



ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2025 - 2026



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LOVE UMNGENI

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear Friends and Partners

As we reflect on the 2025/26 financial year, it is a privilege to share with you the continued story of Love uMngeni. What has been achieved this year is a testament to the power of collaboration and the belief that lasting community transformation is only possible when businesses, government, churches, volunteers, donors and local residents work together around a common purpose.

Last year, the Board committed to strengthening the organisational foundations of Love uMngeni through improved governance, operational capacity and financial sustainability. This year our focus has been on expanding the reach of Love uMngeni (hence the name change), and continuing to invest in our own income generating initiatives. It is our belief that, in order for organisations like ours to remain sustainable, income generating activities should

occupy a healthy percentage of total income alongside donations and fund-raising initiatives. We believe that this is the correct path to long-term sustainability, and that it helps position the organisation to increase both its reach and long-term impact. But crucially, it means that a higher percentage of raised funds can be used for direct community impact, which is the ultimate goal.

As you read this report, you will see encouraging evidence of lives being transformed through education, skills development, environmental restoration, economic empowerment and compassionate social support. Whilst these achievements can be measured through numbers, our greatest success is often found in restored dignity, renewed hope and opportunities created for individuals and families across our community.



Board Chairman, Justin Green

On behalf of the Board, I extend my sincere gratitude to our exceptional staff, dedicated volunteers, generous donors, corporate partners, government stakeholders and community organisations. Your commitment and generosity make this work possible.

Together, we are building more than projects - we are building a connected, resilient and thriving uMngeni. Thank you for believing in our vision and for continuing to journey with us.

Justin Green



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

THE PATHWAY TO PURPOSE

What does it take for a person, a community, and a place to truly flourish?

In 2026, Love uMngeni has learned that transformation rarely happens in a single moment. It happens through a pathway. A person finds a place to belong. Belonging becomes participation. Participation builds confidence. Confidence unlocks skills. Skills create opportunity. Opportunity leads to income. And, ultimately, people who once needed support begin to lead, contribute, and create change for others.

This is our PATHWAY TO PURPOSE.

It is the thread that has connected everything we have done this year. We have seen unemployed young people gain skills, confidence, and work experience. We have seen grassroots entrepreneurs move from ideas to income. We have seen neglected spaces restored, waste turned into opportunity, gardens established, and communities begin to take ownership of their surroundings. However, our greatest success is not found in any single program or statistic. It is found in the movement between them.

We have become increasingly intentional about ensuring that every interaction can become a doorway to something more. Relief can lead to relationship. Volunteering can lead to belonging. A clean-up can awaken community ownership.

Training can lead to work. Work can lead to enterprise. Enterprise can lead to independence.

In many of the communities we partner with, we have seen residents move from asking, "Who will fix this?" to asking, "What can we do together?"

That shift is profound. Through our skills and employment programs, people have gained more than certificates. They have discovered confidence, workplace experience, and a belief that they have something valuable to contribute. Through Green Learn to Earn, 149 participants have entered a pathway connecting environmental work, learning and entrepreneurship. This journey has helped produce 105 grassroots entrepreneurs, with 24 businesses progressing to active or more mature stages.

Behind every number is a change in identity.

From "I need a job" to "I can create value." From "Someone must fix this" to "I can be part of the solution."

None of this happened because of Love uMngeni alone. It happened because businesses invested. Volunteers showed up. Communities took ownership. Schools and churches opened doors. Donors believed. Partners shared expertise. Government collaborated. Ordinary people decided that the future of this place was worth participating in.



Founder & CEO, Matt Hogarty

That is collective impact. Our role is not to be the hero of the story. Our role is to build the pathway – connecting people to opportunity, communities to their own agency, and those who want to help with places where their contribution can matter. As we look ahead, our ambition is not simply to do more. It is to make the pathway stronger because 2026 has shown us something powerful:

- When people are given a pathway, they move.
- When they discover their agency, they take ownership.
- And when enough people move with purpose, a community begins to change.

The path is open. The purpose is shared. We are only getting started.





OUR PATHWAY TO PURPOSE

Communities do not change because one organisation has all the answers. They change when people, businesses, schools, churches, government, and community leaders begin walking in the same direction. That is why Love uMngeni exists.

Our purpose is to champion community transformation through strategic partnerships, creating the conditions for people and places to flourish. We believe every person carries potential, every community has hidden assets, and every challenge presents an opportunity for collaboration.

Our dream is simple: to see a connected, healthy, and prosperous community. Our role is to build the platform that brings partners together, unlocking the relationships, resources, and opportunities needed to make that dream a reality.

At the heart of everything we do are the values of integrity, excellence, diversity, positivity, and humility. They shape how we lead, how we serve, and how we partner.

We have learned that poverty is about far more than a lack of money. It is often a lack of access, opportunity, connection, and belief that a different future is possible. But when clear pathways are created—supported by people who care and organisations willing to collaborate—lives begin to change. Survival gives way to confidence. Confidence becomes opportunity. Opportunity grows into purpose.

This is our Pathway to Purpose, a coordinated journey that brings together five interconnected areas of transformation:

- **Social Development** – Restoring dignity, strengthening relationships, and empowering individuals and families to move from dependence to agency.
- **Place Development** – Revitalising public spaces, creating environments people are proud to belong to, and building communities that care for where they live.
- **Skills Development** – Equipping people with practical skills, character, confidence, and leadership to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
- **Economic Development** – Connecting learning to earning through entrepreneurship, employment pathways, and sustainable livelihoods.
- **Narrative Development** – Changing the stories communities tell about themselves, celebrating possibility, and inspiring collective action toward a better future.

No single organisation can transform a community alone. Sustainable change happens when we connect strengths, share responsibility, and work towards a common vision. This is the movement we are building, and thank you for being a part of it.

When pathways become clear, partnerships become powerful, poverty begins to lose its grip, and purpose rises—one person, one family, and one community at a time.

PATHWAY TO PURPOSE



01

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Preventative education to reduce social ills, poverty measurement, street stores for poor, counselling support and disaster relief

02

PLACE DEVELOPMENT

Creating beautiful spaces, recycling waste, rehabilitating public parks, maintaining infrastructure, urban renewal projects, and promoting environmental sustainability

03

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Education support services, school outreach, teacher training, work readiness programs, professional skills training, leadership development and recruitment

04

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurship development, economic growth support in agriculture/tourism, training to improve labour productivity, networking events

05

NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Positive media campaigns, storytelling platform, personal and societal narrative workshops dialogues, and events that promote community

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FROM SURVIVAL TO **AGENCY**



STREET STORE

Basic necessities (food, clothing, toiletries) are bought with tokens earned by collected recycling. Dignified aid work that takes care of basic needs for households stuck in poverty.



COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Understanding a problem, before we tackle it is essential! Our team survey households on the ground to hear first-hand what communities are facing. This informs how we tackle poverty alleviation efforts.



INNOVATE HUBS

Co-creating solutions based on strengths (and not defects) is a game-changer. All stakeholders work together to create solutions WITH communities. These solutions are implemented by communities with our support, partner



PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

Social-ills are tackled at their source through targeted prevention campaigns focused on health and wellbeing.



STREET STORE

The Love uMngeni Street Store transforms recyclable waste into opportunity for households living below the poverty line. Community members exchange recycling for tokens to purchase clothing, food, toiletries, and household essentials, all donated by local businesses and residents. More than meeting immediate needs, the Street Store builds dignity, encourages environmental responsibility, and creates meaningful community connections. It also serves as an entry point into Love uMngeni's Pathway to Purpose, connecting participants to skills development, employment, enterprise opportunities, and ongoing support that leads from relief to lasting transformation.

362

Households we supported
monthly with basic essentials
through our Street Store





50+

Beneficiaries enrolled in training
in Agriculture, Work Ready, Micro
Business, and She's the Boss

1,468

Clothing items distributed

2,428

Recyclable bags collected

1,047

Food parcels distributed



WATCH HOW ONE MOTHER ESCAPED POVERTY YouTube

Meet Thobile, a Street Store beneficiary from Shiaz. Using tokens earned through the program, she completed our Work Ready course, then moved on to the Crop Production course to further build her skills. Thobile's journey from beneficiary to skilled individual is exactly the kind of empowered transformation we love to see!





XOLISILE MLOTSHWA

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

She first came to Love uMngeni through the Street Store, a place where recycling can be exchanged for tokens. Those tokens bought food to help feed her family. Xolisile then used her tokens to enrol in professional courses. Love uMngeni gave her stock to start selling clothes. Her business grew. And grew. And grew. Today? Xolisile has built a big house for her family with the money from her business.



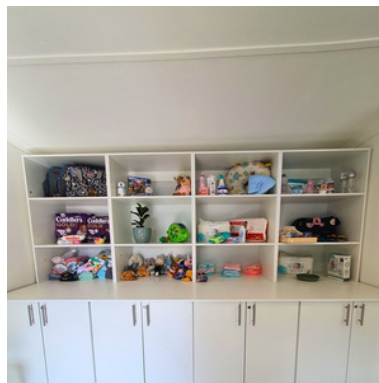
WINTER WARMER | WARMTH, HOPE, AND UNITY

The Emandleni Hall in Cedara was filled with warmth, hope, and unity as our Winter Warmer Drive culminated in a truly special distribution day. Under the inspiring leadership of Ward Councillor Kate, our community came together in high spirits, alongside dedicated partners including Department of Health, Department of Social Development (Child & Safety), Department of Environmental Services, SAPS, and the Department of Social Work. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, we saw smiling faces receiving warm blankets, beanies, and scarves to face the cold.



LIONS RIVER NUTRITION SUPPORT

In March 2025, Love uMngeni donated food supplies to Lions River Primary School when supplier complications threatened their nutrition program. We ensured learners continued to receive meals while the issue was resolved. Thank you to the donors who stepped up, because no child should learn on an empty stomach.



BABY TOWN | A NEW BEGINNING

In August 2025, we launched Baby Town, a new space where moms can give to moms by donating good-quality baby items. The grand opening was a joyous celebration, well attended by local government, Moms of the Midlands, Capitec, FNB, Seeff, Village Talk, local churches, and many other valued partners. The most beautiful moments came from hearing the stories of beneficiaries, whose lives are being transformed through both practical support and developmental opportunities

COMMUNITY FEEDING WITH BIG FIVE FOODS

In November 2025, we partnered with Big Five Foods to serve One-Pot Meals to 500 community members. Families gathered, shared meals, and even began small-scale income-generating businesses by purchasing and reselling meals at R3.00 per portion.



CELEBRATING HOPE

In December 2025, we hosted a Christmas Pop-Up Market for Street Store beneficiaries. Families received "Baskets of Hope," uncooked food items for festive meals. Children received toys and treats. Santa Claus arrived to hand out gifts and sing Christmas songs.





COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Real transformation begins when people are heard. The Greenlight Community Survey helps communities identify their own needs, challenges, and opportunities. It gives people a voice and shines a light on what can be strengthened. This is not just about collecting data. It is the first step in a journey that invites residents, businesses, and stakeholders to take ownership of their shared future. When communities identify their needs together, they move from passive endurance to active participation. Sustainable transformation doesn't happen to a community. It happens with a community.



104

Greenlight Surveys
conducted in Lions River,
Zuzukhule, and Shiyaz.



