

Family strength is at the heart of it all

CARMEN JACOBS

THE Department of Social Development wants to strengthen family structures and provide education and assistance in dealing with various social ills in the community with the hosting of its Family Strengths Expos, the first of which took place last week.

Starting last Friday at the Western Cape Sports School in Kuils River, it kicked off on a high note and is one of four expos that will be held during this month.

Running from 14 May until Sunday 16 May, the event featured a range of exhibitions by government and non-government organisations, all with the central theme to educate, uplift and nurture families.

It was held in concurrence with the commemoration of International Day for Families this past Saturday, 15 May.

Dr Ivan Meyer, Western Cape Minister of Social Development delivered the keynote address at the launch. "We know that families are important to the people of the Western Cape, as more than 96% of people in the province live in family groups. Families constitute the most basic unit in society and we also know that a child's first and most important relationship is formed within the family environment."

Meyer went on to say that the expo held last year in Belhar was such a success that he instructed his department to expand the programme to allow more people access to these expos.

Meyer explained that research undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) revealed a lack of resources experienced by families in the province to provide proper care, and also indicated that poor families are more at risk of social ills, such as substance abuse, abuse and crime.

The expo was well attended and not even

the winter rains could keep people away from enjoying the fun and lively atmosphere and entertainment that included performances by the Ensemble Uthingo, a marimba band.

Mr Sakhekile Ndikandika, from the non-profit organisation, Stars of Today, spoke on the importance of attending these kind of events. "These expos are important because we

want to communicate with others, as families, and be united and exposed to solutions for our problems, so that families can know where to go to," he said.

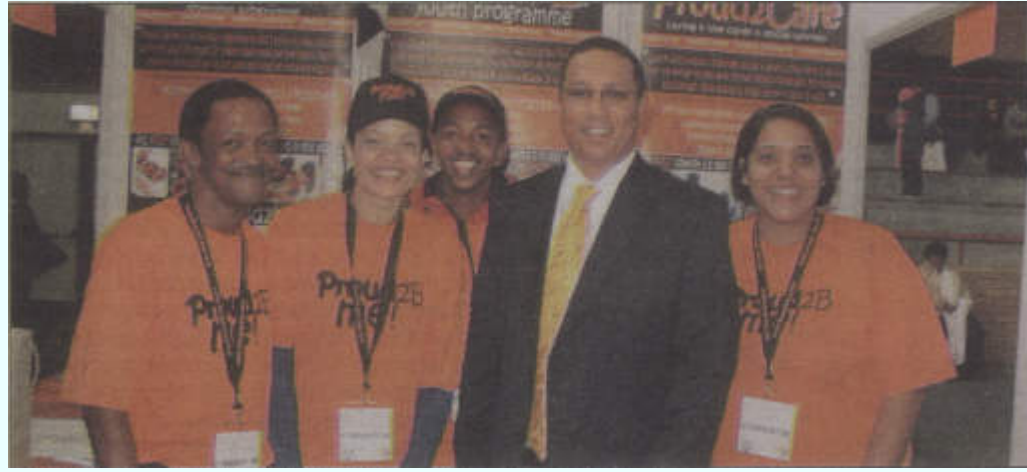
At the event various organisations, aimed at educating people on specific issues, relevant to the creation of healthy family life, exhibited their services.

People present could visit information stalls of organisations such as Hearts of Men, Rape Crisis of South Africa, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Department of Health, Diabetes South Africa and many others.

Mrs Koleka Lubelwana, head of social development said: "Our strategic goal is to foster resilient, caring families and communities and protect the vulnerable. This collaborative venture between government and its social partners, aims to strengthen family and community life."

Local ward councillor Mr Frank Martin accompanied Meyer to the expo.

"I think events such as this one are extremely important as many families are not well informed in relation to social issues. This expo is also a type of eye opener to people and to make them more aware of issues, their rights and how to handle problems they may encounter."



Provincial Minister of Social Development, Dr Ivan Meyer attended the Family Strengths Expo. Here Meyer meets and greets members of the Proud2B skills development organisation. From left are Mr Richard September, Ms Nashita Anthony, Mr Mbululeko Ngidi, Meyer and Mrs Lamise Herring-Ingilis.

Photo: Carmen Jacobs

