From the Mayor’s Pen

Knysna residents were shocked by a spate of murders that took place recently in the area. We are a small close-knit community and have experienced some crime in the past, but it seems that violent crime is on the increase. What often happens is that fear steps in and follows us around wherever we go. It becomes part of our shadow as we move around.

Often, people’s response is to pack up and leave the country, lock stock and barrel. They all say we have a fantastic country, but that the crime and corruption is just getting too much. I agree with them. It is getting too much, but rather than leave, I believe we have to take the future in our hands and stand together to face these fears head on. I love South Africa and want to grow old here, with my children and their children.

I think, as a community, we should rally together and not accept this. Community members often have information that can help the police to catch the culprits, and we should not be afraid to speak out. Even if some of us are not directly affected at this stage, if this trend continues, it may only be a question of time before we are.

To make a real difference we will have to take responsibility. We know our police service is under tremendous pressure, so we need to work out how we can help them. Look at the success the various neighborhood watch groups are having. Pay attention to your surroundings - look around, take notice and if you see something suspicious, report it. It is our only chance to make a difference, and to ensure a safe future for all of us. And let it not stop at crime in Knysna – let us take it further and demand good governance as the residents of this country.

Let us demand good education for our children which will open up possibilities other than crime for them. In the history of this country, it was when we stood together that we’ve brought about the biggest changes. We’ve made miracles happen before, we can do it again.

Georlene Wolmarans • Executive Mayor

A Path of Healing, to celebrate memories

“If ever there comes a day when we can’t be together, keep me in your heart, I’ll stay there forever.” Piglet to Winnie Pooh

Four years ago on August 24th 2011, 14 Primary school children and one adult lost their lives in a tragic bus accident at Kassat-se-Drift on the Rheenendal Road. With the anniversary of this sad day coming up, the Speaker of the Knysna Municipality and councillor for Ward 5, Cllr Eleanor Bouw-Spies, is creating a remembrance walkway with the parents that will hopefully help those affected with their healing process.

She said they want to help the families affected to lessen their grief with some hope and loving memories. “When I read the quote above from Piglet, I wanted to create something tangible to honour them. Interacting with the affecting families also made me realise that healing is the most important aspect for them at the moment. For me, nature has a natural healing force, and that is when the idea for a healing path was created.”
A Path of Healing, to celebrate memories

She explained that benches and trees will be added in the Rheenendal area to celebrate the memories of these lives lost so prematurely. “We will also add paving stones as stepping stones to healing along the way with words like “Remember”, “Soul”, “Harmony”, “Love”, “Peace”, “Hope”, “Honour”, “Spirit” and “Joy” on them.”

A memorial service was held on Sunday 23rd August, and the first benches were put in place as part of the ceremony. “The incident united the community of Knysna four years ago – our hearts went out to the families that lost loved ones. This year we want to not only acknowledge these lost lives, but also celebrate their memories. The public, who showed tremendous support four years ago, can also get involved, either by a donation which will be used towards the purchase of the benches or trees, or even by donating a tree, a bench or plaque. Any help will be greatly appreciated.”

Kathleen Wessels, one of the parents and the representative of the families affected by the accident, said the parents love the idea. “We have memories of the lost children at our homes, but remembering the children outside, by beautifying the area, is a wonderful gesture. I believe it will bring the community together once again and give us a way to heal, to acknowledge our sorrow and hopefully to move on. This way they can be always remembered, and in a beautiful and special environment.”

Bouw-Spies said people interested to help can contact her directly. “Help me to bring some positive and healing energy to the Rheenendal area to celebrate these fifteen lives lost, and to keep them in the hearts of the Knysna community, forever.”

Trees can also be purchased from Rheenendal Prospect Nursery who will beautify and maintain the memorial garden which will be established shortly.

For more information or to donate an item, please contact Eleanore Bouw-Spies at the office at 044 302 6580 or on 076 519 4485 or e-mail ebouw@knysna.gov.za

Knysna Timber Festival offers more than entertainment

The Knysna Timber Festival, taking place from 8 to 10 October this year, was officially launched on Thursday 13 August. Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans said that the festival aimed to act as a catalyst to revive the timber industry within the Garden Route.

