

PRESS/NEWS RELEASE

TRANSNET-PHELOPHEPA HEALTHCARE TRAIN

DATE: 8 August 2017

RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train is in De Doorns !

**Dates: 14 to 18 August 2017 and
21 to 25 August 2017**

The Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train brings health and hope to thousands of rural South Africans in need of access to health-care facilities. The Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train – the world’s first primary healthcare hospital on wheels – uses the existing rail network in South Africa to make quality medical care an accessible reality for many of South Africa’s most remote communities. This nineteen coach train, with its twenty resident staff members, fondly known as the “miracle train”, carries the most modern medical equipment on board. Phelophepa is indeed a journey of hope that continues to make a history of caring. The name ‘Phelophepa’ combines elements of Sotho and Tswana and, roughly translated, **means ‘good, clean health’** – which is exactly what this travelling health clinic provides.

The first of our much-loved Phelophepa Health Trains started operating in 1994. The Phelophepa Health Train has shown incredible growth since its humble beginnings as a three-carriage eye clinic. Today – almost two decades later – it boasts 19 fully refurbished and equipped coaches that provide facilities for health, oral and vision screening programmes, basic health education awareness and community counselling workshops. It won several service excellence awards over the years, amongst those; the United Nations Public Service Award in the ‘Improving Service Delivery’ category in June 2008. Through on-board clinic services and community outreach programmes Phelophepa impacts over 180 000 patients a year.

It travels for 36 weeks each year visiting a different rural community every week or two weeks. This was a significant step forward in the Transnet Foundation’s vision of providing quality healthcare where health services and infrastructure were not fully in place.

The success of the Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Train, together with the increased demand for healthcare services set in motion plans for another train. That dream became a reality when the second train, Phelophepa II, began operation in March 2012.

With both trains operating simultaneously, the extended reach of the primary healthcare offering enables potentially **360 000 patients to receive healthcare they would not have had access to before.**

Although the Transnet-Phelophepa Healthcare Trains can only be in an area for a limited time, the goal is to supplement and support existing facilities to

make sure the residents can continue benefitting from quality healthcare once the train has departed. Education and empowerment that leave better equipped and informed communities in its tracks is a core value of the Phelophepa programme.

- Before the train rolls into town, teams are sent out to alert the community of the days the train will be delivering services. A comprehensive social mobilisation strategy are developed and implemented in collaboration with all local stakeholders in each community.
- Relationships are established with the existing healthcare providers so that patients can be referred and continue to receive the care they need.
- While the train is in the area, screening and healthcare education are the primary concerns. Nursing teams visit local schools to screen children for health-related problems and educate them about basic healthcare.

Our convenient on-board pharmacy dispenses the necessary medication and our community outreach programme, led by the chief nurse, frequents local schools and communities in the surrounding areas. Healthcare education lies at the very heart of Phelophepa services. It equips people living in such remote communities with important knowledge that will help them to correctly prevent and identify disease symptoms as well as to show them how to take their medication correctly.

A special team of resident staff live on the train for its annual 9 month operational period. These dedicated healthcare professionals and support staff, together with the Transnet Foundation senior staff and under the leadership of Mrs Shamona Kandia; Senior Portfolio Manager: Health, Transnet Foundation, they manage the logistics and supervise the continuous stream of final year students from leading academic institutions all over South Africa, who participate to gain invaluable practical experience for two weeks at a time. Annually, approximately 1 200 final year students practice on-board Phelophepa Health Trains.

The train will be visiting the following stations and towns in 2016:

ENDS

Media Enquiries

SOCIAL MOBILISER NAME

Laurika du Bois

Social Mobiliser (Western Cape)

Mobile: 082 8865583

E-mail: laurikadubois1@gmail.com