

## Breaking The Silence: Thokoza's Suicide Prevention Campaign

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September 10<sup>th</sup> is recognized as World Suicide Prevention Day. A day that is dedicated to raising awareness about issues that leads to suicide in our society. On this day this year, Ntswaki Khumalo, a social activist and a suicide survivor took a powerful step towards raising mental health awareness in Thokoza in an effort to prevent suicidal attempts. This awareness campaign was held at the Thokoza Christian Church aimed at combating the stigma surrounding suicide.

Tragically, over the past two months, the community of Thokoza has witnessed the heart-breaking loss of four young lives due to suicide, one of them being as young as 10 years old.

Khumalo became a social activist after she gathered enough courage to talk about her own personal experience of surviving after she attempt suicide. This is why she understands the urgency of raising awareness about suicide prevention and about the mental problems people might be facing.

"It's crucial to reach out and support those who may be struggling with depression or other mental health challenges due to life's pressures," Khumalo first explained.

As the founder of the Back2Eden Foundation, an organisation that focuses on everything that brings about healing and restoration in the life of ordinary people. Khumalo went on to add, "My message to people is that we can overcome life's pressures by reaching out for help when we find ourselves unable to cope. And in so doing, it is essential to understand that a person with mental health issues is in a similar position to someone with cancer or diabetes; they require professional medical help."

Siphesihle Twala, who attended the awareness campaign, boasted about the Back2Eden founder saying, "Khumalo's dedication to this cause is vital in our community because it serves as a beacon of hope for those who may be silently suffering. She sheds light on this important issue, offering support and solace to those in need."

Twala added, "Children suffering from depression don't usually talk about their problems, and if they do no one takes them serious enough to attend to their problems or find them professional help."

During the campaign Khumalo raised the same fact as Twala. Her main message was that young people need to reach out for help when they find themselves unable to cope with life's challenges, and to also resist being absorbed by the culture promoted on social media. That of the pressure to look a certain way and live in a certain lifestyle.

Therefore, community members, parents and the schools need to be educated about ways to support people and children suffering from depression and other mental health issues. As Khumalo then concluded, "Together, we can triumph over the spirit of suicide and build a stronger, more resilient community." she concluded.

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