THE GREENLIGHT SURVEY | LISTENING FIRST

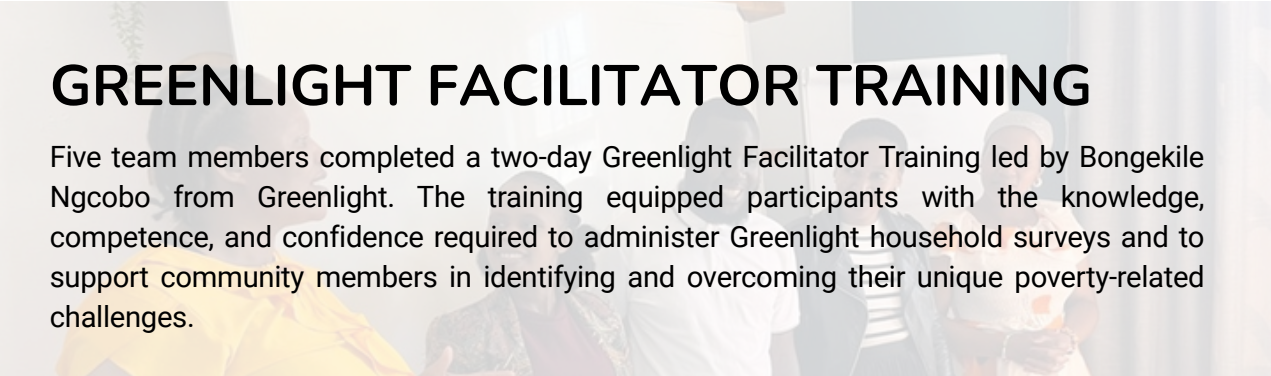
Real transformation begins when communities are heard. The Greenlight Survey is a practical tool that helps communities identify their own needs, challenges, and opportunities. In June 2025, we partnered with SPAR South Africa on their Emergent Day, bringing 30 delegates into Shiyaz to conduct Greenlight surveys, community dialogue, and a budgeting challenge that gave them a glimpse into the daily realities of families living on a limited income. The day ended with Dream Centre students interviewing SPAR managers, and being interviewed in return.





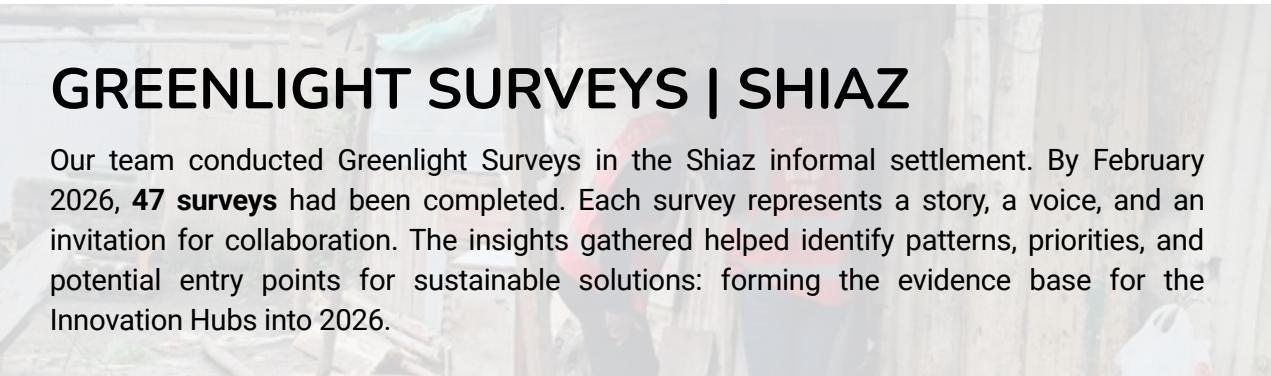
INNOVATE HUBS

Innovation Hubs bring together residents, leaders, businesses, and government to move from identifying problems to designing solutions, together. Following Greenlight Surveys and asset mapping, each Hub creates space for communities to review findings, map their strengths, identify priorities, and co-create practical action plans. Action teams are then elected to drive implementation from within. This approach is rooted in the belief that sustainable transformation does not happen to a community. It happens with a community.



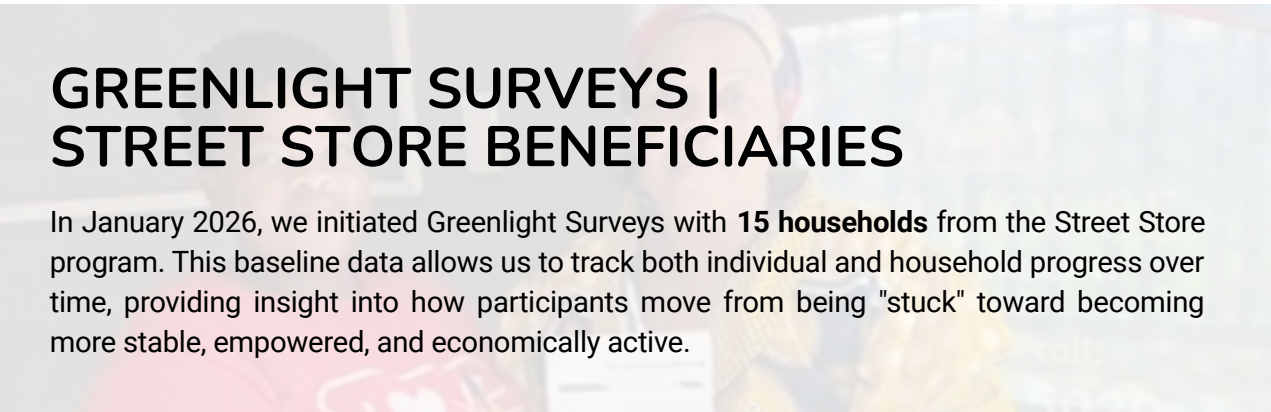
GREENLIGHT FACILITATOR TRAINING

Five team members completed a two-day Greenlight Facilitator Training led by Bongekile Ngcobo from Greenlight. The training equipped participants with the knowledge, competence, and confidence required to administer Greenlight household surveys and to support community members in identifying and overcoming their unique poverty-related challenges.



GREENLIGHT SURVEYS | SHIAZ

Our team conducted Greenlight Surveys in the Shiaz informal settlement. By February 2026, **47 surveys** had been completed. Each survey represents a story, a voice, and an invitation for collaboration. The insights gathered helped identify patterns, priorities, and potential entry points for sustainable solutions: forming the evidence base for the Innovation Hubs into 2026.



GREENLIGHT SURVEYS | STREET STORE BENEFICIARIES

In January 2026, we initiated Greenlight Surveys with **15 households** from the Street Store program. This baseline data allows us to track both individual and household progress over time, providing insight into how participants move from being "stuck" toward becoming more stable, empowered, and economically active.



ASSET MAPPING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our Social Development team continued building relationships with community members, local leaders, and stakeholders: identifying key influencers and laying the foundation for future Innovation Hubs. This included door-to-door engagement, community conversations, and the identification of community assets and strengths.



PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

We believe that lasting change requires more than responding to crises, it requires preventing them. Through targeted campaigns, workshops, and community engagement, we work to address the root causes of social challenges before they take hold.

WOMEN'S MONTH

In August 2025, we hosted four weekly sessions for women:

Nourish to Flourish (nutrition), Rooted and Resilient (food gardening), Sacred and Safe (sexual health and safety), and Emotional Wellness.



96

Women participated in a 4-week women's health program



PARENT WORKSHOPS

equipping parents with tools to build stronger connections with their children, encourage reading, and foster healthy emotional intelligence and discipline



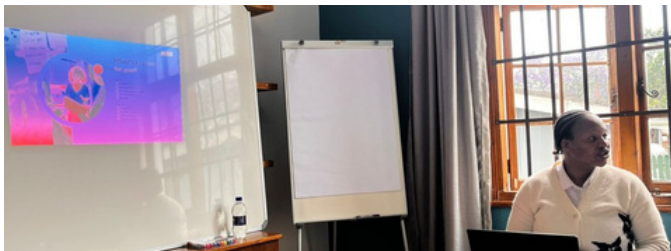
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Teaching school learners about waste management, recycling, and environmental stewardship.



GREENLIGHT FACILITATOR TRAINING

Equipping community members to lead surveys and conversations that empower their own communities



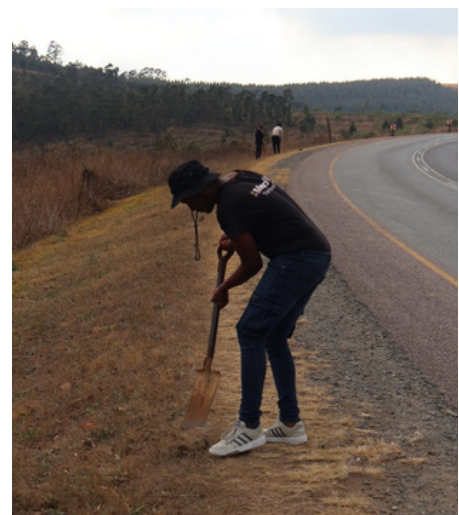
HILTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY SERVICE DAYS

In June 2025 and February 2026, Hilton College students joined Love uMngeni for community service days in Howick. They weeded, planted gardens, and restored public spaces including Howick Falls, the Library, the Police Station, and Morling Street Park. Through their Community Partnerships program, Hilton College is shaping a generation of leaders who respond to community challenges with empathy and action. We are proud to partner with them in building a robust volunteer culture in the Midlands. **To volunteer with us: info@loveumngeni.org.za**



MANDELA DAY | 4 ZONES OF IMPACT

Volunteers and partners joined us in hands-on community service: cleaning streets, packing and distributing 150 hygiene packs for the Zuzokuhle community, and learning sustainable farming. Community Clean-Ups: Teams cleared weeds, invasive plants, and waste across Howick: in Morling Street, Karkloof Road, and Greendale Park. Agricultural Training: Andermatt facilitated a workshop on soil health at Masithokoze Garden, equipping local residents with skills for long-term food security.







DISASTER RELIEF

Love uMngeni serves as a critical lifeline for the community in times of crisis. Specialising in disaster relief, we mobilise quickly to provide essential aid, support, and resources to neighbours affected by emergencies, from devastating storms and floods to unforeseen local tragedies.

LIDGETTON FLOOD RESPONSE

In March 2025, floods devastated parts of Lidgetton, leaving many families without food, warm clothing, or bedding. Love uMngeni, in partnership with the uMngeni Municipality Disaster Management Division, responded swiftly.

A joint distribution day saw **over 200 people** receive food supplies, blankets, and mattresses. A special highlight was the extraordinary generosity of **DJs Spar**. When our team arrived to purchase food items, staff went above and beyond: packing smaller parcels, making calls to mobilise resources, and then donating **all 200 food parcels** for the community. Spice Box in Howick stepped up as well, donating fresh produce including onions and potatoes.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated blankets, clothing, and food items. Your contributions made this response possible.



PLACE DEVELOPMENT

REVIVING PUBLIC SPACES



BEAUTIFICATION

Beautiful environments matter. Our teams work daily to ensure parks, gardens, sidewalks, CDB and tourist destinations look amazing



RECYCLING

Waste bikes, waste centers and waste education projects ensure we reduce waste to landfill and build a thriving recycling ecosystem



URBAN REHAB

CBDs are the drivers of economic activity. We work to repair broken infrastructure, rehabilitate green spaces and clean up across all key nodes



WASTE INNOVATION

Turning waste into products or reducing waste through repairs is a key focus. Appliance repairs, Paving from glass, composting etc.



PLACE DEVELOPMENT

Our Place Development initiatives are transforming our town through collaborative, sustainable projects that enhance infrastructure, environmental management, and community spaces. The **Renoverge Project** revitalises uMngeni's Central Business District, entrances, and Main Road by cleaning verges and repairing infrastructure. Our **Environmental & Waste Management Program** reduces waste through recycling, composting, and education. **Infrastructure Maintenance** ensures safe, functional roads, pavements, and public facilities, working alongside uMngeni Municipality to address potholes, signage, and anti-dumping measures. The **Public Parks Project** creates green spaces that boost health, social cohesion, and biodiversity, while deterring crime and uplifting local economies. Together, these efforts reflect our vision for a cleaner, greener, and more vibrant uMngeni, where community partnership drives lasting change.

