From the Mayor’s Desk

What an exciting time this autumn has been in Knysna!
We painted the town pink during the Pink Loerie Mardi Gras and Arts Festival; we saw an amazing display of classic cars at the Knysna Motor Show; and then the fast and furious arrived for the Knysna Speed Festival and the Jaguar Simola Hill Climb. Sedgefield hosted the Expedition Africa Adventure Race and then we have the Knysna 200 cycle race coming up along with the highlight of our winter calendar: the Pick n Pay Knysna Oyster Festival.

Knysna is fortunate to host an array of events that add interest to what can be a very drab winter. Thank you to all the event organisers for an amazing job done — we know that these events bring a welcome boost to our local economy and to our local charities. I received a R180 000 donation on behalf of the Vermont Centre during the Pink Loerie Mardi Gras and Arts Festival — a memorable and immensely generous gesture. This one gesture has made a tangible difference in the lives of the 60 people who call the centre home. I think it will be an interesting exercise to add up all the charitable contributions of the events Knysna plays host to during the year, monetary or otherwise. It may change the way we look at the events.

As my office is inundated with requests from charitable organisations and individuals, it is impossible to help everyone. There are families within our municipal area with nothing to eat. Food provided by the e-Pap programme at some of our schools is often the only meal some children have. Drive past the Loerie Park entrance in George Rex Drive on any given day and one notices the huge number of people lining up, looking for work.

Margaret Mead, world famous anthropologist and women’s rights activist, said that one should never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. “Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” The individuals providing soup to the people sitting next to George Rex Drive are such people. So is the couple who made the generous contribution to Vermont, and the event managers, often volunteers, raising millions for local charities. Existing efforts to help are too many to mention and I commend each and every one of you.

However, we need to do more. Each and every one of us must ask ourselves — how can I make a difference? Do we not have to do big things? Not everyone has the resources to make large financial contributions. People often question their ability to make a difference, but remember that as one person you might not change the world, but you can change the world of one person. That’s all it takes: one gesture.

Let us extend and add to these generous gestures this winter — a hard time for so many as the cold weather sets in. Whether you support an existing initiative like my blanket drive, or start your own, you can make a difference.

Georlene Wolmarans
Executive Mayor

SUPPORT THE MAYOR’S CHARITABLE PROJECTS:

Contact Alexis Moos at 044 302 6479 amoos@knysna.gov.za for more information.
The 2016/2017 draft budget was tabled on 31 March where-after the municipality rolled out a series of public participation meetings in each ward.

Knysna Municipality has developed a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, as outlined in the Municipal Systems Act 2000. Unfortunately, the public has not shown a lot of enthusiasm for participating.

Wolmarans expressed her disappointment regarding the lack of participation from the community. “The turn-out at the community meetings held in April was very poor. We have encouraged our communities to partake in the affairs of local government, as it is their democratic right to do so. We have recently celebrated 22 years of freedom and it is sad to see that our community is not taking full advantage of the democratic privileges we all enjoy today.”

“We cannot stress the importance of public participation enough. It provides an appropriate platform for the community to express their concerns, give input and have robust discussions with their councillors and municipal officials. This is a far more effective manner of engagement and communication than barricading the N2.”

**Importance of public participation:**

- Active participation of local residents is essential to improve democracy and service accountability;
- It enhances social cohesion as communities recognise the value of working in partnership with each other and with statutory agencies;
- It enhances effectiveness as communities bring understanding, knowledge and experience essential to the regeneration process;
- It enables government policies and programmes to be relevant to local communities;
- It gives residents the opportunity to develop the skills and networks that are needed to address social exclusion and criminality; and
- It promotes sustainability as community members have ownership of communities and can develop confidence and skills to sustain community based programs.

**CELEBRATING YOUTH DAY:**

**CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE - CHAMPIONS FOR HOPE!**

South Africa celebrates Youth Day on 16 June. On this day we commemorate and celebrate the courage of our youth, and of ourselves as South Africans. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Soweto uprisings.

“Young people need and deserve our support,” said Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans. “I believe that the members of the newly established Knysna Youth Council will address challenges facing our youth. As we commemorate the youth of 1976, it gives me great joy to see young people still interested in the affairs of local government. And making efforts to improve the living conditions of our people. I am confident that they will fulfil their mandate.”

**The aims of the Youth Council are:**

- to give the youth of the Knysna municipal area a voice concerning civil matters;
- to promote leadership qualities - as well as a healthy interest in municipal, civil, administrative and community matters - within our youth; and
- to organise projects (in line with the aims of Council) to the benefit of the community and especially the youth, and to promote better relationships between different language groups while fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among the youth in the surrounding areas.

“Enjoy the public holiday,” Ms Wolmarans said. “But remember those courageous young people who sacrificed their freedom and their lives so that we may enjoy and appreciate ours. Use the opportunities that have been afforded to you today and be the champions of change and champions for hope!”

