

A WAY WITH WORDS



QUIZ MASTERS: The Dalians won the latest round of The Valley's monthly quiz. Pictured from left are team members Sandra Rankin, Dale Blanchard, Derek Dexter and Gill Dexter
Picture: SUPPLIED

Reusable sanitary pads offer solutions

Donation drive for Eastern Cape schools

SIPHOSIHLÉ DYONASE

May 28 is International Menstrual Hygiene Day and Palesa Pads, a Johannesburg based company which designs and manufactures reusable sanitary towels made from cloth, is looking to honour the occasion by organising a donation drive in the Eastern Cape.

However, CEO Sherie de Wet said that a lack of sponsorship has made it difficult.

De Wet founded the company in 2017 after she read about how many young girls were missing school because of not having any sanitary products every month.

She quit her job and invested her money into the company.

"I was horrified to think that their education was being compromised by something as natural and uncontrollable as a period."

"My research led me to discover the concept of cloth sanitary pads and how they have been around for millennia," she said.

Palesa Pads has now assisted over 80,000 girls across the country to stay in school and avoid worrying about how they would buy sanitary towels each month.

"Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021 is different to other years in that it continues a conversation despite the pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic lockdown further highlighted the inequalities in our country and the lack of sanitary pads was one of the issues mentioned by disadvantaged communities," said de Wet.

"While there were a number



HELPING YOUNG GIRLS: Palesa Pads CEO Sherie de Wet is hoping to extend her outreach into the Eastern Cape Picture: SUPPLIED

of disposable pad programs initiated by government and other organisations, these supplies quickly ran out while the schools were closed, putting the girls back into a situation of period poverty.

"Further to that, funds that had been allocated for sanitary pads were reallocated to food parcels, leaving girls without sufficient protection during menstruation."

Meanwhile de Wet said the company has struggled to arrange sponsorship for the Eastern Cape.

"The need in the Eastern Cape is great and we have received requests for

donations so often. Hence we are calling on companies and organisations in and around the Eastern Cape to assist us in the #KeepAGirlChildAtSchool initiative."

She said that partnering with other other organisations and resellers has made getting access to the product range easier and more affordable, and has created an ongoing conversation about reusable sanitary towels.

"Our products are available online and will be available in August at selected Ackermans stores nationally," de Wet said.

She said feedback from the girls has been positive and they have enjoyed the frank conversations about their bodies.

"Many of them said they have left the presentation feeling empowered with a better understanding of their menstrual cycle and how to manage it. Some of the girls have comeback saying that the pads are comfortable, they've enjoyed using them and they have saved so much financially."

De Wet said that teachers have also come back to her, saying that they have noticed an improvement in school attendance and that there has been a cleanliness in their bathrooms now that the girls were using reusable pads.

This May, de Wet said she would like to continue educating girls around the world on their periods.

"Having a sustainable solution to menstrual health management means that girls can attend school and achieve their best, unencumbered by their biology," she said.

- For more information, visit www.palesapads.com/

EC infections held in check while other provinces spike

AMANDA NANO

Covid-19 numbers are being held in check in the Eastern Cape while, all around, infections are on the rise.

According to TimesLIVE, infections are rising drastically in Gauteng and the Western Cape.

Provincial health spokesperson Sizwe Kupelo said the department was concerned about the Joe Gqabi municipality from a pandemic perspective, given its proximity to the Free State, where new cases were also climbing.

He said rapid testing was available at all hospitals in the province and that this was a turning point in keeping the province's infection rate lower than other provinces.

"All patients who come to hospital with symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 are tested."

"Contacts of positive patients in hospital are also tested," Kupelo said.

"Hotspot areas in the community are also tested through the rapid antigen test."

"It is supported by 11 mobile testing labs in community health centres."

"We have consistently kept the recovery rate above 94%, which has been attributed to tracer teams and clinicians

inside and outside hospitals.

Kupelo said the province's acting director-general of health, Dr Sibongile Zungu, was leading a technical team of HODs and senior managers who were monitoring threats.

Health minister Dr Zweli Mkhize said on Thursday that all Eastern Cape districts had recorded a "zero percent average change".

However, he qualified this statement: "This does not mean they are not getting new infections, but it does mean they have maintained a plateau, which is very encouraging."

"This reinforces the message that we can all play our part to ensure that these rises in infections do not turn into a third wave."

Kupelo said: "We are focusing on Joe Gqabi given the spike in new cases in the Free State. We want to ensure that there is sufficient oxygen in health facilities and enough vehicles for tracing cases."

"We are getting ready for a possible third wave."

The second phase of vaccine rollout starts on Monday and the health department has launched a service to register over-60s for the vaccine via WhatsApp. They need simply WhatsApp the word "Register" to 0600-123-456.

This service is also now used

to get information about the pandemic, including news, regulations, symptoms, treatment and risks.

Anyone over 60 can register for the vaccine by dialling *134*832* followed by their ID number.

Kupelo said they had already registered more than 85,000 over-60s across the province.

The department expected two million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, he said.

"It [Johnson & Johnson vaccines] will be sent mainly to the rural areas. We are also expecting the arrival of the Pfizer vaccine, which will be used in the urban set-up due to its storage requirements and transportation."

The target is for 4.5m Eastern Cape residents to get the jab. Over 37,000 health workers have already received it.

However, DA MPL Jane Cowley questioned the rollout readiness of the provincial health department, saying the exercise could prove catastrophic because of the low number of provincial health workers.

Kupelo said: "We need to continue with social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks and sanitisation. In hospital, we can only manage serious cases."

- DispatchLIVE, additional reporting by TimesLIVE

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