74,648m²

Areas Brush-Cut



21,765m²

Alien Invasive Removal



Regular garden maintenance at Morling Street Park, Karkloof, Howick CBD, Howick Falls, and the Police Station

MYSPACE

The MySpace Campaign encourages local businesses to adopt and maintain public spaces. By January 2026, 18 businesses had joined, with many participating in monthly clean-ups and recycling collections. The campaign is building a culture of shared responsibility and pride.

29

Businesses have
joined the MySpace
Campaign



PUBLIC PARKS

Love uMngeni has transformed neglected illegal dumping sites within the CBD into vibrant public spaces that restore pride and encourage community ownership.

Once characterised by waste and neglect, these areas now feature landscaped gardens, children's jungle gyms, professionally painted street art murals, benches, and clearly demarcated parking areas. These revitalised spaces have improved the appearance, safety, and usability of the CBD while creating welcoming places for families and visitors. The project demonstrates how strategic partnerships and community collaboration can turn neglected spaces into lasting assets that strengthen both place and people.

Various businesses, schools, the SEF program, and local residents have contributed to this vision through monthly donations, plants, building, painting, and various service projects.



RECYCLING

New waste centre established at Shoprite Shopping Centre, Bell Street (January 2026)

150

Participants trained in waste management, environmental restoration, agriculture, and micro-enterprise

5,549kg

of recyclable waste collected and diverted from landfill



WASTE BIKES PROGRAM

In March 2025, Love uMngeni launched the Waste Bikes Program: an innovative initiative using pedal-powered bikes to collect recyclable materials across uMngeni. The program creates sustainable income for local community members (Enviro Champs) while reducing carbon emissions and improving recycling rates. Businesses can sponsor a waste bike for R870 per month, with their logo featured on the trailer. Section 18A Tax Certificates are available. Email: info@loveumngeni.org.za



INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE



Curbs painted at Dunlop intersection, Howick Falls, Karkloof, and Main Road



Road signs installed at Tweedie off-ramp (July 2025)



Pavements in Harvard, Bell, and Morling Streets repaired



Exterior of Howick Post Office repainted (August 2025)



In May 2025, Love uMngeni gave the Howick Bridge: the vital gateway to our town, a much-needed facelift. The work included painting and maintenance, restoring pride in one of our town's most visible landmarks.

6

Participants trained in appliance repair (December 2025), fixing kettles, toasters, air fryers, irons, microwaves, fans, hairdryers, and blenders

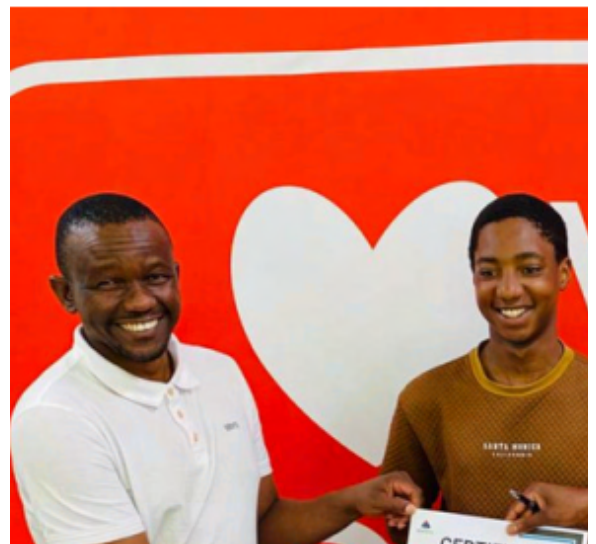
We offer affordable repair services for small household appliances at R150 per item:



Recycled glass turned into durable paving bricks (R60 per paver), supporting local job creation and a cleaner environment

166

Certificates issued in December 2025: including professional skills, brush cutter, chainsaw, landscaping, first aid, and small appliance repair



STORIES OF IMPACT

Bonisiwe Mlaba, a participant in the GL2E program, was dependent on a R350 social relief grant. Through the program, she joined the food resellers initiative and became the top seller, moving over 21 units of merchandise. She now fends for herself and is building a sustainable livelihood.



Andile Mpulo, an Enviro-Champ on the agriculture GL2E team, started selling snacks to his colleagues during lunch breaks. The income now covers his daily transport to work and learning days, a small but powerful step toward independence.

One Agriculture Group started selling cabbages grown in their backyards, splitting profits evenly. They have since added spinach to their offerings, selling to both their community and their peers, proof that small starts can grow into sustainable businesses.



Love uMngeni brought community spirit to life during a **Reno Day at uMngeni SPCA**. Twelve volunteers dedicated 28 hours to plastering six kennels, building two JoJo tank stands, planting three gardens, and cleaning the property, creating a safer, cleaner space for animals and staff.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

UNLOCKING **POTENTIAL**



WORK PREPARATION

Character building, life skills, work experience, professional training that opens the door to employment. Providing courses, job shadowing, counselling, and support



SCHOOLS SUPPORT

Building the right foundations from the beginning is key. We offer specialized programs in ECD, literacy & numeracy, social-emotional development and teacher training



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Through online LEAD.inc platform and workforce capacity building, our teams work with organisations to grow people and unlock potential



JOB CENTRE

Bridging the gap between employers and quality entry-level employees. Looking for a great candidate for your next position, we can help place one of our 4000+ graduates. Email: jobcentre@loveumnngeni.org.za

A photograph of two women in a computer lab. One woman, wearing glasses and a floral shirt, is standing and pointing at a computer monitor. The other woman, with long braids and a white shirt, is sitting at the desk looking at the screen. The monitor displays a document with text. In the background, there is a corkboard with some papers pinned to it.

DREAM CENTRE

Our Dream Centre empowers unemployed individuals through professional skills training, mentorship, and practical experience. Our courses, including Work Ready, Computer Literacy, Hospitality, Baking, Beauty, Agriculture, First Aid, Graphic Design, Barista, Sewing, Retail, and Micro Business, combine theory with hands-on learning. Supported by counselling, a job centre, and volunteer initiatives, we bridge the gap between education and employment.

2,820

Hours of real-world experience
gained through workplace
practicals

396

Community service hours
served by Work Ready Students

100

Sewing students completed 6
month accredited program

570

Students trained through our
Skills Development Centre



THANDOLWETHU BUTHELEZI

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Thandolwethu Buthelezi is a powerful example of resilience and determination, having lost both his parents at the ages of 9 and 11. Determined not to let that depth of pain shape his future, he set about to build a life of purpose and impact.

Things didn't turn out as planned, and at the age of 21 he arrived at Love uMngeni 'at his lowest'. After completing the Work Ready and Retail programmes at Love uMngeni, things began to change.

He secured employment through the Love uMngeni Job Centre at Mugg&Bean/Milky Lane in Howick and quickly rose through the ranks. He is now the manager of both stores. Over and above management, he is a social media consultant for four other stores.

He is an exemplary young leader shaping his community and future.





GIFT MAKATHINI

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

"Raised by a single mother after my father passed away when I was eight, life was initially challenging. Before joining Love uMngeni, my life was directionless: a mess with no goals or dreams. Joining the program changed everything. I went from 'zero to hero,' completing the Work Ready, Barista, Hospitality, and Baking Courses. Through hard work, Love Howick helped me secure a job at Amber Glades, where I have worked as an Assistant Chef, Waiter, and Barista for 1.5 years. I am now living my dream with a clear vision for my life. I thank Love uMngeni for helping me become a better man. To all young people in uMngeni: please visit Love uMngeni and enrol. If you work hard and follow their guidance, your life will never be the same, I promise you."



SBONGAKONKE ZAKWE

STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

"I come from a family of seven, and in August, I was grateful to receive the huge opportunity to become a team member at Spar Merrivale. This achievement followed my enrolment in a skills development course at the Love uMngeni Dream Centre in June 2025. The Centre equipped me with essential workplace skills and the knowledge to thrive in diverse professional environments. I am very grateful for the impact it has had on my life. Today, I am supporting my family and am able to take care of myself. Thank you to the Love uMngeni Team.

DREAM CENTRE ALUMNI DAY RECONNECTING GRADUATES



In June 2025, Love uMngeni hosted a highly successful **Alumni Day** at Howick West Hall: a gathering of past graduates to reconnect, learn, and celebrate their journeys. Guest speakers **Laura Dodd, Kate Watts, and Micki Whitefield** delivered engaging sessions on CV writing, AI in job hunting, and LinkedIn optimisation. Students loved the interview role-play, with lollipop rewards for standout performers. Most importantly, alumni shared heartfelt stories of how the Dream Centre's programs changed their lives.

DREAM CENTRE A NEW HOME FOR GROWTH



In January 2026, the Dream Centre moved to a fantastic new space at **6 Morling Street, Howick**, strategically positioned to be closer to public transport and the CBD. The new location improves accessibility for students, making it easier for unemployed and underemployed individuals to access skills training, mentorship, and job placement support.

23,7%

Work Ready graduates secured work through program



"You Let My Light Shine"

Dream Centre graduate, Thandolwethu, shared: *"I wanted to share this article 'Blanket of Hope' with you. Thank you for letting my light shine again. I came to Love HuMngeni with no hope, but **you** revived my life. Today I can **do good to others.**"*

Home / News / KZN / Youth unemployment decreases in uMngeni

KZN News

Youth unemployment decreases in uMngeni

Pappas said the municipality still has a lot to do, but is moving in the right direction.

June 05, 2025



Prashalan Govender

2 minutes read

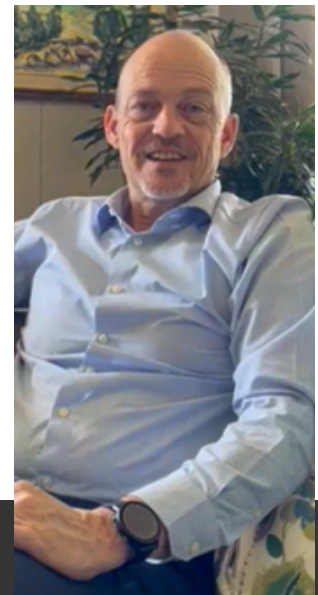
uMngeni Municipality recorded a 7% drop in youth unemployment (Municipality's 2025/26 budget)

LEVEL UP STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Level Up is our staff development program, designed to equip leaders and teams with practical skills in emotional intelligence, communication, personal leadership, and workplace culture. It is a tailored, hands-on training that builds stronger teams from the inside out.

In March 2025, we delivered training to **INR** and **Treverton**, focusing on leadership development and team culture. In July 2025, we worked with **Grace College**, deepening emotional awareness and strengthening staff relationships. In August and August 2025, we partnered with **Dunranch** (Spur, Talisman, Rockafellas, and John Dory's). This tailored program equipped their team with essential soft skills for leadership. The impact? Life-changing growth, both professionally and personally!

We can bring this training to your business too. Contact us: info@loveumngeni.org.za





EDU-PROJECT

Our Edu-Project empowers teachers and learners through targeted training in Foundational Literacy (Grades 1–3), Coding (Grade 6), Entrepreneurship (Grade 7), and Environmental Education (Eco Clubs, Grades 4–7). Using innovative curricula, resource support, and leadership development, we foster essential skills: from reading and problem-solving to sustainability and financial literacy. Through assessments, real-world application, and long-term tracking, we prepare young minds for a dynamic future.



