OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MONTH.
It has been reported that Breast Cancer is one of the top 5 common cancers among South African women – and its incidence is rising. Like with many other cancers, early detection is absolutely crucial in ensuring effective treatment and a positive outcome. Thankfully, approximately 90 per cent of all breast cancer patients survive if they are diagnosed early and treated appropriately for many years. Therefore, I would like to encourage all Greater Knysna residents, male and female, to take the time to be checked.

Thinking of those affected by this disease often brings Eleanor Roosevelt’s words to mind: “you gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.” These words ring so true – not only to cancer survivors, but all those who were affected by the horrendous June 2017 fires that swept across Greater Knysna. All of us looked fear in the face and, over the past five odd months, have gained strength, courage and confidence. We have learnt to ask for help, and to accept it no matter where it comes from. We have learnt to listen to one another and to offer compassion to others. We have learnt to count our blessings and to show gratitude.

There is still a great deal of obstacles that we must overcome while rebuilding Greater Knysna, but fortunately several steps have already been taken to assist those who have lost their homes.

On 24 August, during a Special Council meeting, Council approved the waiving of property rates for the month of September for properties completely destroyed by the fires. This contribution is valued at R16.5 million. In addition, the Municipality has spent over R75 million to date for the provision of electricity and water services, provided waivers for the demolition of damaged properties and planning applications, as well as supporting numerous relief efforts.

Western Cape Premier, Helen Zille’s initiative, Garden Route Rebuild, continues to re- energise and to rebuild the district. Chair by Dr Hildegard Pest, this initiative aims to develop a long-term renewal strategy and shared vision for rebuilding not only Greater Knysna’s economy, but that of the whole Garden Route. It further coordinates all resources and efforts to achieve maximum impact, whilst monitoring progress made by the seven work streams (Humanitarian Support, Reconstruction & Development, Local Business Support, Infrastructure Rehabilitation Funding and Resourcing and Skills Development), their Work Groups and the projects they roll out. Please visit their website www.gardenrouterebuild.co.za to keep abreast of all the great work they do.

As part of their Social Development Awareness programmes, our Social Development Department paid special attention to Older Person Week which kicked off on 26 September. Our older residents were treated to motivational lectures, live music, braais, and scrumptious lunch in celebration of their full lives.

Just before I say goodbye, let me remind you that the celebration of Guy Fawkes by setting off fireworks and/or burning tyres and building bonfires is illegal. Just don’t do it. Stay safe.

BLUE FLAGS FOR GREATER KNYSNA
Knysna Municipal Manager, Kam Chetty is delighted that Greater Knysna has once again secured several Blue Flags.

Buffalo Bay and Brenton-on-Sea beaches both received Blue Flag Status for the 2017/2018 season. The prestigious national Blue Flag was awarded on Wednesday, 18 October.

“Now that our town is in a rebuild phase, Knysna Municipality recognises the value of our Blue Flags as not only important for environmental management and education, but also for tourism, economic development and job creation. We are still in the early phases of rebuilding Greater Knysna, and this award demonstrates our commitment to the rebuild programme, ensuring that Knysna will go through all the ashes, better and stronger than before,” said Chetty.

BOOK DRIVE PROJECT LAUNCHED
In collaboration with Friends of the Libraries, and the Newlands Rotarians, Knysna Municipal Library Services have established a Book Drive Outreach Project aimed at providing books to schools in Greater Knysna.

Thank you to Australia’s Books for the World, the donors of this Book Drive Project.

Mayoral Committee member and Community Services Chairperson, Cllr Weideman said, “This Book Drive Project could not have come at a better time, particularly as the town is slowly piecing up the pieces after the 7 June devastating fires. I thank you to Friends of the Libraries, Newlands Rotarians and Books of the World for your generosity.”

This Book Drive Project team received a substantial number of books that will be sorted and distributed by the Town Library Staff to Greater Knysna schools in need of reading material.

US CONSULATE GENERAL IN SEARCH OF YOUNG LEADERS
The US Consulate team visited Knysna on Tuesday, 26 September; with the aim of providing information on their recruitment for the Young African Leader Initiative, also known as YALI /Mandela Washington Fellowship 2018.

Greater Knysna youngsters listened attentively during the information session in the Council Chambers. The criteria for this initiative are as follows: Potential recruits
• between 25 and 35 years-of-age
• a university degree or equivalent experience in the chosen field of work
• minimum of 2 years of relevant experience
Selected finalists will get to experience the following opportunities:
• Spending six weeks in the U.S. in July/August 2018
• Exploring issues of leadership
• Networking with various peers from sub-Saharan Africa

Grant funding for Knysna special projects
The team will go through all the applications and an interview and selection process will take place January 2018.