

# Ekurhuleni's PLWHA Support Group Candle Lighting ceremony

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Ekurhuleni PLWHA Support Group Candle Light Ceremony

15 May 2009

The Ekurhuleni PLWHA Support groups held a candle light service on the 15th May 2009 at J. Dumane clinic's community hall, in Vosloorus. Community groups of all ages participated in what was decidedly more than a candlelight ceremony in remembrance of all people who have passed on as a result of HIV/AIDS but an entertaining informative ceremony targeted at the youth. Speakers from both local government and the department of health used the platform to educate attendees about HIV/AIDS, whilst PLWHA organisations spoke about the importance of disclosure and dispelling stigma. Through their own stories, they gave encouragement to infected and affected members of the community to fight on .

Just when you think people have become fatigued by HIV/AIDS campaigning, something like this comes along and you realise how much HIV has affected communities. From grandmother's who could hardly see, to the young people that when you hear their personal stories would imagine they would have been jaded and despondent. Local youth groups performed plays, dance pieces and poetry.

From the Play performed by the Gugulethu Drama Group it became evident that the youth are aware of the effects of succumbing to peer pressure; the confusion that ensues as one is 'coming of age' or 'coming into their own' in an already dysfunctional family situation. Often we don't go into issues around how a family functions or how a child is raised, the environment it has to grow up in and out of, its perceptions of roles between genders and how these feed into sexual violence and even HIV. That was a refreshing take and interpretation and one would only hope that their young minds understood the many scenarios that played within the play and they learn to get out of the moulds that family and society forces them into and they do not become victims of circumstance.

NAPWA affiliates and TAC members stood together and spoke of living positively with the HIV, inspiring some people to disclose. The Candlelighting was more than a sad reminder of deaths but all the candles that flickered were like little flames of hope.

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