“The Knysna Timber Festival will showcase locally produced timber products and related services which are sure to reignite the public’s passion for timber,” she explained. “The concurrent development of timber related skills and exposure to job opportunities will boost the development of our local economy, creating marketing opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME’s) within the various segments of the timber industry.”

“Our region and our town in particular owes a lot to the history of the local timber industry. We are confident that this festival will allow us to take a big step towards re-establishing Knysna as the timber capital of the Garden Route,” she said. “In celebrating the heritage of the Knysna Forest and our inherent, natural connection with timber, we are marketing the town of Knysna as a destination to timber enthusiast tourists, as well as a business destination for travellers within the industry. The festival will generate a lot of exposure for our exhibitors, our town and our timber, reinforcing the possibility of attracting investors to the local industry.”

“We are proud to support a festival that ticks these major boxes: economic development, skills transfer and education, marketing the town and luring investment. And we thank the sponsors and organisers for making the festival a reality,” Wolmarans continued. “But the best part is that the Knysna Timber Festival will be a lot of fun, too! I urge everyone to make their way to the Premier Hotel on George Rex Drive between 8 and 10 October. You’re sure to learn something new, discover fantastic products and perhaps even be inspired to try your hand at timber related DIY or craft projects. But mostly you’ll have fun, and hopefully you’ll be reminded that Knysna would be a very different place if it weren’t for our forests.”

“In fact,” she concluded, “Knysna might not even have been here at all if it weren’t for our historical, local timber industry.”

Those no longer with us but never forgotten:

- Ashwell Davidson
- Felicity Fiegeland
- Andre Fiegeland
- Cheswin Freiburg
- Marco Kiewietz
- Jorina Kiewietz
- Antonio Mello
- Lugan Mello
- Lisa Mello
- Maroshaan Meyer
- Mauritshia Fiegeland
- Michael Sass
- Raylene Wessels
- Octavia Williams
- and the driver, Colin Payle.
We often speak about the natural beauty of our area and the Garden Route, but I believe that Sedgefield and its surrounding area is the most beautiful of all. I believe that there is something unique to Ward 2, central Sedgefield and Karatara, that sets it apart from the rest – a sense of community. Sedgefield and Karatara are very different places, but a genuine communal spirit is evident within each of these vibrant communities.

And a lot is happening in both Karatara and Sedgefield. You may already have read about the brand new, fully equipped fire engine in Karatara, along with the newly refurbished fire station. Response time to fires in Karatara will be significantly reduced, keeping our residents, their properties and our area safe.

Driving through Sedgefield on the N2 one may have noticed some building activity at the Sedgefield fire station. We are constructing a new awning to house the fire engine and the first response vehicle.

While our area is steeped in natural beauty, we are taking steps to beautify our town. Masithandane is creating new guinea fowl mosaics and, together with the Sedgefield branch of Knysna & Partners, we are initiating a flower pot project. These mosaicked pots will be placed around town. Individuals and businesses are invited to sponsor these pots, and to either sponsor their upkeep, or to take on the responsibility of keeping the pots filled with pretty plants themselves. Please visit Belinda at the Sedgefield branch of Knysna & Partners for more information on how to get involved.

We also know how to have fun in Ward 2 and hosted fantastic celebrations in honour of Mandela Day and Women’s Day in both Sedgefield and Karatara.

I know that the state of our roads is a sore point for many residents and this is also a favourite talking point. I am not only the Ward Councillor for this area, but also serve on the Mayoral Committee as the Chairperson for the Planning, Infrastructure and Development Committee. As such I am pleased to confirm that most of the potholes have been seen to and, after the Council workshop on this subject, I shall be able to confirm which roads will be seen to next.

We live in exciting times, and I am proud of the manner in which this municipality is working with its residents and the private sector to create a town where people and nature can prosper – especially in Ward 2.

Karatara boasts new fire station

The fire station at Karatara has been upgraded in order to house its newly refurbished and fully equipped fire engine. Construction on the fire station began at the end of May this year and was completed on 24 June this year, at a cost of R27 176.00. The fire station was officially opened on August 6th.

Ward 2 Councillor Louisa Hart explained that the project had been funded through her ward discretionary funds. “Karatara is a very important section of Ward 2, which also includes central Sedgefield. And it was high time that the previous firefighting system was upgraded.”

