

EDUCATION / KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE

The 'Festival of Gratitude' community outreach event was held in Ravensmead on September 29th and October 1st 2009.

The Bill & Melinda Gates funded Grand Challenges in Global Health project entitled 'Biomarkers of Protection against TB in the context of HIV in Africa' (aka GC6) was launched in 2005 with the aim of identifying immune and mycobacterial factors that may contribute to the high burden of TB in Africa. In addition to the discovery of biomarkers of protection and susceptibility to tuberculosis, the study aims to find new candidates for inclusion in novel TB vaccines. The CBTBR team at Stellenbosch University is one of seven African groups that are partnering in this ambitious project. The CBTBR team have enrolled over 1000 residents of Ravensmead, Uitsig, Adriaanse and Elsie's River as participants in the ongoing multi-national GC6 study.

As a means of community outreach, research dissemination and study feedback, the 'Festival of Gratitude', was held in the Civic Centres of Adriaanse and Ravensmead on September 29th and October 1st 2009. The event was organized and carried out by SUN GC6 team members with the help of many others from the Department of Biomedical Sciences. The main aim of this outreach initiative was to 'give back' to the members of the community who had participated in the research and say thank you for their invaluable contributions in the advancement of the GC6 project. The two events also provided an important opportunity to provide basic education about TB (including multi-drug resistant TB) and HIV using a creative combination of music, drama and scientific discussion. The serious educational messages were punctuated with many light hearted moments and over the 2 days, 40 prize draw winners walked home with food hampers containing over R200 of essential groceries. The play 'Touched By TB' which was presented as part of the outreach activities, was written, produced and directed by Cape Town based professional actor David Muller and was performed by students of the University of the Western Cape Centre for Performing Arts. Members of the community were given the opportunity to have their questions about TB, HIV and other public health issues answered by Prof Gerhard Walzl, a chest physician with expert knowledge on tuberculosis. These question and answer sessions were clearly appreciated by the community members and highly interactive. On both days attendees of the Festival were provided with refreshments including a healthy filled roll, fruit juice and fresh fruit. The play 'Touched by TB' will be taken to ScifestAfrica which will be held in Grahamstown in 2010. It is hoped that 'Touched by TB' will travel to many different parts of South Africa as a means of conveying the importance of visiting the clinic with first signs or symptoms of tuberculosis and also completion of treatment if tuberculosis is diagnosed. The 'Festival of Gratitude' was attended by around 800 residents of Tygerberg District as well as several members of the Department of Health, including Karen Jennings, the manager for TB, HIV and STIs for the City of Cape Town. The Festival of Gratitude was a highly successful project which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

