Recognition for community partnership between Dedel'ingoma Arts Healing and the Department of Educational Psychology

We take pride in sharing this recognition of community engagement partnership between Dedel'ingoma and the Department of Educational Psychology, awarded in 2012. Dr. Elzette Fritz, project leader of a SANPAD (South Africa Netherlands research Programme on Alternatives in Development) research project focusing on Creative Expressive Arts Therapy as (school) community intervention, partnered with Adelaide Sheik from Dedel'ingoma in 2009 – 2011. Dedel'ingoma hosted workshops to caregivers focusing on self-healing and self-care.

By exploring the sense of ‘self’ through creative expressive arts therapy, caregivers were provided with the opportunity to engage with their personal stories and to explore how their stories/narratives influenced their personal and work lives. The rationale was that if the caregivers took better care of themselves, they would connect with their own resilience in order to engage with those in their care in a healthier and more productive manner. Nadine van Westrhenen, a Dutch clinical psychology graduate, participated in the workshops in 2010, conducting research on the experiences of the caregivers participating in the workshops and co-authored an article with Dr. Fritz in the Health Education Journal titled “The experiences of professional hospice workers attending creative arts workshops in Gauteng”.

Based on the data generated through individual interviews, focus group discussions, observations and supported by a researcher journal with 19 trainees at nine different hospices, this article also considered potential skills transfer and self-healing considering compassion fatigue by exposing the participants to a diverse range of creative arts. The results indicated that music and movement resonated with the participants due to their indigenous knowledge systems where music and movement form part of their traditional rituals. Music and dance as part of creative expressive art therapy was therefore found to provide the opportunity for debriefing without engaging the caregivers in interrogating traumatic events.

The massaging activities highlighted the importance of self care and connecting with others in order to optimally serve those in the care of the participants. These findings confirmed the potential of community creative expressive arts therapy in terms of providing support to caregivers in contexts confronted with scarce supportive resources, such as hospice settings.
Unfortunately the partnership came to a close at the end of 2011 due to the fact that funding to Dedel’ingoma was discontinued.

Research on creative expressive arts therapy will however continue through the SANPAD research project of Dr. Fritz, involving three doctoral students and four Master Educational Psychology students – of whom two have already submitted their minor dissertations at the beginning of 2012. A manual was developed by Nicky Vienings, with input from Nadine van Westrhenen, and negotiations are under way in order to explore the possibility of refining the manual for distribution purposes.