322

Teachers trained, resourced and supported by EduProject

1,932

Learners impacted weekly by our Edu-Project in Literacy, Coding, Entrepreneurship, and Eco Clubs

60

Pairs of MyWalk school shoes donated to Little Ambassadors ECD Centre in Sphumelele

957

Learners trained in Foundation Literacy

257

Learners trained in entrepreneurship

60

Learners trained in Environmental Education

657

Learners introduced to Coding



NHLANHLENI SCHOOL MAKEOVER

In April 2025, Love uMngeni partnered with **Halfway Toyota Howick** and **Midmar Group** to give Nhlanhleni Primary School in Mpophomeni a much-needed facelift. Walls were painted, broken fixtures restored, and the school grounds transformed: creating a cleaner, safer, and more inspiring environment for learners and educators. This makeover was part of our ongoing commitment to improving the quality of education. Over the past year, we have provided specialised training for teachers in Literacy, Coding, Entrepreneurship, and Environmental Studies at four schools in Mpophomeni: achieving a **23% cumulative increase in literacy levels** across these schools.



STORIES OF IMPACT



"Literacy Festival brought out talents we didn't even know existed. Our Grade 1 learners worked together for guided reading and our Grade 3s blew us away with their drama performance. They walked away empowered."

– **Teacher, Literacy Festival**

"My son used to come home excited, talking about algorithms and loops. Now he helps fix my phone and wants to teach his younger sister. We never imagined he would have these skills at such a young age."

– **Parent of an Advanced Coding learner**



"Our Grade 7s applied the business skills they learned in EMS, engaged with real customers, and won the competition. They learned about budgeting, marketing, teamwork, and resilience."

– **Teacher, Market Day**

"During Arbor Week, 60 of our learners engaged in hands-on learning about trees and conservation. One learner even asked to start a garden club at school! It wasn't just a celebration; it was the start of a movement."

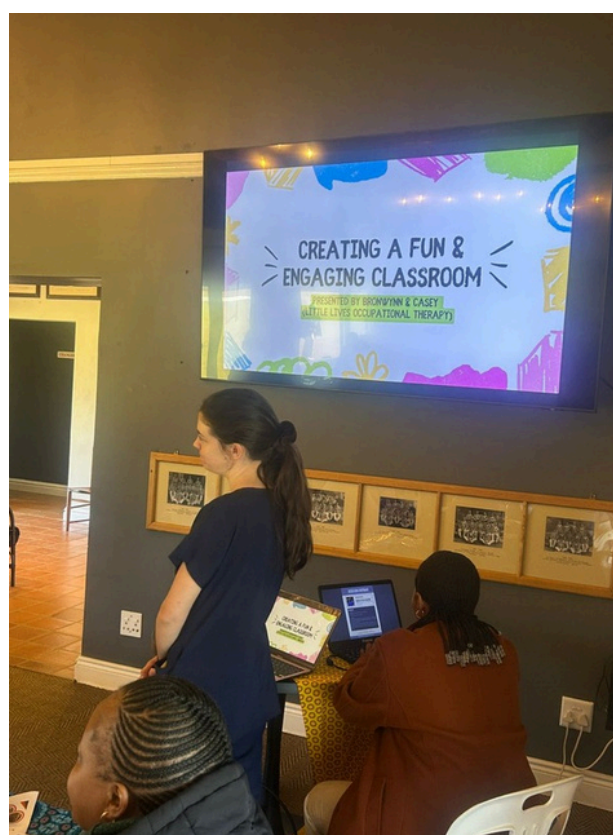
– **Teacher, Environmental Education**



EDU-SEMINARS

Love uMngeni's Edu-Seminars are designed to strengthen the capacity and wellbeing of educators, recognising that empowered teachers create thriving schools. Through practical, evidence-based workshops, educators gain tools to overcome learning barriers, improve learner engagement, develop social-emotional wellbeing, and build inclusive, resilient classrooms where every child can flourish.

The seminars also place a strong emphasis on educator wellness, acknowledging that healthy teachers are the foundation of healthy learning environments. One participant shared, "I feel more confident in supporting learners with diverse needs," while another reflected, "Thank you for reminding us to prioritise our own mental health as well." By investing in teachers, we are investing in stronger schools, stronger communities, and brighter futures.



GEAR UP PROGRAM

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Howick & Hilton. In March 2025, Love uMngeni launched the **Gear Up Program** with the Rotary Club of Howick and Hilton: addressing one of the biggest barriers to education in non-urban areas: **access**. Many students walk up to **10 kilometres daily** to school. The program donated **40 second-hand bicycles** to students from four schools in Mpophomeni, with recipients selected through motivation letters and sketches. "The sheer joy and shrieks of delight as bicycles were delivered to schools today shows just how much these acts of kindness are impacting our communities." – Matt Hogarty, CEO.

In April 2025, the program expanded: gifting **20 bicycles to Dream Centre graduates**, improving their mobility to get to work, start businesses, and reduce transport costs. "Community partnerships like this one with Rotary make a significant difference to the lives of people." – Matt Hogarty, CEO



ECD LEADERS FIELD TRIP

In October 2025, ECD leaders from our Business Accelerator Program visited three private pre-schools in Pietermaritzburg (**Clivia Pre Primary, Sunnylea Pre Primary, and Settlers Park Pre Primary**). The field trip provided fresh ideas, inspiration, and valuable mentorship from dedicated teachers and principals.

This exposure is vital for professional development and business sustainability in early childhood education. By connecting leaders with high-performing schools, we are upskilling individuals and spearheading regional improvement in education, building a brighter future for every child.



PLAY TO LEARN

In February 2026 we launched Play to Learn, a powerful new partnership with the Linc Foundation and Care for Education. This initiative is boosting literacy and social-emotional learning in our local schools. Led by our Occupational Therapist, Casey Beningfield, Phase One is launching at Isibongo Primary (Mpophomeni) and Neverneverland Primary (Emandleni Cedara), training 17 educators and reaching 540 students weekly. The program uses the brilliant Six Bricks tool; a playful, hands-on method using LEGO® DUPLO® bricks to build foundational skills.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GROWING STRONGER **LOCAL ECONOMIES**



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Startup training, market linkages, learnerships and targeted programs help to kickstart entrepreneurs. This year we launched Green-Learn2Earn, Resellers Bootcamp, She's The Boss



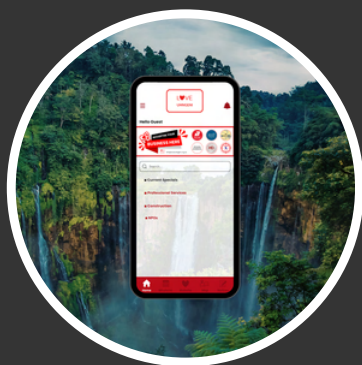
AGRICULTURE ACCELERATOR

Training in crop and animal production, agri-business skills, home growers support system and links to market - all help to develop entry-level farmers



PARTNERSHIPS

Economies thrive through strategic partnerships that act to stimulate growth in key sectors. As a 'platform for partnerships' we aim to work to foster these collaborations



COMMUNITY APP

Connecting our community on one digital platform is key to growth. The new Love uMngeni App will connect businesses, opportunities, events and all communication in one place



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our Economic Development drives sustainable growth through five key initiatives. The **Midlands Business and NGO Network** strengthens local supply chains and fosters collaboration between businesses and nonprofits. Through **Catalytic Tourism Projects**, we spotlight the Midlands' beauty with initiatives like the Midlands Magic series and Howick Falls Precinct revitalisation. Our **Entrepreneurship Development Program** equips aspiring business owners with mentorship and funding opportunities. Lastly, the **Agriculture Accelerator & Urban Vegetable Garden** empowers small-scale farmers and combats food insecurity. Together, these efforts create jobs, boost tourism, and build a resilient local economy.

CREATING 150 JOBS THROUGH THE GREEN LEARN TO EARN PROGRAM

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT. WORK EXPERIENCE. LEARNING PROGRAM. BUSINESS COACHING.



In November, we took a monumental leap forward for our community! We are thrilled to announce the launch of our **Green Learn to Earn** program, creating **150 learnerships** for unemployed uMngeni residents.

In partnership with DUCT and the National Social Employment Fund, this 10-month program is a direct investment in our five pillars. We're not just creating short-term jobs; we're empowering a new generation with skills in waste management, environmental restoration, sustainable agriculture, and micro-enterprise. This is about building a resilient, green economy from the ground up, right here in uMngeni.



RESELLERS PROGRAM

The **Resellers Program** trains aspiring entrepreneurs to buy, market, and resell goods: from clothing to food items. Participants learn product sourcing, pricing, customer service, and sales techniques, equipping them to start income-generating businesses with low capital. Graduates of the program have gone on to launch successful micro-enterprises, creating sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM | A FOUR-PHASE JOURNEY

In March 2025, 10 **entrepreneurs** completed an intensive overnight Business Bootcamp, generously hosted by **Halliwell Country Inn** in Curry's Post. The bootcamp was part of our four-phase Entrepreneurship Development Program:

- **Phase 1: Ideation** – generating and refining business ideas
- **Phase 2: Test** – developing prototypes and testing with target markets
- **Phase 3: Bootcamp** – immersive training in business planning, finance, marketing, and legal compliance
- **Phase 4: Masterclasses** – advanced training with subject experts, culminating in a pitch for seed funding

We are grateful to **KA Travels** for sponsoring transport, and to the speakers and mentors who invested their time in our emerging business leaders. If your company would like to sponsor this programme or provide seed funding for business start-ups, please contact matt@loveumnngeni.org.za.





BRINGING BIG IDEAS HOME TO UMNGENI

On 31 October, our team attended the inspiring TRIGA Entrepreneurs Conference at Laborie Estate in Stellenbosch, witnessing firsthand how faith-driven entrepreneurship is building ventures to solve Africa's challenges. It was a day of festive connection and learning, affirming our commitment to fostering redemptive business within our own community of uMngeni.

FORGING GLOBAL LINKS FOR LOCAL IMPACT

On 28 and 29 October, Love uMngeni joined the FORGE Global Summit in Cape Town, connecting with global ecosystem builders who use entrepreneurship to drive change. We shared our community-driven model and gained fresh inspiration, tools, and worldwide connections for our mission in uMngeni.



LOVE UMNGENI CEO JOINS NATIONAL GREEN JOBS 'THINK TANK'

In September, our CEO was honoured to be invited to a National Green Skills Jobs 'Think Tank' in Johannesburg, hosted by Accenture. This critical workshop focused on accelerating partnerships and job creation in the Green Economy. It's a promising step forward in tackling unemployment and climate change together.

OUR MODEL GOES NATIONAL!

Matt Hogarty presented the Love uMngeni story at the national Community Development Conference at the University of the Free State. His talk, "Love Cities: A Scalable Model for Sustainable Community Transformation," showcased how our hyper-local, love-driven work in uMngeni can inspire change across South Africa.





HOWICK FALLS GORGE WALK

One of our flagship projects was the rehabilitation of the Howick Falls Gorge Walk. We cleared alien invasive plants, reconstructed the pathway, and made the waterfall accessible to visitors from the closest possible range. This work directly contributes to tourism and economic growth.

66

Graduates referred through
Job Centre

105

New Businesses started

80

Small scale farming projects
launched & supported



168 SMALL TOWN OF THE YEAR DAILY MAVERICK 168 18 Dec 2023

Humble, hopeful Howick: the town powering its own revival

Civic action, small-scale but important improvements and neighbourly warmth are reshaping this tiny place into a more optimistic community. By Greg Arde

Howick is perfect for all the things it is not, promises being one of them. On Saturday, the main street has sold trading post robes, with farmers, second-hand dealers and coffee roasters doing business alongside chain stores.

