

DECEMBER 2018

Y-TALK

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



IN BURLING PHOTOGRAPHY

A message from the National General Secretary

Rev. Siphso Sokhela

“Partnerships are so much better than being a donor-funded recipient”

Greetings family and friends

In the last month, we have been powerfully reminded that partnerships are so much better than being a donor-funded recipient. US Coalition representatives came to visit us and to share their knowledge with us. What started as a tentative donor relationship in 2008, has now blossomed into a firmly entrenched partnership of friends who respect each other.

During this visit, the Coalition under leadership of two CEOs, Eric Mann of First Coast YMCA, Jacksonville Florida, and James Morton from Greater Boston YMCA, visited and had meaningful exchanges of best practice with YMCAs in Durban, Athlone, Port Elizabeth, Cape Flats and Pietermaritzburg.

A key highlight was a 3-day fundraising training organised by the SAYMCA National greatly facilitated by the leadership team from Metropolitan YMCA of Atlanta, Georgia. Working with the National Grants Manager, whom they mentor, a tailor-made training for the South African market was developed especially for staff and Board. The way this was approached ensured their understanding and desire to understand our context, so as to work and walk together with us as we plan our first ever annual giving campaign. The experience was a meeting of minds and a tribute to our togetherness as a united YMCA

family. I raise this example as it typifies our relationship with the US YMCA movement. We look forward to the visit of the bigger Coalition group in March next year.

All in all, this has been a demanding yet invigorating year. Next year promises to be equally so, as among other things, SAYMCA is hosting the Africa Alliance General Assembly.

As we end the year, I am saddened to say farewell to my great mentor and friend, a great supporter of SAYMCA, Paddy Kearney, who passed away suddenly on 23 November, and of whom the Minister of Corporate Governance and Tradition Affairs Dr Zweli Mkhize remembered him as “a giant who optimised a non-racial future and unity of our people”. I will miss him.

The National Executive Committee and the national office staff wish you a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

May God bless you during the festive season.



In this edition of **stakeholder spotlight**, we talked to Patricia Vilakazi, a Health Promoter at Orlando East Clinic and one of the Soweto YMCA stakeholders.



What work do you do at the clinic?

I am a Health Promoter at Orlando East Clinic. My duties are to educate people about health in the community. I also do advocacy relating to health issues for the community or patients.

At the clinic do you have programmes specifically for young people?

Yes we do. We teach about sexuality which includes the menstrual cycle up to teen stage and physical development. We do these lessons at the clinic, in schools and in the community.

How long have you been a Soweto YMCA stakeholder?

More than 5 years.

Do you work with Soweto YMCA in any of their programmes?

Yes I do. We work together in the community dealing with kids who have problems and are part of the YMCA. We go to the extent of reaching out to their families. My role in all this is to offer counselling for the kids and their families. A recent incident is a case of a child who was unruly and we had to work together in talking to the family.

In your own opinion does YMCA make an impact in the community?

The YMCA programmes, according to me, do have an impact in changing the children's lives because they are faith based and they deal with the children's moral behaviour.

Agricultural Project: an intergenerational prevention programme

In an informal settlement near the YMCA Cape Flats campsite is an agricultural project with a difference – linked to the Youth Justice programme. Through a grant from the Department of Health, the YMCA Y-Justice Coordinator initiated the **Camp Road Organic** food gardens project providing healthy food to the community. There are currently 12 adults involved. In September, as part of the youth justice preventative work, the YMCA introduced an informal lifeskills programme at their place of work – the participants talk, discuss and find opportunities to make better life options for themselves and their families. The goal is to move the participants into formal training during gardening time, focusing on in-depth life skills and communication. This is an **intergenerational preventative initiative** where communication is key. The next step in 2019 is to hold similar workshops with young people where home visits will be included. The final step will be to bring these two groups together to find common ground and in this way, contribute to the community members refraining from participating in criminal activities.



DYNAMIC DUO AT THE HELM

By Gil Harper



I recently had the opportunity to watch the new Chairperson and new General Secretary of Nelson Mandela Bay YMCA in action during fundraising training conducted by the YMCA of Atlanta.

Lerato is energetic and passionate about her position as Board Chair, knowing it “comes with a lot of responsibilities and as a leader you have to know that every decision taken should be for the best interest of the organisation”.

