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By *moderator*

Created 2012/05/16 - 5:06pm

16 May, 2012 - 17:06 ? moderator

The Varsity Kudus is a running group based at Wits University in Johannesburg. TAC secretariat member and avid runner, Mark Heywood, belongs to the Kudus club. Runners for Health is a running group of TAC that was organised and is lead by TAC's General Secretary, Vuyiseka Dubula.

Runners for Health aim to participate in the 2012 Comrades Marathon, South Africa's gruelling, annual 89km (56 miles) race running between Pietermaritzburg and Durban. This year's race will take place on 3 June. The Kudus are raising money for Runners for Health's participation in the race. Below is an excerpt from the Kudus newsletter about the drive.

You can also sponsor Runners for Health's participation in the race by following the instructions included in the Kudus newsletter.

Sponsor our Comrades runners

Why not support a club member, or group of members running Comrades this year? Dave (I really should have stayed in retirement) Rossouw has already attracted much attention, but arguably that's because many doubt he's actually going to finish (again) this year! But it doesn't matter - the opportunity exists to sponsor anyone, or everyone, that you wish.

The club will be donating all sponsorship gathered to the Treatment Action Campaign. TAC is an award winning social movement campaigning to save the lives of people living with HIV and TB. In the 12 years since it was established TAC has helped to save millions of people's lives in South Africa. But TAC is not just about its past achievements. It continues to do critical work to alleviate the HIV and TB epidemics. For example in the last few months it resolved a shortage of a critical medicine for treating a fatal opportunistic infection and brought together clinicians, government and civil society organisations to take action against the TB epidemic. TAC volunteers distribute over five million condoms a year and in the past 6 years have provided information about HIV treatment to patients in clinics across the country. Its over 100 branches identify problems in clinics and try to get local health authorities to work effectively.

Bank account details for donations are as follows:

Bank: Nedbank, Cape Town

Account Holder: Treatment Action Campaign

Account Number: 100 972 6269

Branch code: 100 909

One of our club members, Mark Heywood, has also been training a group of HIV-positive runners in preparation for this year's Comrades. As another special opportunity, why not support these runners as well? Sponsorship details are as above

Please support us in this charity drive, and have some fun while doing so. Why not approach your friends to join in, and why not challenge other running clubs to join in as well?

If you do decide to donate, please mark your electronic deposit with "Comrades TAC Kudus" so that a total contribution can be calculated by the TAC. If you'd like to, please let Mark or me know as well, so that we can also keep tabs. Alec Joubert (alecjoubert@gmail.com) and Mark Heywood (heywood@section27.org.za)

Running with HIV

Vuyiseka Dubula is a young new South African woman. Having grown up in poverty in the Eastern Cape she moved with her family to Cape Town more than a decade ago. However, the joys of early adulthood in a free country were spoiled when she was diagnosed with HIV. By her own account Vuyiseka was saved from despair and illness only when she encountered the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). The TAC provided her and many others with important information about HIV (it's impossible to confront any cause of illness without understanding it); what we call 'treatment literacy'. It also gave her a mission to fight to arrest the epidemic and to ensure that all those infected with HIV have access to the treatment that has made HIV a manageable, if not curable, virus.

She has been successful at both. By the end of this year two million people will be accessing daily treatment in South Africa. And today Vuyiseka is the General Secretary of TAC.

But last year her life took another turn, unexpected, but as profound as an HIV diagnosis. Vuyiseka set her sights on the Comrades. Until early 2010 she had hardly run at all. Now she's done several marathons and she ran the Two Oceans earlier this year. But Vuyiseka and a few others have not just made running a personal quest, but a political one. Running with HIV breaks personal and social barriers. It shows that if HIV is managed properly it does not have to limit any part of your life. Running with HIV breaks stigmas. Spreading the joy of running is also important in a country with one of the highest rates of obesity in the world.

Today, growing around Vuyiseka is a group of runners, many of them with HIV, who have also been introduced to the joys of running. Six have succumbed to Comrades fever! We have formed a loose group around a Facebook Page called 'Runners, Walkers, Cyclists for Health' that reports on our running efforts and encourages people with HIV to start by breaking their own stigmas. It has over 250 followers. On the Soweto marathon and Two Oceans we have proudly carried a flag proclaiming 'HIV Positive' from start to finish and built a bus out of a nucleus of HIV positive runners.

In March last year I gave Vuyiseka my first Comrades medal on the promise that she would give it back to me when she made it across the line. That should be in about a month's time!!

Source URL (retrieved on 2018/02/22 - 2:30pm): <http://www.tac.org.za/community/node/3277>