The station housed a water trailer prior to the upgrade. This trailer would be towed to the scene of a fire by a tractor. “As the tractor was housed elsewhere, this caused a few delays in transporting the water trailer to where it was needed,” said Hart. “This tractor was also not for our fire department’s exclusive use, which would cause serious problems were it not to be available when necessary.”

“Aside from the water trailer, Karatara also had strategically placed fire boxes with firefighting equipment,” she continued. “But our Chief Fire Officer, Clinton Manuel, brought it to my attention that at least one of these had been vandalised and that these boxes presented potential liability issues should a member of the public be injured while using this equipment.”

“Mr Manuel further explained his concerns regarding the delays in getting the water trailer to where it may be needed. We decided to replace the fire boxes and the trailer with a fully equipped fire engine,” she said. “The fire engine would not have fit into the existing space, so we decided to upgrade the station to house this new addition.”

At the opening of the refurbished station Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans said that it completed the firefighting triangle, as opposed to the fire triangle. “The fire triangle teaches us that fuel, oxygen and a heat source will create a fire when combined with an exothermic reaction,” said Wolmarans. “My firefighting triangle consists of dedicated firefighters, appropriate equipment in good working order and an up to date fire station.”

“I already know that our fire department is staffed with dedicated personnel, but now the other two parts of this triangle are also present in Karatara. The newly refurbished fire engine and the upgraded station complete the firefighting triangle,” she concluded. “Keeping our residents and our municipal area safe from fires is only one way in which we are creating a town where people and nature prosper.”
Knysna Municipality joins forces with the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership

Knysna Municipality has committed to supporting the Southern Cape Business Partnership (SCBP). “We support the SCBP as a local structure driving and executing partnerships and collaborative work within the economic space,” explained Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans. “These actions are in line with the aims and objectives of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership.”

Provincial Cabinet established an Economic Development Partnership (EDP) for the region in August 2011, based in Cape Town. “Initial findings of the EDP showed that, given its resources, assets and people, the Western Cape region should be performing better,” said Wolmarans. “Although strong economic growth of 45% over ten years was recorded, there was only a 16% increase in employment.”

“Some of the reasons for this performance included that the region did not share an economic vision or a common agenda, the existence of a disjointed regional economic delivery system, an inability to translate plans into action and a relatively weak regional business brand,” she said. “The EDP addresses these matters as a partnership-based organisation that leads, coordinates and drives regional economic growth, development and inclusion.”

“It has however become clear that, through no fault of its own, the EDP cannot afford sufficient direct support to all areas in the region,” she continued. “It is a simple reality that locally based champions are better connected locally, and more driven to perform. As such, we have committed to supporting a recommendation that dedicated, external capacity be secured for this partnership effort in the Southern Cape, funded by the local municipalities within the Eden district, as well as the Eden District Municipality itself.”

“This collaboration between local government, regional government and the private sector could lead to welcome, significant growth of the regional economy, as well as our local economy,” Wolmarans concluded. “Economic development is a function of government that we take very seriously, and this commitment is proof of our efforts in creating a town where people and nature prosper.”

Knysna Municipality has launched a Community Market Day initiative. “The market days will serve as a platform for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME’s) to showcase and market their products directly to the community,” explained Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans.

“These pop-up sales events will aim to increase exposure and sales for our SMME’s and has the potential to lead to skills development relating to participants’ specific businesses,” she continued. “Any SMME within the greater Knysna municipal area is welcome to apply. Space is limited, so I urge all interested parties to apply as soon as possible.”

Five Community Market Days are scheduled to take place over the next 12 months, with the first happening at the Sanlam Mall in Nekkies on 3 October 2015. “The registration deadline for this first market is 18 September,” Wolmarans said. “Other markets will take place in Rheenendal in November, Jood-se-kamp in December, Hornlee in February and Smutsville in March.”

Wolmarans said that the market days will create temporary employment opportunities. “We will be appointing two individuals to act as market day coordinators from each of the communities where market days will take place. With our assistance, these individuals will be responsible for arrangements ensuring that their market day runs smoothly.”

Information about the markets has been advertised and interested parties should contact Ms Sibali at nsibali@knysna.gov.za or 044 302 6359 for more information.