Kevin feels “absolutely ecstatic” about his appointment. He said, “The YMCA is such an incredible organisation and it aligns with my belief system, heart, values, dreams and aspirations. The potential opportunities to impact young lives in a meaningful, real and relevant way are huge”. He brings with him over 30 years of broad business experience, of which half is in the NPO sector.

Further, of his many and varied relationships, he said, “I firmly believe that some of these relationships can be leveraged into mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships for greater impact on the youth in our region.”

Lerato brings with her a leadership style (servant and transformational) to “harness the sharing of power, put the needs of others first, help people develop and perform as highly as possible.” A firm believer of collaborative partnerships, this enhances Kevin’s vast networks.

The key priority of the board, according to Lerato, is to have a well-functioning organisation that promotes the mission and vision of the YMCA.

“I believe we must strive to be a team with superior cohesion that is less prone to competition, promoting open and trusting dynamic with explicit standards concerning team values.”

I met Kevin about 14 days into his position at the YMCA and on first impressions, he says, “

All I can say is WOW! ... the experience of hosting the US Coalition in my first week in office touched me deeper than any international trade missions I have had the pleasure of hosting in my career... my eyes were opened to the enormity and impact of the YMCAs in their respective cities and worldwide... in this short period of my first month in office, I have made YMCA friends for life.”

Giving a joint quote, Kevin and Lerato said, “Our vision as the Chairperson and the General Secretary of the NMB YMCA is to build an effective, selfless team that touches lives and impacts our youth to rise up to new challenges with an innovative and entrepreneurial spirit that will bring success to the community.

Go and like the Nelson Mandela Bay YMCA Facebook page and keep up to date with what their youth and leadership are up to!

YOUTH AT THE SUMMIT

By Ryan Benjamin
General Secretary of Athlone YMCA

It's the beginning of a long journey of hard work and perseverance for me, in our organisation. The YMCA has always represented empowerment of young people to me. I am a testimony of what the YMCA produces.

I was asked by the Lead Editor of Y-Talk to express what it's like to be a General Secretary at a young age. The #YeNOW has exploded on to the scene in 2018 in a big way, shining a light on the voice of the future. I am privileged to represent young people in management at the YMCA.

Much as it is a privilege for me, it's also a massive undertaking for my local Y to entrust this responsibility to me.

So here are a few thoughts on what it's like to be young and in charge:

1. A privilege.
2. A responsibility beyond the local association.
3. Challenging, further than the day to day operations.
4. I need a vision for my community, city, province and nation.
5. I cannot do everything on my own, and seek to surround myself with partners who will invest into my life.
6. South African young people are an ever-changing group with issues of joblessness and poverty always being a pivot in their lives. I need to be flexible to come up with

evolving solutions.

7. Don't allow the "old" way of doing, remain the status quo for the way I do things.

8. I love what I am doing and who I am doing it for. Without love I will not see success.

9. Failure is an option, as long as I fail forward.

1 Corinthians 12 seeks to teach us how we are part of one spiritual body. Youth play a vital role in this Movement. Never feel less than that. You are amazing. You are important, and lastly you are the future.



Ryan Benjamin
The youngest General Secretary
in the SA YMCA

IMPACT STORY

An interview with Siphesihle Mdungwa who, through the Youth Justice programme at Pietermaritzburg YMCA, managed to change his life. For more on his life story watch: <https://youtu.be/qt8OytZrJWI>

When you came off the streets and into the YMCA, what were some of your dreams?

To make peace with my family.
Go back to school and finish matric.
Study further and get a good job.
Travel the world.

What difference has YMCA made in your life?

Through YMCA I was able to reunite with my family. I was given a second chance in life because YMCA helped me to go to rehab, I was given accommodation after rehab, a chance to finish my Matric and now a chance to be part of the Communication For Change (CFC) programme.

How did you feel when you were selected for Communication For Change (CFC) programme?

Shocked, happy and short of words. All I could say was thank you.

Tell me about your experiences during CFC in Kenya. I had an opportunity to visit a lot of different places, learn about different ways of living in Africa, about cultural diversity, respecting other people's cultures and communication. It was an interesting experience.

How does your family feel about your progress in life so far? They are happy that I managed to change my life. They are supporting me and they now treat me as their child compared to the past. The trust has been built again, they love me and I appreciate it so much.

