

We, the clinical team at Madwaleni District Hospital, would like to nominate Katy Miller for the therapist of the year award because she has demonstrated deep commitment to serving the hospital and its surrounding community as a therapist since her and her husband's arrival in 2013. Katy moved to Madwaleni after completing her occupational therapy community service year at Groote Schuur Hospital. While Katy's husband (Dr Andrew Miller) is both the clinical manager of Madwaleni Hospital and previous recipient of the RuDASA rural doctor of the year award, he often shares that they would not be at Madwaleni Hospital were it not for Katy's dream of living and working at a rural hospital.

After a long six months of waiting for a post, Katy started her role as the only permanent occupational therapist in the hospital's rehabilitation department and joined forces with Thandi Conradie, the permanent physiotherapist at the time. In her three years working in the rehabilitation department, Katy was instrumental in the opening of the rehabilitation-based ward, Siyaphila, and setting up systems such as the wheelchair database, cerebral palsy groups and an electronic system in Excel to keep track of the department's data to advocate for more staff and equipment. Furthermore, Katy also completed her adult Bobath training during this period and using the knowledge gained from this course played an integral part in establishing Siyaphila block therapy systems and protocols that continue to be used to this day. Katy also completed her basic wheelchair seating course and the Introduction to Cerebral Palsy course in this time which assisted her in setting up a wheelchair and CP service for rehab. In addition to this she organised a Molemolele Onward Intro to CP course at Madwaleni Hospital. During this time working in the department, the funding for the employment of three rehabilitation assistants was withdrawn and it was the realisation of the important role they played in adding quality and supporting care, that led to her dream to start an NPO. Together with her amazing administrative and organisational skills, her contribution as an occupational therapist was the foundation on which many of the Madwaleni rehabilitation systems could be built.

Around the same time that Katy resigned from her hospital work to be at home with her first child, she and two other founding members were on a steep learning curve and putting in the hard work to set up an NPO which would not only support hospital services including employing three rehabilitation translator assistants but with a vision to bring hope and positive change and to see the rural community around the hospital thrive. It was here that the Layita Foundation was founded and over the years has grown into a thriving NPO with three programmes all aiming to come alongside and support the needs of both the hospital and its community. Katy shared the role of overseeing Layita in a voluntary capacity in its early years but has now worked officially as the manager director for the last two years and counting. Katy's role in Layita from the start has meant that she has been involved in the dreaming, planning and outworking stage of every project it runs as well as the day-to-day management of the NPO and its employees and volunteers.

The Layita Foundation has three programmes: First Thousand Days, Early Childhood Development and Healthcare Support. While Katy is involved in each of these programmes and the projects which fall under them, she is also the programme leader of the ECD programme. This has entailed the opening and overseeing of the ECDC, Masikule, which runs on the hospital property and is available to all children of caregivers who work on the hospital property. Currently, 40 children are enrolled in the school, enabling the longevity of healthcare workers at Madwaleni Hospital as well as keeping more families together with the availability of schooling near caregivers' places of work. This school, has a special place in Katy's heart as it was originally set up alongside two other mothers with small children living at Madwaleni Hospital. Her two eldest children are previous and current attendees of the school. The establishment of the school has also given women from the local community previously employed in homes the opportunity to receive further training and become ECD practitioners at the school. Furthermore, Katy provides hands-on occupational therapy and educational support in the Grade R classroom at Masikule on a weekly basis. Other projects which Katy oversees under the ECD programme include the after-school enrichment project which provides extra murals such as Mini Chess, sport and reading clubs to children from the community, the community

literacy project which runs from the Layita library and the ECD network support project. The ECD network support project has provided training and support through resource provision for 8 other ECDC practitioners in the community. The First Thousand Days programme looks to support mothers and families through pregnancy and the early years of life with a dominant focus on supporting appropriate breastfeeding practices throughout this period. The healthcare support programme entails providing assistance with filling some gaps for improved service delivery including that of the assistant translators (3 in the rehabilitation unit and 2 in the outpatients department) to enable better communication and consultations between healthcare workers and their patients. Moreover, the continued running of this foundation provides employment to 13 women from the local community.

Although Katy is not currently working as a 'conventional' occupational therapist as part of a rehabilitation team at a health facility, we feel she optimizes the idea of a rural, community-based therapist enabling the establishment and running of all these projects through the Layita Foundation. She spends her time and energy investing in Layita to therefore invest in both the hospital services and the surrounding community. Moreover, she is committed to deepening her understanding of her surrounding community to make the best cultural considerations she possibly can when implementing or growing projects. What brings her most joy within this role, is when someone from the local community approaches her to assist with their hopes and dreams for their lives and community.

Over-and-above her work with Layita Foundation, Katy home schools her eldest child and their neighbour who are both completing Grade 2 and through this, once again enables another family to continue to stay and work at Madwaleni Hospital. Katy is also committed to supporting other staff and families of the hospital in practical ways like sending cooked meals and assisting with childcare as well as often providing a 'safe space' for people to come and debrief about the triumphs and challenges of rural living. Yes, Katy Miller wears many hats, including occupational therapist, NPO managing director, home schoolteacher and of course mother of 3, yet in everything she does she has and continues to show innovation, excellence and dedication in the way she serves this rural community. She is most worthy of this prestigious award.

Yours in rural health,

Sarah Wilkins

Speech Therapist at Madwaleni District Hospital & Layita Foundation Chairperson

Thandi Conradie

Previous Physiotherapist at Madwaleni District Hospital & Layita Foundation Founder

Dr Michaela Lotz

Medical Officer at Madwaleni District Hospital & Layita Foundation Programme Leader