

OBSERVATORY

YMCA celebrates 150 years

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It was a walk down memory lane as people gathered to celebrate the 150 years of existence of YMCA Cape Town.

The organisation reminisced and spoke of their wishes for the future in Observatory on Saturday.

Talking about the journey that started in 1865, the speakers touched on the challenges the organisation has had, but focused on the milestones achieved.

Attending the celebration was Premier Helen Zille and Mayco member for Corporate Services Xanthea Limberg.

The Cape Town YMCA is a registered non-profit organisation, running weekly youth development programmes such as YZone, YArts and YJustice for youth between seven and 25-years-old.

Working with more than 250 young people each day, they solely depend on volunteers and they are happy that they have managed to change lives for so many years.

Stephen Stockdale, YMCA Cape Town chairperson says the movement has grown immensely. "With many partnerships formed and voluntary work being one of the cornerstones of our mission it is crucial we celebrate our service thus far. We wouldn't have done it without the people that have contributed their time for the benefit of others. We appreciate the ef-



YMCA celebrates 150 years of existence and they are happy to be changing the lives of the people in the vulnerable communities through their work.
PHOTO: TIYESE JERANJI

fort they put in and may it all continue to touch and change a lot of lives," he says.

Brandon Kadalie Youth Programme Manager says it's a great feeling to be part of something with such a great impact in the communities.

"People always find it easy to

complain about a lot of things and never do anything. What makes me happy is the fact that after we notice that there are challenges in the vulnerable communities we go into them and change their lives for good. We don't watch things happen, we make things happen. We won't stop now; we will continue

pushing forward because we have seen the fruits of it over the years. The programmes that we run are so life changing and we are glad that we could bring in that change," says Kadalie.

Quinton Mitchell from South Africa National YMCA says over the years they have done well and they

are proud to be celebrating this day.

"The main goal is to change the lives of the young people in vulnerable communities. Many of the people that have come through the hands of YMCA come from broken families, areas hugely affected by drugs, gangsterism and alcohol abuse. However they managed to change their life around and a lot of them have become very good leaders.

"By reflecting on the past we are able to move forward and we still need to focus more on the youth and try find sustainable ways that match with the times and continue to change more lives," he says.

As part of the 150 celebrations the team of Cape Town Y volunteers with their young program attendees, supporters and partners, were tasked with planting a total of 150 Forest Bushwillow (*Combretum Kraussii*) which is South Africa's designated '2015 Tree of the year' during August and September.

The planting initiative will also give an opportunity for the Cape Town Y team to engage other youth NGO's about the importance of trees in sustaining our natural habitat. The planting will be conducted at various locations housing the YMCA weekly programs such as Wallacedene Library, Pollsmoor and at other youth partners like Bonnytoun Child and Youth Care Centre, and at selected youth NGO's in Cape Town.