What is your greatest learning since you left the streets? It is good to be honest all the time. Do not be afraid to tell your story. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Respect other people and I have learnt about umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, I am what I am through other people's help.

How did you feel when people clapped and cheered for you at the YMCA National Assembly?

Being asked to stand in front of everyone was the scariest part because I had stage fright and I feared being judged afterwards for my past. Somehow I found the courage to do it and I told myself that I needed to do this to prove that my life had really changed.



Describe your experience when you met Carlos?

I was ecstatic because I only knew him from hearsay and pictures. It was a huge experience to meet him in person and I felt special to get a chance to get a picture with him as well as talk to him. I am so proud of myself.

What is your role currently at the Pietermaritzburg YMCA?

I am a volunteer and part of CFC. I assist in the Youth- Justice and Y-Zone.

How is the relationship between the Y-Justice participants now?

They are happy about the progress I am making in my life. I wish someday I will be able to impact and help change one of the participant's life.

What career do you want to follow? Why?

I want to be a High School teacher because I love teaching and I love helping young people. I believe with my experiences in life I will be able to make a huge impact in the lives of young people.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

Living a good healthy life with a family; having a good job, a nice car and still helping young people because I have this desire of helping young people.

What is your advice to young people to make sure they have a positive future?

What I can say is be who you are and don't change for other people to impress them. Be proud of who you are, do not be afraid to seek help. Do not do drugs because drugs destroy families, they destroy the future and destroy lives. Instead of doing drugs do Maths (laughing). Just study hard, focus on your future. Good things will come in life, respect other people and be honest at all times.

OUR YOUNG LEADER ON THE WORLD STAGE

Not long ago we used to regularly hear, “we’ve heard of the YMCA but we don’t know what you stand for”. When other organizations recognize that we stand for “Empowering Young People” all across the world and recognize us for our united brand position, it is a proud moment of progress for the movement. It is through that recognition that saw our Change Agent, Sharnelle Cader based at YMCA Ravensmead in the Western Cape, proudly wear her red t-shirt as she took to the stage to represent us at the Olympism in Action Forum in Buenos Aires prior to the Olympic Youth Games.

Sharnelle says that she was part of the working Zone around **Solidarity, Inclusion and Social Cohesion through sports** with an elite panellist group. Their working zone aimed to explore how sport can bridge the divisions that currently exist in societies around the world with the goal of promoting inclusion and creating cohesive communities.

Her first question from the facilitator was: “How is YMCA using sports to create social cohesion amongst youth?”. Sharnell says she considered that to be pretty simple question to answer, considering that YMCA practically invented three different sports namely: basketball, racquetball and volleyball. Sharnell also said “I shared about the Red Triangle where we focus on Mind, Body and Spirit and then went into more detail with regards to the ‘Body’ aspect and how we use sports at various locals as a way to harness and to develop the body as a tool of empowerment. I also touched on the fact that as an organisation we aim to ‘Think Globally and Act Locally’ as the YMCA differs from country to country, region to region and local to local.”

In conversation with the audience, one of the questions that Sharnell considers the toughest was on how YMCA includes other groups from different faiths and backgrounds or cultures. “To my relief I could explain that we evolved as an organisation, over a period of time. Even myself representing our organisation which is known as the Young Men’s Christian Association – I as a Women am able to stand here on this platform and speak on behalf of our organisation. A typical example of how we constantly aim to adapt with the needs of society.”

For more on her experience in representing the world’s young people as a Change Agent we encourage you to read her insightful blog at: <https://www.ymca.int/world-ymca-olympism-action-forum-2018-sharnelle-cader-change-agent/> to hear from one of our young leaders on the world stage.



Social Pages

Delegates who attended the SA YMCA Annual Assembly, hosted by the Nelson Mandela Bay YMCA in September.



SA YMCA local General Secretaries, with the Secretary General elect of the World Alliance of YMCAs, **Mr. Carlos Sanvee** on the extreme left, and the National General Secretary of SA YMCA, **Rev. Sipho Sokhela**, 3rd left.



Participants in the 1st Google Digital Skills training that took place at the Durban YMCA in November. More such training to come in 2019.





Group of fabulous young leaders at the Gala Dinner as part of the 2019 Annual Assembly of SA YMCA. Representing several locals and Denmark YWCA/YMCA.