

# THOUGHTS

A Newsletter for Supporters of the South African Federation for Mental Health



## NEW DIRECTOR WELCOMED AT NATIONAL OFFICE

The earlier months of 2011 have been very busy and challenging as we had embarked on the production and launch of our national awareness campaign "Be Lifted" - generously funded by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (read more about this on pages 2 and 3).

During this period, we also said goodbye to the former National Director of the Federation, Mr Solly Mokgata, and welcomed in his place Mrs Bharti Patel who was appointed in June. We wish her every success in leading the organisation. As an introduction to you, we've asked her some questions about herself, her background and her vision for the Movement.

**Editor: You previously worked in the Child Welfare Sector. Why did you make the decision to join the Mental Health Movement?**

**BP:** I have spent 17 years in the children's sector. I started out as a social worker in the child abuse section. Here I acquired many critical social work skills in dealing with crises, legislation, families and communities. The most rewarding of these experiences was having gained an understanding of how children cope with trauma, feelings and emotions and how to overcome challenges. Within all of us, the inner child still exists but we tend to become less tolerant as we develop into adults.

As a social worker you quickly learn that in order to bring about any change, you first have to understand and pre-empt how people think and react. Therefore the mental well-being of any individual, family and community is always first and foremost in any interaction.

While the children's sector will always be close to my heart, I wanted to gain more exposure in another field. Mental health is an interesting and evolving field. I find myself learning every day about the challenges experienced by mental health care users as well as what needs to be done to be able to bring about any positive change in communities.

The S.A Federation for Mental Health has been instrumental in improving the lives of mental health care users for the past 90 years and I want to contribute to this positive change as part of this organisation.

**Editor: What is, in your opinion, the biggest challenge faced by the Movement?**

**BP:** Stigma and discrimination remain the biggest challenges faced by the Movement. This is evident from the lack of funding from government organisations that refuse to make mental health a priority in the country.

Since mental illness and intellectual disability do not have obvious or visible symptoms, it is easier to ignore. Families and communities have been forced to hide mental illness and intellectual disability for fear of intolerance by individuals and communities. Changing perceptions poses a great challenge. Ongoing education of mental illnesses and intellectual disability is the only way to change people's ways of thinking.

**Editor: What message do you have for our mental health care users, member organisations and valued donors?**

**BP:** We encourage our mental health care users, families and donors to come forward and make use of the vital services offered by mental health organisations that strive to improve the lives of all citizens.

Mental health affects us all. Donors are encouraged to invest in our programmes and services which will improve the way society addresses mental illnesses, intellectual disability and mental well-being. This way, we can all enjoy the freedom that is entrenched in our constitution.

The S.A Federation for Mental Health is a dynamic movement that addresses social ills in our country and we actively seek to partner with individuals, communities and institutions to continue making a difference to the lives of so many in need.

Let us all step up and take a stand in favour of mental health: our own as well as every other individual in our country. Mental health is the nation's wealth!

**Editor: Any other thoughts you'd like to share?**

**BP:** The need for improved mental health services in our country has probably never been greater than right now. We appeal to every individual who feels so inclined to get involved - whether to donate funds, contribute time and skills or to assist in any relevant way - and be part of the Movement that is making a positive contribution to the lives of mental health care users, their families and the communities in which we all live.

I look forward to getting to know you during my time as National Director. My door is always open and I give you every assurance that I will serve the Federation and the Movement as a whole, to the best of my ability.



## "BE LIFTED" CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED WITH PJ POWERS

On 1 September, we launched our first ever national awareness campaign at a glittering event in Montecasino's *Skoobs Theatre of Books*. Aptly named "Be Lifted," the campaign aims to endorse the importance of mental health for all South Africans. The campaign was generously funded and made possible by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund.



Highly respected celebrity PJ Powers is the face and voice behind the new campaign and launched her new single called "Lifted" at the event. Proceeds from the sales of this single will be donated to the Federation.

**The event was attended by celebrities and business executives such as Dali and Rachel Tambo, Amy Kleynhans-Curd, and SA's latest and talented Indie rock band *Easy Tiger*; to name a few.**

"With this campaign, the SA Federation for Mental Health aims to lift the veil on the myths surrounding people afflicted by mental illness and intellectual disability," says Bharti Patel, National Director of the Federation. "We want to spread the message that with access to proper support, people suffering from mental illnesses have the potential to be active, contributing members of society - and that we are working hard to ensure that professional support is readily available to all South Africans."

Approximately 1 in 5 South Africans suffer from a mental illness severe enough to affect their lives significantly. Mental health issues can range from mood disorders to substance-related disorders; up to and including cognitive and personality disorders to name a few. "All these illnesses are manageable and mental health care users need not be hidden away in shame - they have a right to receive the proper care and support from a trained professional. They just need to step forward and ask for help," continues Patel.



Rachel Tambo (Patron), Bharti Patel (National Director), PJ Powers and Shona Sturgeon (President)



Arlene Mcmaneveldt, Zethu Mthimkulu, Suritha Umley, Dali Tambo, Bharti Patel, PJ Powers, Amy Kleynhans-Curd, Dennis East and Shona Sturgeon



### **Says PJ Powers:**

*"It is ignorance and fear that mystifies and stigmatises mental illness and intellectual disability. I became involved with the South African Federation for Mental Health to demystify and destigmatise mental illness and intellectual disability. I want society to learn through education that because you have a mental illness or intellectual disability does not mean you cannot lead a fulfilled life and contribute to the economy and society.*

*I live with depression and with the right treatment I am able to function at an extremely high level and contribute to the society we live in."*





PJ Powers and Annatjie Labuschagne with Dale and Travis from the band Easy Tiger

The 45 second television advertisement will be broadcast on the following channels over the next month: SABC 1, 2 and 3; E-tv; DSTV/Mnet; Sowetan TV. Live billboards can be seen nationwide at strategic locations. Metro FM was the radio station of choice and print advertisements will appear in the following magazines: Woman & Home; Fairlady; Sarie GESOND and Mamas & Papas. Watch out for our message of hope conveyed through all of the above mediums. There is also a music video that will be broadcast by the various television stations. So many individuals and companies played a part in getting it to the point of being broadcast to the nation. We look forward to the outcome of this amazing campaign!



