

COMMUNITY NEWS

THE HEARTBEAT OF A DEVELOPING PEOPLE

BRIEFS

School prayer

MATSAPHA – Parents of pupils attending school at Swazi National High School are invited to a thanksgiving prayer to be held at the school on Saturday, starting at 9am. For more information contact Sizwe Hlatshwayo on 7617 3659.

Tent crusade

MBABANE – Let His Voice Be Heard Ministries invites Christians to a tent crusade to be held at the church behind the Galp Filling Station on March 12 to 25. Services start at 6pm to 9pm. Transport would be available at a fee. For more information contact 7605 3387 or 7643 3598.

Fund-raising concert

NGONINI – Lushikishini Apostolic Faith church invites all Christians and the public to a fund-raising concert for the completion of a church structure, to be held at Water Apostolic Faith Church at Ngonini on Saturday and Sunday, starting from 8pm to 6am. For more information contact 7622 0949 or 7647 0702.

WORD OF GOD

Proverbs 19:17

He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the LORD; and that which he has given will he pay him

SD should be recognised for dramatic HIV reduction - M2M

BY SITHEMBILE HLATSHWAYO

MBABANE - Mothers-2 Mothers (M2M) co-founder, Robin Smalley, has suggested that Swaziland should be recognised for the dramatic reduction of HIV transmission from mother to child.

Through the PMTCT programme, Swaziland has made a mark in reducing the number of babies born with HIV and the mortality rate of mothers living with HIV who die when giving birth.

PMTCT is Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission. Smalley said the country should serve as an example to other SADC countries which have a high HIV prevalence rate.

She was in the country to tour some of the M2M projects. In Swaziland, M2M operates in 60 health facilities in all the four regions of the country.

About 2 000 women per month go through the M2M programme.

Smalley who is based in Los Angeles was speaking during advocacy evening on Tuesday, where the organisation had met with other partners who are involved in different programmes aimed at fighting the epidemic in Swaziland.

However, she said she cannot be

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(L-R) Glen and Debbie Bickerstaff who are donors of m2m and Robin Smalley the co-founder of the organisation paying attention during the advocacy evening. (All Pics: Sithembile Hlatshwayo)

complacent of the fact that the country still had a relatively high HIV rate among pregnant women which is around 40 per cent.

Working

Mothers2Mothers is a non-governmental organisation working in PMTCT where Mentor Mothers are engaged and provide peer education and support to pregnant women and new mothers at PMTCT health facility service points.

The vision of M2M is to see a world

in which babies are no longer infected with HIV and where mothers with HIV live long and healthy lives.

In Swaziland M2M programme started in 2008 and to date a lot has been achieved by the programme.

Smalley said M2M works with African governments and targeted were countries with a high HIV prevalence. "Our aim is to work with the countries to help them meet the goals of the global plan," she said.

According to Smalley, the direct

founder of the organisation whom she identified as Mitch realised a waste among the African women who were dying as a result of HIV.

In 2001, a number of women were dying due to HIV and lacked basic knowledge on HIV/AIDS. This led to the idea of mentor mothers being born.

donor

Glen Bickerstaff who the husband of Debbie a donor board member of m2m, said health worker shortages in sub-Saharan Africa leaves many clinics critically understaffed, preventing life-saving information from being effectively communicated to women going through the crisis of HIV diagnosis. "Without this kind of support, many pregnant women and new mothers living with HIV assume they are facing a death sentence and don't seek the services necessary to keep themselves and their children healthy," he said.

Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Health Dr Stephen Shongwe commended the programme by m2m, which provides high quality PMTCT services for women around the world. He said m2m's concept of mentor mothers was unique and very innovative. The PS said m2m was making a huge contribution in the fight against the epidemic.