The Midlands House, with its historic Howick Cottage line, craft beer and country exterior, offers a postcard version of the place, but the town itself is humbler and more grounded.

Howick is in the middle of the Mhondo. It is also the seat of the village Municipality, which oversees a vast, disparate area including Howick, wealthy nodes like Hilton and Nottingham Road, and poor, remote-outposts like Mphahlele.

Howick is 12km from King Shaka International Airport. Turn off the N4 when you see Mphahlele Dam. A few roads lead into the town, some with low-flashing views that others, giving a quick sense of the wealth disparity and governance challenges.

In 1988, the White established a town or the Mhondo River crossing and called it Howick because the secretary of state for the province, Lord Grey, had recently acquired the title of Lord Howick.

Fast-forward 35 years, and Howick and Mphahlele are synonymous with the small, young, white, gay, fluent English-speaking town, Chris Pappas. Howick residents are homegrown working class and farming folk. Typically not used to push, they speak glowingly about Pappas.

Pharmacist mother Colleen Wilson made Howick her home 25 years ago. "It's so pretty here. People are friendly. Pappas has changed it."

Wilson Wines runs the Vineyard at Yend as part of a series of beautiful buildings on the corner of Main Street and the Karkhoad Road. Tourists stroll between here and take in the olive fields.

Howick is a township for fighting through the forest canopy, cycling, hiking and exploring outdoor-quality trails. Pappas is brilliant. Howick is unique."

That's a stretch for some, but the 34-year-old mayor must get credit. His approach to government has been influenced by a book called Making Money Small Change. John, Paul, and the Building the Vision for the Future by Robert Longwell. It advocates sustainable development through small-scale community organizations.

Pappas grew up locally, and his father sold mineral land. He is hands-on, inclusive and very of good nature. He is a bona fide supporter of a highly successful civic initiative.

In 2008, pastor Matt Daggerty started a movement when he invited his neighbours to clean up their little stone streets.

Called Love Howick, its motto is "together for the common good" and it has since brought thousands of people through to job and outreach projects.

Howick's popularity shows in property prices. Hayley House Howick, from the data suggests Lightstone, says house prices are steadily increasing. Compared with the KZN



Howick's quietest street.



Love Howick is a successful civic initiative that has put a shine on the little Midlands town.

average, Howick properties sell quicker and for more. On average, more than 400 properties transfer in the town a year. That will be upwards of R2.5 million.

"The retirement sector is definitely a contributor to this, so is the growing civic pride and perceptions around good governance," she says. Retirement complexes had a host of related businesses, many of which are medical in nature.

Andika Bheketi works in a supermarket.

She and her husband moved to Howick from Durban 10 years ago. "This place has given so much more. I love it. It's quiet. You get to chill here. However, it's very expensive. I guess because of all the retired people."

Nicky Gray is an insurance broker who has lived in Howick for 16 years. The town's transformation and rising property prices have seen it move from a place for "the near dead to the newly dead".

Gray is not blind to the challenges. There



are perhaps more straightforward than work, but the town has a functioning local reporting system. The council's collaboration between Love Howick, businesses and the municipality. "We live in an economic community. While the number of residents has grown tremendously, Howick still has community spirit and greater care. The municipality works tirelessly to 'make progress together' said."

Thandeka Mkhize (33) is an artist who lives in Mphahlele, about a 15-minute drive from Howick's main street. "People are friendly here, everywhere. In winter, the dam and the river make Howick cold, but the people keep you warm. They enjoy talking to one another. It's always here. We have our problems. The economy isn't a level playing field yet. Mphahlele was created as a labour dormitory. We are a work in progress here, but we are moving forward."

The town's charm and the public enthusiasm are drawing outsiders might smile at its sustainability and occasional banishment, but Howick is like the determined street fighter in the book The Little Engine That Could. It's large on challenges, towards much to and dare to believe in a kinder, safer, more progressive place. **BM**

Runners-up

In KZN, everything is determined by how far you are from King Shaka International Airport, in case you have to foot because of a riot, more floods or some pestilence. East Rock, 10km north of the airport, shows, even though it falls in the shadow of the magnificent Mphahlele Dam. If every day has to be a beach holiday, it's probably because you have to have a trust fund to live here.

A cheaper alternative, 10km north of the airport and also on the beach, is Mphahlele. Locals complain about beaches, shady streets, mangrove forests and spreader birds.

It's hard north of the Tugela makes you

hating. Pennington (10km south of the airport) also gives it a bit of a taste. Last, but not least, in Grahamstown (12km from the airport) you're in the shadow of the majestic Grahamstown mountains. Not much to complain about beyond a bit of winter frostbite and the said Grahamstown, which makes underdoggers happy. Happy thinking who "got stuck in" after the 2014/15 winter storms and people

owners from Grahamstown and towns housing along the East Dragger. **BM**

KwaZulu-Natal towns performance

Rank	Town	Overall	Health	Education	Environment	Safety	Nature	Family	Community
1	Howick	84.5%	78.5%	80%	85%	85%	80%	85%	80%
2	Mphahlele	84.0%	80%	80%	80%	80%	85%	80%	80%
3	Underberg	78.5%	85%	85%	80%	85%	80%	80%	80%
4	East Rock	72.5%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	85%	80%
5	Pennington	83.5%	80%	80%	80%	85%	80%	70%	80%

BUSINESS AND NGO BREAKFAST

In June 2025, Love uMngeni hosted a **Business and NGO Breakfast**, bringing together local leaders to share insights and strengthen collaboration. Guest speakers **Laura Dodd** from Accountancy Placements Pietermaritzburg and **Kate Watts** from iOCO shared over 28 years of combined expertise on innovative hiring strategies, pre- and post-recruitment best practices, and expert tips to engage and retain top performers in a competitive market. We thank **Rawson Properties Midlands** for generously sponsoring this community initiative, and to everyone who joined us for making the event a success.



PARTNERS' APPRECIATION BREAKFAST

In December 2025, Love uMngeni hosted a **Partners' Appreciation Breakfast** at Woodstone Restaurant in Howick to thank the businesses, organisations, and individuals whose invaluable support throughout the year made our work possible.



ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER



In March 2025, Love uMngeni hosted its Annual Thanksgiving Dinner at Hilton College, an unforgettable evening of gratitude, connection, and shared purpose.

Guests were treated to inspiring stories of transformation and the energetic beats of the Hilton College Jazz Band, celebrating the incredible impact we made together in 2024.

SHE'S THE BOSS GRADUATION

In November 2025, six women graduated from the Retail and Micro Business Course. Each graduate received R200 worth of clothing stock to start their own second-hand clothing businesses. These women are no longer Street Store beneficiaries, they are entrepreneurs.



UMNGENI COMMUNITY HUB APP CONNECTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

The **Love uMngeni Community Hub App** is a free, user-friendly platform that connects residents, businesses, and community organisations. It features an interactive map, events calendar, instant alerts, and direct contact information for local services.

For businesses, the app offers an affordable way to increase visibility and build customer connections. Listings start from **R275 per month**, with options for event promotion (R75 per event) and banner advertising (R2,795 per slot). Businesses can update their hours, prices, and specials in real time, and track engagement through their own dashboard.

Free listings for NGOs and faith communities.

The app strengthens local economies by making it easier for residents to support local businesses and for businesses to reach new customers, creating a more connected, prosperous community for all.

SCAN. DOWNLOAD. CONNECT.



iOS
(App Store)



Android
(Google Play)

Local Brand Visibility

**Instant Customer
Connections**

Build Trust, Do Good

NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

CRAFTING STORIES THAT **SHAPE OUR FUTURE**



VISUAL STORYTELLING

The stories we tell shape the world we build. We focus on using media as a powerful tool to communicate vision, positive change and impact. We are creating HOPE.



PUBLIC ART & CAMPAIGNS

Stories can be told in so many ways. On public walls, through drama, poetry and dance. We host curated experiences that aim to tell a 'better story' in our region



SOCIAL MEDIA

News travels faster on social media. Using our significant online reach, (locally & nationally), we are developing content that seeks to influence the SA narrative in a positive way



EVENTS

Gathering the community is a key part of shaping our collective narrative. Whether Business Breakfasts, NGO Forums, Gala Dinners, or Workshops - they all help us unite behind something better!

A professional video camera is mounted on a tripod in a grassy field. The camera's LCD screen is flipped out and shows a woman sitting in a chair in the same field. The woman in the background is wearing a white sleeveless top and a patterned skirt. The camera has various attachments, including a top handle and a lens. The scene is set outdoors with tall grass and hills in the background.

NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Narratives shape what we believe is possible. In a time when negative news dominates, we tell a different story: one of hope, dignity, and transformation. At Love uMngeni, narrative development is a strategic pillar of our work. Through visual storytelling, social media, events, and public art, we amplify community voices, celebrate positive change, and shift the narrative of our region from broken to building. Our message reaches audiences locally and internationally: because when people believe change is possible, they start to build it.

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"FOR ALL YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS"
THE HILTON

ALL PHOTOS: RUTH PECKHAM

A NIGHT OF MIDLANDS MAGIC: LOVE UMNGENI CELEBRATES COLLECTIVE IMPACT, CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY

There was magic in the air at Amber Glades Country Cottages when more than 130 key businesses, community leaders, artists, and supporters gathered for the Love uMngeni Annual Banquet and Midlands Magic Gala.

The theme was Pathway to Purpose – and the evening proved exactly how a caring community, working together, can transform lives.

This vision was boldly communicated by Love uMngeni Founder and chief executive officer, Matt Hogarty, who welcomed guests with a clear call to action.

"Tonight, we showcase evidence of Love uMngeni's approach to community building that moves away from isolated projects to an interconnected, strategic pathway that moves people towards their potential," he added.

"When programmes, people and resources align around a common goal, real change becomes possible. Let's unite to make this possible."

uMngeni Mayor Chris Pappas added his support, saying: "Not just in terms of handouts, but actually giving dignity to people through the work that you do."

"So I am here to say thank you so much for the work that you guys do. Together is ultimately what we have to do, and all of you here tonight are that together."

The Love uMngeni team presented the 2025/26 impact review – a powerful reminder of what a community can achieve when it refuses to look away from poverty.

In the past year, the organisation achieved the following:

- 642 unemployed youth received skills training. 23% of these graduates found work through the programme.
- 105 new micro-businesses were launched.
- 80 small agriculture projects were launched and supported.
- A 7% drop in youth unemployment was recorded in the uMngeni Municipality's 2025/26 budget.
- 1 312 unemployed individuals were supported through the Street Store.
- 1 919 clothing items, 1 186 food parcels, and 455 toiletries were distributed, while 116 school shoes were given to children in ECDs.
- 238 353m² was brush cut, 7 539m of pavements and curbs were repaired, and new parks were renovated.
- 23 000+ people were reached through Love uMngeni's social media platforms.

In a moving highlight of the evening, Love uMngeni presented its very first Golden Heart Award.

This monthly award recognizes selfless leadership and contribution to the community, and the organisation was proud to present it to Thendolwethu Buthelesi – a young man whose journey from profound loss to leadership ensured there was not a dry eye in the room.

Having lost both his parents at the ages of nine and 11, Thendolwethu arrived at Love uMngeni at 21 years old "at his lowest".

He completed the work ready and retail programmes, secured employment through the Love uMngeni job centre at Mugg&Bean/Milky Lane in Howick, and quickly rose to become manager of both stores. Today, he is also a social media consultant for four other outlets.

"He is an exemplary young leader shaping his community and future," said Hogarty.

