

Activists running for health

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APPEAL FOR SUPPORT FOR HIV ACTIVISTS WHO ARE RUNNING FOR HEALTH!

The *runners for health*, a group of activists from the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) are taking up the challenge to encourage other fellow activists and ordinary people living with HIV to join this new wellness and physical health initiative.

The runners will take part in key races in South Africa namely: **Soweto Marathon, Cape Town Landmarks half a marathon and the Cape Town big walk in 2011**, to raise awareness on the importance of wellness and physical health. During the races, they also want to highlight the financial challenges faced by organisations who work to ensure the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Most of these organisations are struggling to survive after the economic meltdown.

This appeal goes to individual and corporates in South African to look deep in their heart and pockets and spare a rand every day to keep social movements alive in order to guard our democracy and keep the voices of the poor alive and heard.

Runners for Health Champion: Vuyiseka Dubula, 33 years old

Vuyiseka is a young black African woman who firmly believes in human rights. Vuyiseka draws strength and power from the collective and believes that everyone has the potential to be better if they choose to persevere. She takes pride in her roots and uses her life experiences as life's stepping stones.

She joined the HIV movement when she was 22 years and believes that she did not choose the struggle but that the struggle chose her. She started out as a volunteer of the Treatment Action Campaign in Samora Machel, a township outside of Cape Town. Starting from the lowest job in the organisation, she has now risen to the highest as the General Secretary of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) elected in 2008 and re-elected in 2010.

She was instrumental in building TAC branches in 2001 in the Western Cape and is committed to ensuring that People Living with HIV have a positive voice in the struggle against HIV. Furthermore, as a woman living openly with HIV since 2001, she wants to see that women and girls have access to health services and live equally in society free of gender and sexual violence.

Vuyiseka holds many leadership roles in other structures; she is the national representative for People living with HIV in the South African National AIDS council (SANAC), the chairperson of the SECTION27 (AIDS Law Project), served in the UNAIDS advisory group for women and girls on HIV and currently the youngest UNAIDS High level commissioner on HIV prevention.

With a passion for education, she founded the TAC development centre aimed at assisting activists to further their studies. She has presented and published at multiple national and international health and human rights conferences and in 2009 was nominated by the Mail and Guardian as one of the 300 young South Africans worth taking out to lunch.

Other notable awards that she has received for her work include the University of Oslo, Norway as a 'courageous leader' in 2003, the Chevening leadership scholarship by the British council and DFID 2009, the leadership award by the John Lloyd foundation in the United States of America, 2010.

When asked why she decided to run, Vuyiseka says, 'When Tantaswa, my personal assistant, and I started running I felt more energetic and wanted to run more regularly. My first race was 21km Gun run in October 2010 and I was shocked that I could run such a long distance. Running has helped me to free my mind from everyday stressful work life, family pressure and has significantly improved my physical appearance. Seeing other activists joining in running and hiking has also added to the satisfaction.'

'Of course crossing the finishing line and the medal makes me feel proud with sense of accomplishment.' She adds. Vuyiseka has never stopped running since 2010 and hopes that more people living with HIV especially women who cannot afford gym fees can join her group.

She says, 'I am now hoping to raise money for my own organisation that is struggling financially and to raise money for poor people living with HIV to enjoy physical health without having to worry where they will get running shoes, transport to the races and registration to the races.'

She believes this can help instil a culture of exercise amongst comrades to be examples to their children and communities on healthy eating habits and good physical health for the family.

While this is an initiative to encourage physical health and wellness amongst activists especially those living with HIV, other runners, walkers and hikers are welcome to join at a fee. The fee will enable registration of the club and to be able to pay entry fees for unemployed comrades.

Key events coming up:

1. Soweto Marathon 6 November 2011

42 km

Runners include: Lumkile Sizila (Male), Tantaswa Ndlelana (Female), Billy Dutyulwa (Male), Siyabulela Mama (Male), Kholeka Bokwe (Female), Thanduxolo Mngqawa (Male), Nomso Zwana (Female), Loyiso Mahomba (Male), Vuyiseka Dubula (Female) and Nomthunzi September (Female).

10km fun run

(Yvette Raphael, Barry Mohammed, Nokhwezi Hoboyi and Phindile Madonsela)

2. Cape Town Landmark 21km on the 6th November 2011

Five comrades will take this challenge - donations for registration are welcome

3. FAMILY BIG WALK ? Cape Town 12 November 2011

50 comrades and their children & partners have signed up take part - donations for registration are welcome

This is an appeal for public support of the runners, walkers, hikers living with HIV and affected by it and the organisations they belong to.

Bank: Nedbank

Account name: Treatment Action Campaign

Account number: 1009 714 805

Branch code: 100909

REF code: Runners for health

Thank you in advance for your contribution to the struggle.

Contact

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