.
- Research Conversations with FMS, Project Leader: Zandile Mahlobo.
- PAT Administration Programme, Project Leader: Siphesihle Mthethwa.
- Smart Wastewater Treatment to Energy System (SWTES), Project Leader: Dr Emmanuel Kweinor Tetteh.
- uMphafa Participatory Praxis: Mural, Project Leader: Dr Tanya Dayaram.

Third prize winner

It was shared between three winners:

- Using Action Research to Upskill Community Health Workers: A Case Study, Project Leader: Dr Colette Kell.
- Waste Biomass & Valorization – Plastic fused bio brick from waste plastic and sugarcane bagasse ash Project Leader: Dr Farai Dziike.
- Faculty of Health Sciences Khula Wellness Initiative, Project Leader: Dr Pavitra Pillay.

Given a change to say her thanks for the award, Dr Pavitra Pillay, the Deputy Dean at the Faculty of Health Sciences said that they received the award on behalf on the community that they served in the Khula Village. “It is not just one person contributing to it, it’s our entire faculty. So, I am really grateful to have received this award and ensure that we are going to use the money effectively to give back to the community,” said Dr Pillay jubilantly.

Second prize winner

- Improving Mathematics and Science in Rural Schools, Project Leader: Dr Siyabonga Ndllela.



First prize winner

- EmpowerEDpreneurs-Business and Social Leaders Programme, Project Leader: Yâchal du Plessis.

Giving her thanks, Yâchal du Plessis, a lecturer from the Department of Applied Management at the Pietermaritzburg campus said that she was truly honoured to receive this award but more so for the reason that this award recognises the impact that each of us can make on our students and our community. “This award serves as a reminder that purpose is fuelled by passion, and that we can actually effect change when we turn our passion to serve into action that is impactful. It is a privilege to be recognised in this way, and it motivates me to pursue community engagement with even more fervour and commitment,” she said.

After the announcements of the sterling winners, messages of support were given by Ms Nompumelelo Madonda the Director at the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) in the Office of the Premier (KwaZulu-Natal), and Ms Thandazo Jafta a District Manager from Ikamva Youth.

Jennifer Frances Ducray, a Basic Medical Science lecturer at DUT congratulated Phumzile Xulu, the DUT Engagement Practitioner and her team on a wonderful celebration of DUT community engagement initiatives.

“Pulling the entire thing together must be very challenging but was so worthwhile. It truly was wonderful to see the efforts, enthusiasm and dedication of staff and students in this arena. As an institution, we are blessed with wonderful resources and expert domain knowledge in so many fields. The responsibility of stewardship of

these with respect to community engagement rests on our shoulders as much as the education of our graduates. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present some of our work. It means a lot to have efforts affirmed and supported by the institution in this way. I know we will do DUT proud in the current project and hope to see continued growth occurring going forward,” she said.

The closing remarks and vote of thanks was delivered by Xulu, who thanked all guests for coming to the prestigious event. She also gave a brief history into her journey into community engagement saying that she worked for over 15 years to support those working in the informal trade sector.

“I am truly grateful that you have taken the time and moment to do the community engagement work, the projects that were presented were top notch and of great quality. Both staff and students’ projects were very impressive but the students impressed me more because they do this work with not much support, not much knowledge even of what they need to do but they are driven by the passion for wanting to see the lives of other people changed, for wanting to make a difference in the world,” she said.

She relayed that the impact that community engagement work has to changing the lives and livelihoods of others, is the biggest income, the biggest money, the biggest prize. She further went on to thank all the role-players who were instrumental in making the event a success.

The event concluded with a scrumptious lunch and entertainment by Abahambayo Music Pty (LTD).

WAHEEDA PETERS

It truly was wonderful to see the efforts, enthusiasm and dedication of staff and students in this arena. As an institution, we are blessed with wonderful resources and expert domain knowledge in so many fields. The responsibility of stewardship of these with respect to community engagement rests on our shoulders as much as the education of our graduates. — JENNIFER FRANCES DUCRAY





MEN CARVE ADDRESSES CRITICAL ISSUES SOCIETY FACES

The Men Carve founder and president, Zakhe Khuzwayo, is a beacon of hope addressing critical issues related to gender and masculinity, reshaping societal norms, and empowering the youth to foster healthy attitudes. Khuzwayo is a student in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, Department of Information and Corporate Management, registered for his Postgraduate Diploma in Business and Information Management.

The core objective of the Men Carve is to combat gender-based violence through creative and innovative means. Khuzwayo passionately believes that cultivating healthy attitudes is the key to dismantling the toxic masculinity that perpetuates violence in South African. His commitment to this mission is unwavering, driven by first-hand experiences that have shaped his perspective.

Khuzwayo shared that the plans for this year included wanting to grow the organisation and encouraging more people to be the change they want to see. "We believe once they become aware that change starts with and within them, they can change the world to be better place," he said.

He also added that the organisation would like to get more sponsors to help with the sustainability of the project. "We want to secure sponsorship as we are using our bursary money to do our programme as we have limited funding from the DUT International Centre of Non-violence ICON through Mr Crispin Hemson. So, we want to get more sponsors and donors for sustainability of our project," he elaborated.

He is now appealing for assistance from management to provide the organisation



Pictured: Men Carve founder and president, Zakhe Khuzwayo.

with working space, which would enable him to better support DUT student who needs his guidance.

The Men Carve is involved in other programmes that helps people. They are currently in a programme called Food Scheme (Nomfundo Mbatha Campaign), Helping Grade 8 learners to choose their subjects wisely. "This will determine their choices of study and their future jobs; helping Grade 12 learners in forgotten deep rural areas with online CAO and NSFAS applications as they often lack smart phones and data to make online applications; we have members from different communities, universities and TVET colleges, churches, civic organisations that we also collaborate with," said Khuzwayo.

He further mentioned that they are looking for new members to join the organisation. "If someone wants to be part of our organisation we are looking for new members from different places, applications are open and will close at the end of February, 2024. Visit our social media platforms to find more information about our organisation and the application to become one of us," he said.

PATIENCE MAKHAYE



Engagement at DUT is the portfolio under the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Innovation and Engagement (DVC-RIE), Durban University of Technology (DUT). The Engagement Office champions initiatives, efforts, and activities that focus on establishing the University as a responsible, relevant, and active partner of the community in addressing the needs of society. Through engagement, the University facilitates collaboration among DUT staff, students, alumni and the community for meaningful university-community engagements. This newsletter seeks to capture and showcase engagement projects, initiatives, and events that have been initiated by staff and students as part of service learning, community-based research, community outreach or volunteering for positive societal impact. Showcasing these projects recognizes staff, students and social partners for their exceptional commitment to contributing in changing the lives and the livelihoods of our people in line with the ENVISION2030's goal.

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