The evening also marked the inaugural Midlands Magic Art & Photography Competition awards. With the theme "Midlands Magic – Through Our Eyes", the competition drew stunning entries from professionals, amateurs, and youth – each piece a love letter to the region.

The venue at Amber Glades was the perfect backdrop: guests strolled through an indoor exhibition of shortlisted artworks while enjoying canapés outdoors, surrounded by the very landscapes that inspired the pieces.

The winners were:

Professional photography - 1, Mabuseli Cebekhulu; 2, Maureen Heckland.

Amateur photography - 1, Alistair Hunter; 2, Marelie Lee; 3, Alistair Hunter.

Youth photography - 1, Oliver Hillermann; 2, Leodon Hogarty.

Professional artist - 1, Vince Reid; 2, Alanna Deall; 3, Char Eastment.

Amateur artist - 1, Elaine Brady; 2, Diana Dreboldt; 3, Christiane Verney.

Youth artist - 1, Kendra Tongue; 2, Ceinwen Dossan; 3, Oliver Hillermann.

Guests were treated to an interactive art activation by artists Brent Dodd and Gysbonge Sikkhosana, accompanied by the soulful live music of Chris Jensen.

A special thank you to the prize sponsors who made the competition possible: JS Automotive – Bosch Car Service, Zulu Lulu Art-house, Ashleigh Wiegner Studios, Midlands Magazine, Scotch Macoskill – Optical Laser Cuts, The Framery, The Dlamini Collection, and Bushveld Bees.

Love uMngeni also honoured the event sponsors who made the gala possible: Amber Glades, Highgate Wine Estate, MSN Electrical, Labola, Muiheads, Merrivale Spar, Greendale Spar, Yirah Films by Ruth Peckham, Candle Dipping, and Jurgens Bekker Attorneys.

The formal programme closed with a heartfelt thank you from Tim Gibson, founder of Amber Glades, who reminded everyone that "when everyone participates in change, communities strengthen, and a better South Africa stops being a dream – and starts becoming our reality."

Love uMngeni (formerly Love Howick) continues to build a coordinated pathway out of poverty. To partner, donate, or find out more go to www.lovemngeni.org.za

VISUAL STORYTELLING

We believe in the power of seeing transformation. Through video, photography, and print, we capture real stories of change: from Thobile's journey from the Street Store to income, to graduates stepping into their first jobs. In 2025/26, we produced testimonial videos, campaign content, and event highlights that have been viewed thousands of times, reaching audiences locally and internationally. These stories are not just content: they are proof that change is possible.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Our message reaches people where they are. Across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and YouTube, we share stories of hope, dignity, and transformation. With **23,000+ followers** and growing international audiences in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and the US, our digital presence is expanding. Our content has reached **over 3.5 million views on Facebook alone**, with audiences engaging across multiple platforms.



Comment



Share

EVENTS

Every event is a story we choose to tell: about creativity, courage, and community.

In 2025/26, we hosted:

- **Love uMngeni Golf Day** presented by Audi Centre Pinetown, bringing together businesses for community transformation
- **Mandela Day**: four zones of community action
- **Market Days**: showcasing local entrepreneurs and raising funds for the Street Store
- **Community Connects**: engaging residents across Howick, Hilton, and Mpophomeni
- and so many more

Each event strengthens community ties and amplifies our shared story.



PUBLIC ART

In 2025, we launched the Midlands Magic Art & Photography Competition, inviting the community to show us what they love about the Midlands through the theme "Midlands Magic Through Our Eyes". The competition was open to professionals, amateurs, and youth, and generated significant interest across the region.



View their art here





96%

Of our Facebook audience is in South Africa (The rest are in UK, US, Australia, NZ)

R 75k

Invested in narrative events, video projects and media

23,000

We have a combined organic audience of over 23,000 people

67%

Our Facebook followers are 67% women and 33% men



VOLUNTEERS

Love uMngeni offers numerous ways for the community to get involved. To get started, neighbours can join our Weekly Volunteer Thursdays (9-11 AM). Options include sorting clothes or packing food parcels, reading to kids at under-resourced schools, cleaning/gardening/repairing at community spaces, helping source donations of baby equipment/food/clothes/hygiene packs, facilitating at our Dream Centre, or assisting at events.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BUSISIWE SIKHAKHANE

Why I volunteer with Love uMngeni

Busisiwe volunteers because she wants to give back to the community that has given her so much.

For her, volunteering is a way to learn new skills, stay active, and remain socially connected. She is driven by a desire to make a real difference and to help strengthen the community she calls home.

"I volunteer because I believe I can make a difference: and together, we can build a stronger community."





VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: **NOKWETHEMBA MAKHAYE**

Why I volunteer with Love uMngeni

Nokwethemba volunteers because she believes in the organisation's mission to uplift the community, and she wants to be part of that change.

For her, volunteering is more than giving time: it is an opportunity to gain valuable work experience, meet new people, and connect with the community. It is also a chance to step out of her comfort zone and grow personally and professionally.

"I want to learn, I want to connect, and I want to make a difference."

PARTNERSHIPS

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Partnerships: The Key to Driving Sustainable Community Development

Love uMngeni extends a heartfelt 'thank you' to all businesses who have embraced collaboration for long-term impact this year.

In today's world of rising poverty, food insecurity, and inequality, no single organisation can solve the challenges facing communities. Real transformation requires collaboration—and that is exactly what Love uMngeni NPC is proving through its innovative partnership-based model of community development.

At the heart of Love uMngeni's work is a belief in restoring dignity, agency, and opportunity to individuals and families living in poverty. From the Street Store and BabyTown initiative, where families "earn" tokens through recycling or volunteering, to entrepreneurship hubs and skills training, the organisation is building a pathway out of poverty that is sustainable, dignified, and inclusive. Protecting our environment and enhancing service delivery are a team effort, and the partnerships formed in the environment, waste and infrastructure development space are ensuring that we see the progress we all desire.

This impact is only possible through partnerships—with local businesses, donors, government stakeholders, and community members themselves. Businesses that join hands with Love uMngeni do more than provide resources; they unlock shared value.

By contributing goods, expertise, or funding, companies not only help meet urgent community needs but also:

- **Strengthen their B-BBEE scorecards through measurable socio-economic development.**
- **Build brand loyalty and reputation as purpose-driven leaders.**
- **Cultivate a future workforce by investing in skills development, training, and entrepreneurship pipelines.**
- **Drive social cohesion, ensuring safer, more resilient communities where businesses and people can thrive.**

"Our model shows that when businesses, NGOs, and communities stand together, we move beyond handouts into true empowerment," Director at Love uMngeni. "Partnerships are not charity, they are an investment into a stronger, more inclusive future for South Africa."

As South Africa continues to face pressing challenges of unemployment and inequality, Love uMngeni is calling on businesses nationwide to be part of a collective solution. By supporting partnership-based community development, companies play a vital role in rewriting the story of poverty, turning despair into hope and dependency into opportunity.

"ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE, TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH" - HELEN KELLER

OUR MONTHLY IMPACT PARTNERS



Fairfield Dairy: A trusted South African dairy, Fairfield Dairy is dedicated to producing the highest quality milk and dairy products through a commitment to innovation, world-class health standards, and the well-being of their cows. From humble beginnings, their values are rooted in quality and service. We thank them for their continued partnership in sustaining our work. Website: www.fairfelddairy.com



SOS Contractors: SOS Contractors is a local, KwaZulu-Natal-based harvesting contractor serving the Midlands community. Their long-standing presence in the area reflects a commitment to the local agricultural sector and the region's economy. We are grateful for their ongoing support and partnership.



Harvard House: Since 1972, the Harvard House Group has evolved from an independent accounting firm into a comprehensive financial services provider. Based in Howick, their mission is to empower people to achieve their financial objectives with integrity, professionalism, and a personal touch. We sincerely appreciate their commitment to fostering financial well-being in our community. Website: www.hhgroup.co.za



Mergon Foundation: Mergon is a resource partner with a deep passion for Africa. Through its investment portfolio and a network of collaborative partners, it invests in organizations focused on the spiritual and social transformation of lives across the continent, working to unlock Africa's full potential. We are honored to be a recipient of their vision and generosity. Website: www.mergon.co.za



uMngeni Local Municipality: As the administrative seat of the uMngeni Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, this forward-thinking local government works to be a "beacon of excellence and efficiency." Through its focus on infrastructure investment, economic growth, and building safer communities, it supports the sustainable development of the region and the well-being of its residents. We thank them for their partnership in serving the community. Website: www.umngeni.gov.za



OUR PARTNERS

Accountancy Placement
Ackermans
Amber Glades
Amangonyama Tours
Andermatt Madumbi
ANEW Hilton & Pietermaritzburg
Angels Care
Araujo Attorneys
Audi Centre Pinetown
Ayanda Dlamo
Basil Budke Family Trust
Bell Africa
Big Five Foods
Bolt & Nut
Bosch Car Service
BP Garage
Build It Howick
Bushveld Bees
Business Partners
Capitec
Cavern Drakensberg Resort
Caversham Education Institute
Cordwalles Foundation
Charmaine Schofield
Citizen Leader Lab
Coastal Hire
Coffeeberry
Coffeebox
Dee Hunt
DJ's Spar
Dormehl Phalane PROPERTY PMB
DUCT
Fairfield
Fairfield Dairy
Fairfield Farm
Fair Lands Farming
FNB
Greater Ambers
Greendale SPAR
Groundcover
Gym & Fitness
Harvard House
Hawklee Country House
Hilton College
Howick Community Church
Howick Library
Howick Travel

