

# Joe Public's Rock4AIDS sparks hope for 50 learners

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Joe Public's Rock4AIDS foundation has enabled 50 learners to take part in Bridging for Life, a Valued Citizen's Initiative guiding and encouraging students to enroll into tertiary institutions. This is one more step for Rock4AIDS towards realising their dream of seeing every learner in South Africa leave school with university exemption.

Johannesburg based advertising agency, Joe Public, launched Rock4AIDS in 2004 with the intention of making a change in South Africa. Although the focus in the beginning was centered on HIV/AIDS it was soon realised that the only way of eradicating this epidemic from our struggling country was, rather than addressing the symptoms of the problem, to address the root - namely the lack of education. In 2007, Rock4AIDS identified Forte High in Dobsonville, Soweto, a dysfunctional school with an eagerness to help themselves and adopted them.

Since this first step, Forte High has seen its facilities being revamped and improved with the support of Joe Public's clients Tracker and CTM. Teachers have also had the opportunity to attend workshops to increase their life skills knowledge and pass these onto students through funds raised by the annual Rock4AIDS concert.

The latest initiative at the school allows 50 learners to take part in a programme entitled 'Bridging for Life.' This is a Valued Citizen's Initiative aiming to build a movement where citizens take responsibility for their future. The two-year course aims to strengthen students' self-esteem, create a "walk the talk" attitude towards South Africa's constitutional values and develop the aspiring youth to lead their lives fully and successfully.

Carole Podetti Ngono, Founder and Managing Director of Valued Citizens Initiative, explains how the Bridging for Life programme works: "300 youth - 30 grade 11 learners and 20 post-matriculants - from high schools in selected provinces, will be taken under our wing. Our aim is to guide 65% of these students to enrol into tertiary institutions or undergo learnership programmes."

Bridging for Life entails 14 workshops of four hours each which educate students on academic related issues such as: self-management and leadership, communication for sustainable relationships, emotional intelligence and career guidance to name but a few.

The programme's coordinator, Jerry Thulare says, "I have observed these learners grow, from having low self esteem and no trust, to being confident students, who are caring for one another. Bridging for Life offers these learners a platform to express themselves and show their potential, it also teaches them the importance of giving the best in whatever they do regardless of their circumstances."

The official launch of the Bridging for Life course will be celebrated at the Hyatt Regency, 191 Oxford Road, Rosebank Thursday, 9 September from 13h00 to 14h30.

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