

PasSPORT to Health Project Restores School Facilities

The Department of Human Movement Science staff member Prof Walter, who leads the PaSPORT to Health Project, supported a group of students in the department whose fundraising efforts allowed them to revamp the bathroom and playground facilities at Colchester Primary School. The Herald report below provides details on this initiative.

● Varsity upgrade project included repairing bathrooms and sprucing up playground

Students restore dignity at Colchester school

Roslyn Baatjies

Colchester Primary School was abuzz with excitement recently as Nelson Mandela University students, teachers and community members gathered to celebrate the handover of a significant upgrade project.

The event, marked by a spirited march and drill display, was the culmination of a year-long effort by final-year students from NMU's Department of Human Movement Science.

The dedicated students spent the day at Colchester Primary, located on the edge of the Addo Elephant National Park, where elephants can occasionally be seen from the schoolyard.

This picturesque yet challenging setting was the focus of their 2024 project, aimed at promoting the health and well-being of the school's 103 children, who study in multigrade classrooms within a very poor community.

Prof Cheryl Walter, who initiated the long-term PasSPORT to Health project over a decade ago, said the school's facilities, particularly the toilets, were in dire need of repair.

"The bathrooms were



FUN STARTS HERE: NMU student Jayde Marais with, from left, pupils Keanon Jacobs, Amyoli Jacobs (on hopscotch paver), Hakeen Plaaitjies, Stiaan Prinsloo and Zoey Tamboer at Colchester Primary School where they recently received upgrades to the playground

unsanitary, lacking basins, and in a state of disrepair.

"Through fundraising efforts, the students managed to raise over R20,000 thanks to the generous donations from businesses and individuals.

"This funding allowed them to repair or replace all the toilets for boys, girls and teachers,

install hand basins, and paint the walls and floors.

"Additionally, they painted cement pavers for hopscotch and other games, creating a more engaging and fun environment for the children," Walter said.

She also commended the students for their dedication

and hard work, highlighting their efforts to restore dignity to the pupils by providing clean and functional toilets.

The day was a joyous one, with the university students honoured with certificates of appreciation from the school.

Sergeant Rudi Ryan Williams, of the Kinkelbos police station, led a disciplined march and drill routine, adding to the day's festivities.

Walter emphasised the importance of community involvement in promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of their children.

She praised the support from local businesses, Williams, principal Chantelle Loff, dedicated teachers and the school governing body.

The students also launched a Facebook page, now managed by the school, to highlight its successes and ongoing needs.

The project was part of their practicals which involved site evaluation, needs analysis, project planning, fundraising and implementation — providing invaluable real-world experience.

Student Sakhe Boo said the project allowed them to apply what they had learnt in a

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practical context, while also making a meaningful contribution to the community.

"Being involved in the project allowed us to engage directly with the locals about their issues, and the sense of giving back was worth it.

"It not only enriched our academic journey but also highlighted the importance of social responsibility.

"I am so grateful that Prof Walter allowed us the opportunity to be a part of something so great," she said.

In a heartfelt speech, Loff described the day as one of celebration and kindness.

"We are very thankful for this great gesture."

In addition to the much-needed facility upgrades, the principal said breaktimes were now fun.

"The learners play peacefully and every child has something to do.

"We can't thank Walter and the students enough."