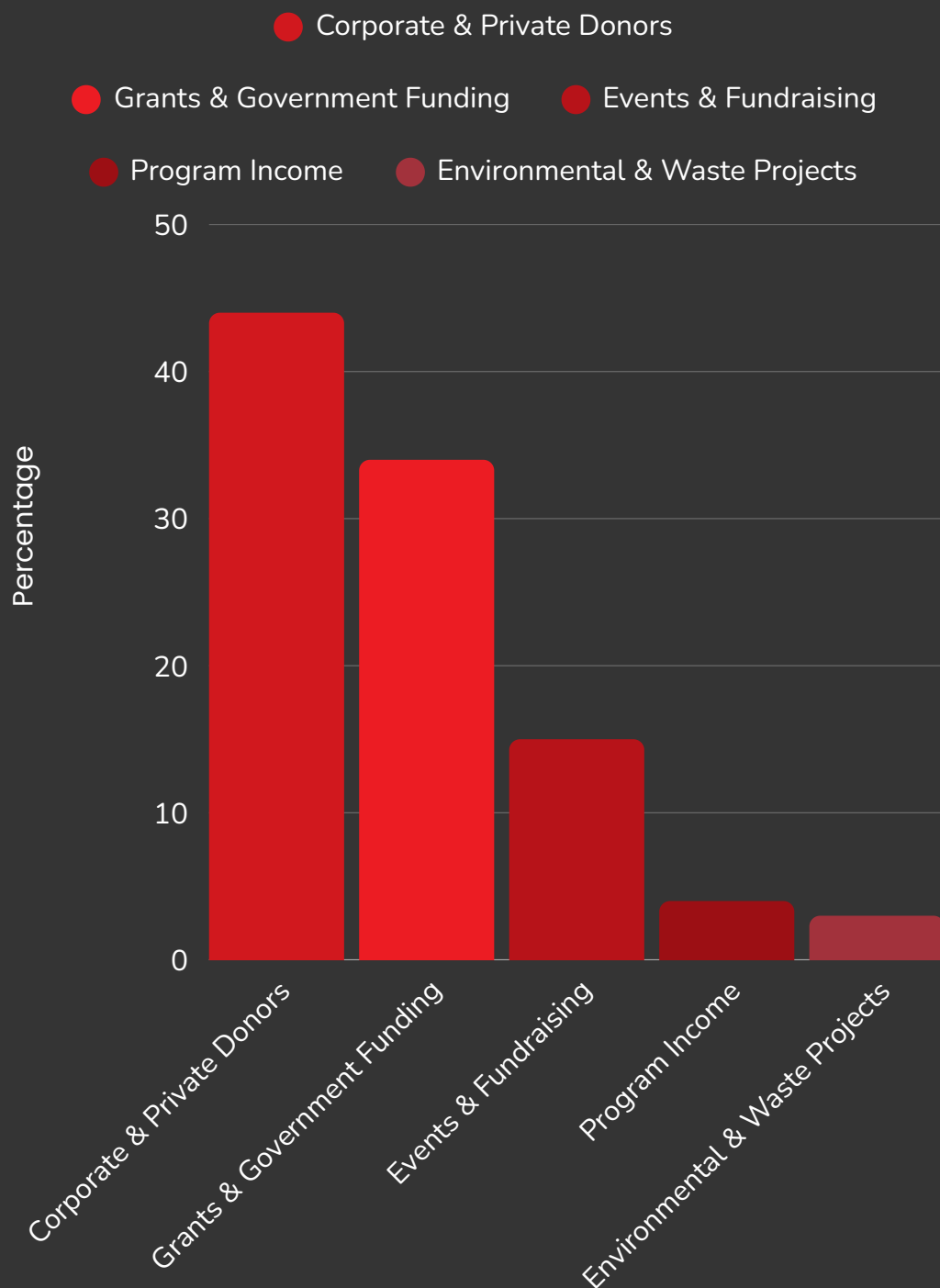
Howick Padel Club
 Ian Davies
 Investec
 iOCO Talent
 Iron Light
 Jetteson Timber Products
 Judith Chadwick
 Jurgens Bekker Attorneys
 KA Travels
 Karkloof Canopy Tour
 Kerry Jones
 La Rose Driving Range
 Liberty Group
 Life Hilton Private Hospital
 Lihle Mavuso
 Linc Church & Linc Foundation
 Little Lives Child Development Centre Hilton
 M&N Electrical
 Many local citizens, schools, organisations
 Mergon Foundation
 Merri-Mow Enterprises
 Merrivale Spar
 Middledale Farms
 Midlands EMS
 Midlands Exterior Cleaning
 Mills-Fitchett
 Milkylane Howick on Main
 Momentai Hub
 Moms of the Midlands
 Mpophemeni Shopping Centre
 Mr. Aubrey Shabalala
 My Walk Shoes
 Ndaka Safari Lodge
 Noluthando Zuma
 Nomusa Makhaye
 Patricia Oliver
 Penny Carolan
 Pick n Pay Fairways
 Pin & Cove
 Polyoak Packaging
 PPS Insurance Company
 Purposeful Pathways
 Rockafellas
 Rubik Design Forge
 Sags Creations
 Seeff Midlands
 Shoprite
 Sicelo Gwamanda
 SIMI (Shaya Izibalo Maths Institute)
 Siphuthando Stepdown
 Social Employment Fund (SEF)
 Sole

SOS Contractors
 Sourced
 Spar Quarry Hilton
 SADASA
 Spice Box
 St John's D.S.G.
 St John's Gym
 St John's PNP (Pick n Pay)
 Stockowners Outdoor Park
 Sugar Baron
 Supa Quick Mooi River
 Sweetwater's Education Trust
 The Cavern
 The Rotary Club of Hilton and Howick
 Timber Solutions
 TRU Connection Coaching
 Tyson Properties
 uMngeni Municipality
 Upper Umgeni Presbyterian Church
 Wakefields Estate Agents
 Whitehead Kitchens
 Wildtrust
 Woodstone Restaurant
 Yes Please Shuttle
 Zandile Mchunu

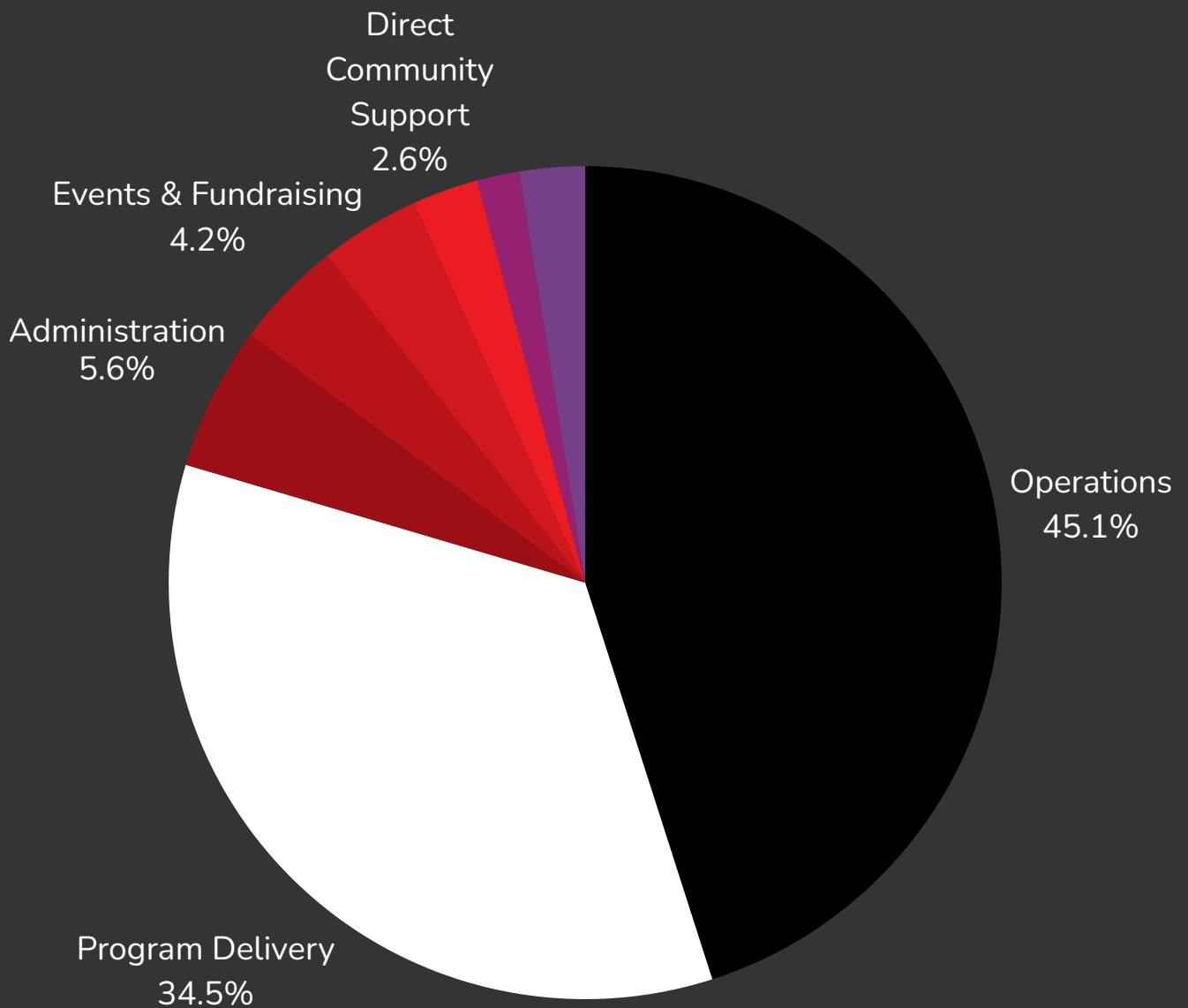
All the valued anonymous local heroes who gave monthly.



TOTAL INCOME: R3,4M



TOTAL EXPENDITURE: R3,5M



AUDITED Financial Statements

The complete audited financial statements for the fiscal year March 2025 - February 2026 are available upon request. To receive a copy, please email finance@loveumnigeni.org.za.



statement

53	3,856	3,920	4,011	4,103	4,259	4,506	4,529	4,587
23	30	22	20	15	23	22	21	23
,176	3,886	3,942	4,031	4,118	4,282	4,528	4,550	4,610
2,735	2,208	2,286	2,509	2,608	2,700	2,756	2,751	2,773
1,441	1,678	1,656	1,522	1,510	1,582	1,772	1,799	1,837
670	715	722	680	673	703	851	82	845
10	13	11	19	14	10	11	1	15
7	6	5	8	6	5	8	6	6
15	14	19	15	18	12	14	6	7
0	702	748	757	722	711	730	884	851
92	739	759	899	800	799	852	888	948
782	6	8	7	10	9	5	4	5
5	9	7	8	5	10	9	6	18
9			914	815	818	866	898	971
						173	189	194
								777

OUR BOARD

Governance & Oversight

At Love uMngeni NPC, strong governance and strategic leadership are at the heart of our mission.

Our board comprises four passionate individuals whose diverse expertise ensures transparent, ethical, and effective stewardship of the organisation.

Justin Green, based in the KZN Midlands, brings a wealth of experience in education and economic development. A former teacher with an MBA from the University of Cape Town, Justin co-founded an enterprise development organisation and champions sustainable transformation through access to education and economic opportunities.

Simpfiwe Radebe, a skilled community activist with six years of experience, specialises in Asset-Based Community Development, trauma debriefing, and grassroots transformation. Her innovative approaches to sustainable development make her an invaluable voice in community empowerment.

Janine Ward, a qualified social worker with 38 years of experience, has dedicated her career to participatory capacity building, enterprise development, and HIV/AIDS education. Her 12 years of independent work in rural Eswatini, where she established an NGO, underscores her commitment to sustainable community programs.

Barbara Dommett, is the captain of our Finance ship, ensuring that all funds are used correctly, transparently and with accountability. As an experienced Bookkeeper and business specialist, Barbara has added immense value to every organisation she has been a part of. Farm Manager, Event & Function Venue Manager, Creative Floral Arranger, she brings diverse talents to this team!

Matt Hogarty, entrepreneur and founder of Love uMngeni NPC, combines business acumen with a deep passion for social impact. A former school principal with B.Comm qualifications in management, economics, and education, Matt drives our vision for positive change in uMngeni and beyond.

Together, our board ensures robust oversight, strategic direction, and unwavering accountability: guiding Love uMngeni NPC towards meaningful, lasting impact.



Justin Green



Simpfiwe Radebe



Janine Ward



Barbara Dommett



Matt Hogarty

OUR TEAM



Matt Hogarty

Managing Director

matt@loveumngeni.org.za

Barbara Dommett

Finance Director

finance@loveumngeni.org.za

Doni Hogarty

Social Development Lead

doni@loveumngeni.org.za

Noxolo Sibiya

Skills Development Lead

dreamcentre@loveumngeni.org.za

Nobuhle Katamzi

Enviro-Waste Administrator

enviroadmin@loveumngeni.org.za

Amanda Sibiya

Street Store Lead

info@loveumngeni.org.za

Wendy Dladla

Edu-Project Lead

info@loveumngeni.org.za

Reinette Fritz

Marketing & Partnerships Lead

marketing@loveumngeni.org.za

Nqobile Zuma

Edu-Project Facilitator

Nomfundo Mlotshwa
Facilitator



Meet our dedicated 2025 team of professionals who have contributed their expertise, passion, and collaboration to drive our success.

FUN MOMENTS

One of Love uMngeni's key priorities is 'building a unified community'. This often doesn't happen in boardrooms, council chambers or within the confines of formal channels. Connection, community and strong bonds are often the result of having fun together. This past year we have prioritised fun: creating moments for meaningful connection and shared experiences.



