

Bringing joy despite incarceration

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STEMMING from Mandela Day last month, second year interior design students at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) united to bring joy to a mother and child facility at the Westville Prison.

Gagasi 99.5 FM broadcast from the centre for 67 minutes on the day (July 18) to assist students raise sponsorship for the project.

From a zero budget they sourced sponsors and their efforts will bear fruit when the revamped facility is launched on Friday.

Student Melindah Sne Mkhwanazi said they began working on the project in the female section last Monday.

"Through the generous support of sponsors we will beautify the creche and the 22 rooms of the mothers, who either have babies with them when they are incarcerated, or have babies who are born while in prison," said Mkhwanazi.

Fellow student Sashlyn Naidoo said working on the project was rewarding, while Ayesha Imandin added that the experience was eye-opening. "I learnt a lot about forgiveness and second chances. From the outside we look at those in prison as criminals, but we do not know what led them to do what they did. When I see these moms care for their children,



Interior design students, from left, Ayesha Imandin, Melindah Sne Mkhwanazi, Sashlyn Naidoo and Bianca Drews

PICTURE: SUPPLIED

it's like any loving mother-child relationship," said Imandin, who added the theme from the project was 'scrapbooking'.

DUT lecturer Susan Jane Barrett explained: "Each year

the interior design programme at DUT undertakes the upliftment or revamp of an existing environment which serves the community. This year the students are trying to create an environment, which is uplift-

ing to the incarcerated mothers in order to provide for memory, hence the theme scrapbooking. Mothers can display pictures of family, friends and other children they may have outside the prison."

She said the students were involved with painting and a décor revamp of bedrooms, the crèche, TV lounge area, passageway, foyer and offices. The project will contribute to credits towards their diploma qualification under the subject interior design, Practice III.

Provincial police spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Vincent Mdunge praised the initiative.

He said about 20 newborns and toddlers, up to the age of two, lived on the premises with their moms.

With renovations in full swing, the environment, he added, would be more conducive to learning and bonding. After a child turns two, he or she is either placed in the care of guardians or taken to Child Welfare who find foster homes. Mdunge said the Minister of Correctional Services, Nosiviwe Noluthando Mapisa-Nqakula, was scheduled to attend the launch.

Among the sponsors are Shuter and Shooter Publishers and Miles Plant Hire.

Nareshini Ranganathan, of Shuter and Shooter, said they contributed educational toys; while businessman Sydney Pandaram, of Miles Plant Hire, sponsored paint, carpeting and material for the male inmates to manufacture beds.