Footnote: The Youth Council representatives for the ten wards in Knysna were announced on 25 April during a session in the Municipal Council Chambers.
According to Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans, traveling to Knysna hasn’t always been as easy as it is today. “The routes to Knysna used to be long and challenging, even treacherous. I am always amazed when I hear the stories of Knysna’s past. The unveiling of this plaque stands as testimony to the trials and tribulations our town, visitors and travellers had to overcome to make Knysna what it is today - a place of pristine beauty and limitless opportunity.

“The Concrete Bridge is a perfect example of the human spirit conquering obstacles. The flood that destroyed it reminds us of the fleeting nature of our efforts in the face of frightening powers beyond our control,” she continued. “Abstractly speaking, this could be the bridging of the divide between rich and poor, the educated and uneducated, the employed and the jobless, the centre and the fringe.”

“Knysna is making concerted efforts to address these gaps by building many types of new bridges. KnysnaON, the fibre-optic broadband internet connection, is one of the most important. This cyber bridge on the information highway promises to bring many opportunities and possibilities to our town, like job creation, access to information, opportunities for further education and business stimulation. KnysnaON, like the bridging of rivers during centuries past, will bring trade and commerce to our town.”

It is also with keen interest that the municipality keeps abreast of the efforts by members of our community to get the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe chugging again. This includes petitioning for the repair of damage done to the railway bridges in floods almost a decade ago.

“If I believe that the people of Knysna possess the drive and the vision to continue building these connections to and from our town, ensuring our connected, thriving future,” said Wolmarans. “I thank the Knysna Historic Society for their efforts in preserving our heritage by connecting us to the past, as well as for their valued contribution in telling us about where we come from.”

The concrete abutment, one of a pair, is all that remains of the so-called Concrete Bridge. It replaced the 1893 Wooden Bridge, situated on the same site on the Knysna River, which had become unsafe. The deck, of steel plate girders encased in concrete with a concrete deck, comprised eight 40 ft. spans on concrete piers and abutments, all founded on concrete piles. It was opened in October 1915 and cost £8150. The record-breaking floods of May 1916 resulted in the blockage of the bridge openings with huge trees and debris. Six of the seven spans collapsed into the river, destroying the bridge. As the earlier Wooden Bridge had been dismantled this catastrophe severed Knysna’s approach from the west. Communication was re-established by river pontoon until the bridge was eventually replaced by the Westford (Red) Bridge in 1923.

Knysna Municipality and the Knysna Historical Society celebrated the centenary of the Concrete Bridge on Wednesday 4 May.

Knysna Municipality has taken several steps towards road repairs in the Central Business District (CBD) and the Industrial area during the 2015/16 financial year. Over R8 million has been spent on resurfacing, patching and pothole repairs.

The breakdown of road works done in the Industrial Area and the CBD is as follows:

- R6 million was spent on resurfacing in Fechter, Noble, Hadeda, Jonker, Boswerker, Meeu and Queen Streets, Remembrance and Waterfront Drives and the George Rex Intersection.
- R2.4 million was spent on road patching at Rawson, Long and Boswerker Streets and the N2 Main Road at the Provincial Hospital.
- So far R 240 000 has been spent on pothole repairs in the CBD and work is in progress in other areas in the greater Knysna municipal area.
Despite recent rains in the Garden Route, Knysna Municipality is still asking all residents to make an effort to use water wisely, implement conservation measures and adhere to municipal water restrictions.

Apart from the Water Awareness Campaign, which is aimed at informing, educating and motivating, the municipality has approved a budget for a Leak Repair Programme in the outer suburbs. Water leaks can be reported to 044 302 6331.

During June to November the water restrictions in place require residents to only water their gardens at dusk between 17:00 and 18:00 on designated days: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays for houses with even numbers, and Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays for houses with odd numbers.

The Solid Waste Department attends to numerous sites where community members dump waste illegally. Dumping often occurs on vacant land and public open spaces. Illegal dumping adversely affects the entire community. It can cause harm to people and nature, as well as contamination of our already threatened water supply. All of this influences increases in service costs, by driving up the expenses the municipality incurs to collect and dispose of the debris.

Community Services Chairperson Irene Grootboom urged communities to cooperate and to report incidents of illegal dumping. “This is a recurring problem. Our law enforcement officers do fine guilty parties, but this is possible only with the assistance of the community through tip-offs. Residents can assist further by taking their household black bags to the transfer station on days of non-collection.”

What is illegal dumping?
Illegal dumping and littering is the unlawful disposal of rubbish onto public land other than approved waste management facilities. It is illegal to dispose of litter in streets, parks, footpaths, car parks, etc.

How does it impact the community?
- Illegal dumping harms the environment;
- It attracts additional dumping and other illegal behaviour;
- It can be a health and safety hazard; and
- It is costly to Council and the community.

How can I report illegal dumping?
If you see any dumped refuse, please contact 044 302 6405 with the location/address and any other information that will assist in identifying the person who dumped the waste.

#SAVewater:
WATER RESTRICTIONS ARE STILL IN PLACE

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DATES TO REMEMBER - MUNICIPAL MEETINGS 2016

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DATES TO REMEMBER - COMMEMORATIVE DAYS & EVENTS

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