Love uMngeni's 9th Birthday Celebration



GET INVOLVED

WHATSAPP

Join our WhatsApp community for the latest information: [here](#). 

PARTNER

Become an official IMPACT CLUB MEMBER - Donate R100 per month: www.loveumngeni.org.za/product/monthly-donation/ 

SPONSOR

Sponsor one person through our growers program or a student for only R950.

DONATE

www.loveumngeni.org.za/get-involved/ 

VOLUNTEER

- Help at our monthly Thrift Market
- Monthly handyman services for our facilities
- Knit scarves and collect blankets for winter
- Join our monthly garden day at Park, Falls, CBD
- Help source donations for the poor and vulnerable
- Assist at events

BANK DETAILS

Love uMngeni NPC
Account no: 627 747 27 039
Branch no: 220 725
First National Bank Howick



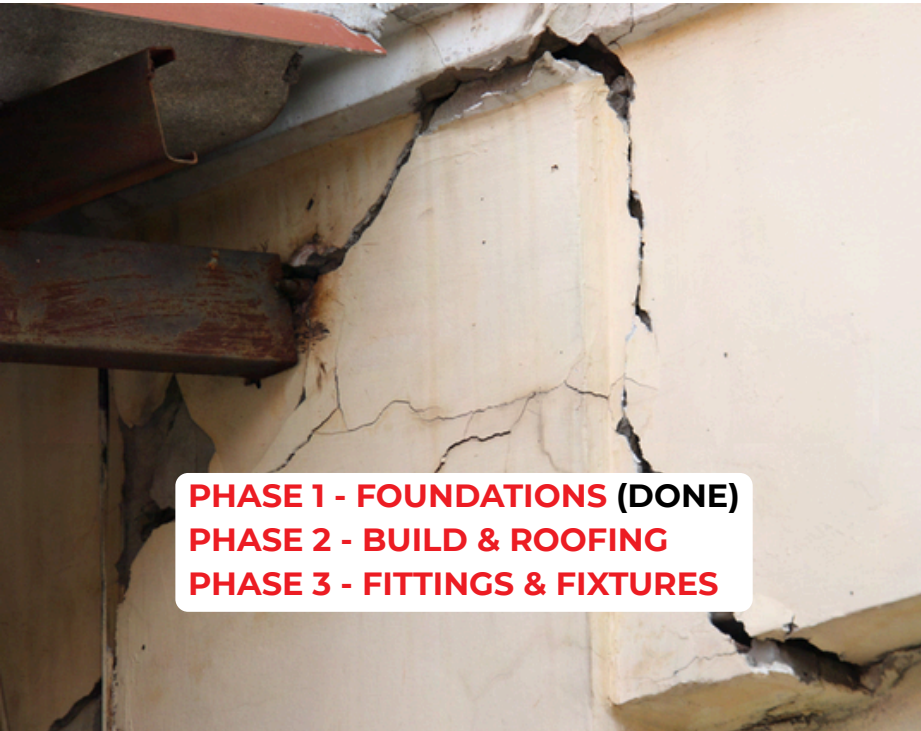


LOOKING FORWARD

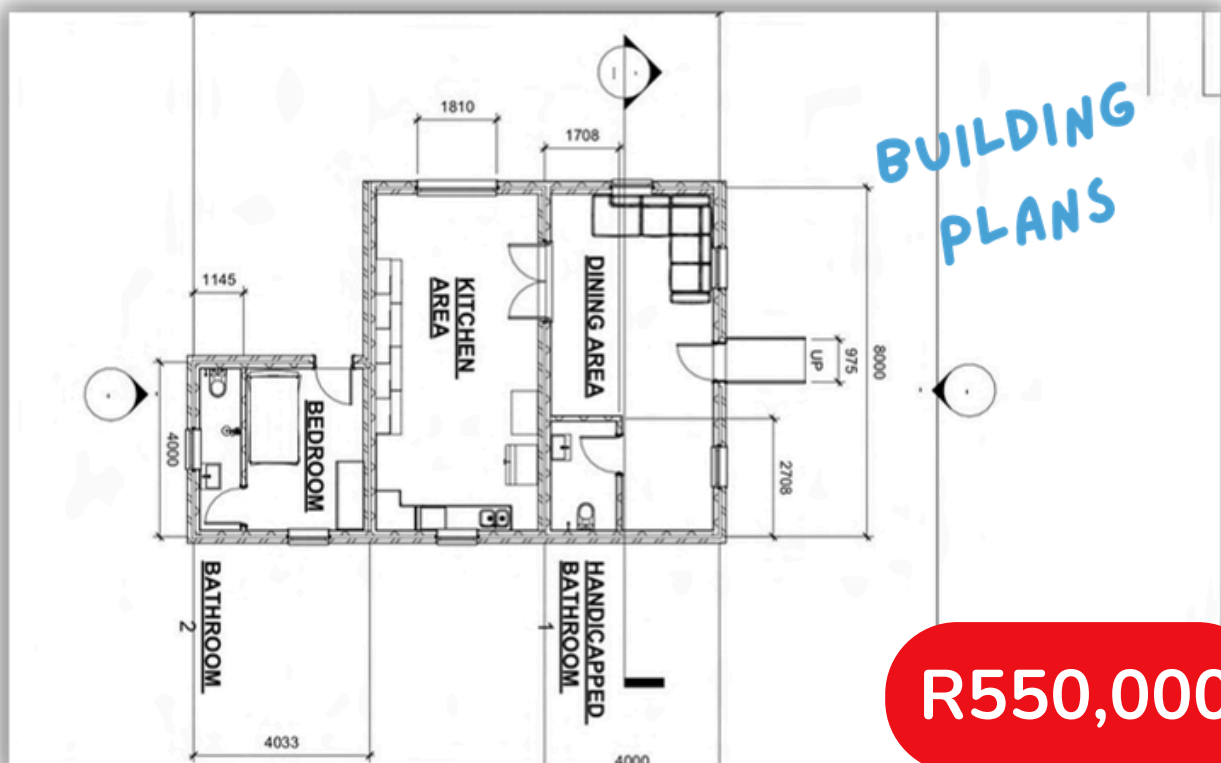
OUR NEW PROJECTS

Rebuilding the Lidgetton Senior Centre

Email matt@loveumnngeni.org.za



PHASE 1 - FOUNDATIONS (DONE)
PHASE 2 - BUILD & ROOFING
PHASE 3 - FITTINGS & FIXTURES

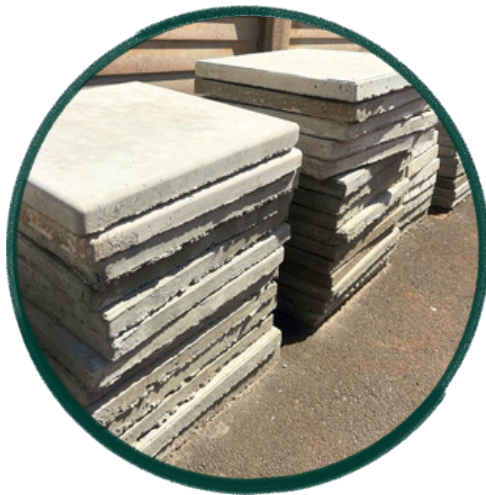


Innovative Waste Solutions

That Create Jobs and Build Sustainability

Love uMngeni Green Micro Enterprises

R 1,5 MIL



**ECO PRODUCT RANGE
WASTE TURNED INTO NEW
PRODUCT**



**APPLIANCE REPAIR HUBS
E-WASTE SITES**



**SEEDLING / NURSERY /
COMPOST PRODUCTION SITE**



**BIOCHAR PRODUCTION -
GREEN GOLD FROM ALIEN
INVASIVES**

Resellers Containers in Key Communities

Improve Food Security, Create Jobs in Partnership with Big 5 Foods

Turning Food into Opportunity

Our Resellers Program equips local entrepreneurs to earn an income by selling affordable, quality food products from Big 5 Foods, including fortified porridges, soups, and one-pot meals.

A centrally located container near transport hubs makes products easily accessible to both resellers and the community – creating local income while improving access to affordable, nutritious food.

R95,000
PER CONTAINER SETUP



New Midlands Magic Film Series

to 'sell' the Midlands Lifestyle & Investment Potential

'THIS IS HOME' 4-PART VIDEO SERIES

I AM HOME is a strategic video series positioning the Midlands as one of South Africa's most desirable places to live, work, invest and build a future. By showcasing our education, healthcare, business, lifestyle, and community assets, the series builds a compelling story of a region with real opportunity and quality of life. It is more than destination marketing — it is about attracting investment, talent and enterprise while building confidence in the Midlands' future.

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Unparalleled Natural Beauty / Outdoor Lifestyle
2. Local Service Delivery that works
3. Quality Education / Family Support
4. Best Healthcare and Later Life care



ONLY 6 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP PLACES AVAILABLE MAXIMISE YOUR BRAND EXPOSURE THROUGH ALL VIDEOS. R30 000 INVESTMENT.



Hilton College

Hilton College is proud to partner with Love uMngeni, whose commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement has made a meaningful impact on our boys throughout the year.

Through our grade-specific clean-up days, every grade has had the opportunity to serve, learn, and develop a deeper appreciation for the responsibility we all share in caring for our environment.

The Love uMngeni team has been consistently professional, supportive, and inspiring, creating experiences that are both educational and transformative.

Their ability to connect environmental action with community service has helped open our boys' eyes to the power of active citizenship and collective responsibility.

We are sincerely grateful for this fruitful partnership and look forward to continuing our work together in making a positive difference in the uMngeni Municipality and beyond.

By the end of the year, 600 boys had been involved.



Accountancy Placements

Accountancy Placements is a trusted recruitment partner with a long-standing history of connecting talent with opportunities across KwaZulu-Natal. Through our work, we connect and engage with thousands of job-seekers each year. This unique position provides us with valuable insight into the common challenges candidates face when searching for employment, particularly when it comes to CV preparation, job applications, interview techniques, and understanding the modern recruitment process.

Recognising the need for greater job-seeker education, we launched a community-focused initiative in 2017 aimed at equipping unemployed individuals with practical knowledge and tools to improve their employment prospects. Led by Laura Dodd, Recruitment Director of Accountancy Placements, this initiative has grown steadily over the years, enabling her to educate increasing numbers of job-seekers on effective job-search strategies, professional CV writing, interview preparation, and navigating the recruitment market through presentations and workshops delivered at educational institutions, community organisations, and employment-focused initiatives across the region.

Partnership with Love uMngeni (Formerly Love Howick)

In 2017, Accountancy Placements was invited to deliver its first employment-readiness presentation to Love Howick alumni, marking the beginning of a valued partnership.

We have long admired Love Howick for the meaningful work they do within the community, particularly their commitment to empowering unemployed individuals through skills development, training opportunities, mentorship, and practical support. Their dedication to restoring dignity, building confidence, and creating pathways to sustainable employment has had a significant impact on countless lives throughout the Midlands community.

Our shared passion for helping people realise their potential has made this partnership a natural fit. Over the years, we have been honoured to contribute to Love Howick's programmes by sharing industry insights, job-seeking guidance, CV-writing expertise, and recruitment best practices with participants preparing to enter the workforce. Together, we remain committed to equipping individuals with the knowledge, confidence, and opportunities they need to secure meaningful employment and build successful careers.





**HELP US
STRENGTHEN
OUR IMPACT
SHARE YOUR
FEEDBACK**







Thank you for supporting us!

 www.loveumngeni.org.za

 033 940 5075

 info@loveumngeni.org.za

 19 Morling Street, Howick, KZN, 3290