

Outreach Report: Mandela Day at Ethembeni Community Safe Home

In observance of Mandela Day, the Department of Human Movement Science conducted a community outreach intervention at the Ethembeni Community Safe Home. This initiative was launched as part of a commitment to bridge the gap between academic expertise and the health needs of the local community. Elderly populations at facilities such as the Ethembeni home often face challenges related to sedentary lifestyles and limited access to professional exercise guidance. By implementing evidence-based movement strategies, the project aimed to improve functional independence and overall quality of life for the residents. Furthermore, the event served as an opportunity for students to engage in service learning, translating classroom knowledge into community support. The collaboration, initiated by an invitation from Loyiso Siswana and Esmerelda Daniels of the Age in Action Group, highlighted the role of academic departments in supporting vulnerable populations.

The event was facilitated by the involvement of 16 student volunteers from the HMS Society. Following a welcome address from Ms. Siswana and Ms. Daniels, the team initiated a structured programme. Students were divided into teams to manage specific testing components, including vitals, flexibility, and functional screenings, for the 17 residents at the home. Staff members Kamvalethu Kele, Nomvuyo Nyoni, and Mteteleli Biko oversaw the floor to ensure clinical safety and operational efficiency. Throughout the process, the students demonstrated professional engagement and competence in their interactions with the residents. Upon completion of the clinical assessments, the group transitioned to an exercise session featuring dance-based movements, which encouraged active participation from the residents.

The day concluded with a debriefing session to discuss observations regarding the residents' functional health. The data collected during the screenings is intended to be used to develop evidence-based recommendations and a sustainable physical activity plan tailored to the residents' needs. This approach ensures that the impact of the intervention continues beyond the initial visit. The initiative addressed immediate community needs and provided the department with a foundation for future collaboration and continued support for the residents of Ethembeni.