PJ Powers, Dennis East, Shona Sturgeon, Dudu Shiba, Rachel Tambo, Dick Shingange and Dali Tambo

**The following list of organisations will be able to assist anyone requiring more information on mental health issues. Advice and treatment will always be provided within a safe and confidential environment.**

Cape Mental Health	(021) 447 9040
Northern Cape Mental Health	(053) 841 0537
REHAB - East London	(043) 722 9680
Port Elizabeth Mental Health	(041) 365 0502
Uitenhage Mental Health	(041) 922 8025
Northern Free State Mental Health	(057) 352 1046
Southern Free State Mental Health	(051) 444 0212
North Gauteng Mental Health	(012) 332 3927
Vaal Triangle Mental Health	(016) 931 2910
Central Gauteng Mental Health	(011) 614 9890
Laudium Mental Health	(012) 374 3002
North West Mental Health	(018) 297 5270
Limpopo Mental Health	(015) 307 4732
Durban & Coastal Region Mental Health	(031) 207 2717
Pietermaritzburg Mental Health	(033) 392 7230
Zululand Mental Health	(035) 772 2664
Mpumalanga Mental Health - Secunda	(017) 631 2506

# Mental Health is the Nation's Wealth!



*1 in 5 South Africans will experience mental illness in their lifetime.*



*4% of South Africans live with intellectual disability.*



*Over 250 South Africans under 21 commit suicide every year due to depression.*

*Together we can make a difference!*



**SMS "LIFTED" to 40027 to download the new single by PJ Powers at R20 per sms in support of the South African Federation for Mental Health.**



[www.safmh.org.za](http://www.safmh.org.za)  
**011 781 1852**

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## GRIEVING FAMILIES COMFORTED THROUGH TRAUMA SUPPORT

The importance of mental health in all aspects of life is underestimated more often than not. The truth is that mental health stands at the centre of our daily lives and we cannot remove ourselves from it, nor deny that it forms an integral part of us.

Recently, the country was shocked and saddened by the two airplanes that crashed into the Mamotswiri Peak north-east of Tzaneen, after participating in the Tzaneen air show. Thirteen people, including two young children, lost their lives in the mountainous area.

After the news broke that the two planes were missing and the families were contacted by the Disaster Management team, the Director of Limpopo Mental Health, Carel Mouton, and his team went to Tzaneen Airport where they gave support to the families of the missing persons.

The process of trauma de-briefing is a complex and difficult one and the team gently started to prepare the families for the worst. The Limpopo Mental Health Society team helped to provide the basic needs of the families such as clothes, toothbrushes, and encouraged them to eat something to keep their strength up. When the wrecks were found with no survivors, they gently conveyed the devastating news to the families and started the counseling process without delay.

Head of Disaster Management Hannes Steyn, said that the assistance from Limpopo Mental Health Society was invaluable to them. He noticed a definite improvement in the emotional state of the various family members from when he saw them early that morning and when he returned later that evening. He found the immediate availability of trauma counselors very helpful. Steyn went on to say that they have received positive feedback from the families and the wider community about the support that was given to them in their time of need when they were unable to think logically.

The Limpopo Mental Health Society worked together with various other role players such as the other counselors, police, emergency services, disaster management, the public, etc. The incident had a major impact on the community: not only locally but also nationally. When a tragedy such as this occurs, people are suddenly more aware of their own mortality and can experience what is called secondary trauma.

However, the work did not end with the families going home eventually. Carel and his team still follow up with the families to establish how they are coping and to assist where possible with the process of reintegrating back into society and their daily lives.



But what about those who have to deal with the horrors of everyday tragedies? Who supports them? Peer counseling is essential: even trauma counselors need therapists whom they can go to in order to remain emotionally sound and healthy to support others on an ongoing basis. It is evident that there is a definite need for immediate and accessible psychological / emotional support for the relevant role players such as the disaster management centres, police, army, hospital staff, emergency personnel, etc. There is yet much work to be done...

We salute the work that the Limpopo Mental Health Society has done in this regard. It has brought relief and comfort to the families of the plane crash victims in their time of need.

### You are what you think

How you think can have a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must." These are definite marks of self-defeating thoughts.

### Healthy ways to relax and recharge

- Go for a walk
- Spend time in nature
- Call a good friend
- Sweat out tension with a good workout
- Write in your journal
- Take a long bath
- Light scented candles
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea
- Play with a pet
- Work in your garden
- Get a massage
- Curl up with a good book
- Listen to music
- Watch a comedy

**Be Connected** Join us on Facebook! 'Like' our page and participate in interesting discussions and debates on all matters concerning mental health. This is a great platform from which to interact with others and where important issues can be raised and addressed.



S.A. Federation for Mental Health

### CONTACT US

**Postal Address:** Private Bag X3053, Randburg 2125

**Enquiries:** Telephone: +27 (0) 11 781 1852

Facsimile: +27 (0) 11 326 0625

**General Enquiries:** safmh@sn.apc.org

Visit our website at [www.safmh.org.za](http://www.safmh.org.za) for more information on the role and function of the South African Federation for Mental Health. Remember that you can now safely make donations online - directly via our website! It's fast, secure and convenient.