

MEDIA RELEASE:

14 September 2016

KZN Department of Health Employees Rewarded for their loyalty and dedication after 40 years' service

PASSION, selfless dedication and an unwavering will to always serve the public with distinction. These are the three common qualities that have underpinned the longevity of three employees of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health who received accolades this week, after 40 years of service.

The employees are Deputy Principal of the KZN College of Nursing Ms Shanti Ramkilowan; pool vehicle driver Mr Jabulani Gumede; and the Chief Director: Executive Support Service Ms Prasheeka Padayachee.

These are their stories:

Shanti Ramkilowan

Ms Shanti Ramkilowan is a self-confessed bookworm who genuinely cares about the nursing profession. For her Master's degree - which she completed at the tender age of 62 last year - she did a thesis based on the causes of attrition among nursing students. She interviewed 290 students.

Among her findings were that some people enter the nursing field despite it not being their career of choice, while many are not aware of the academic intensity of the nursing course and the amount of work it involves.

So, what does it really take to become a nurse?

“The passion must come from you, from inside. You must want to be a nurse. It is a calling,” she says.

“And once you become a nurse, you must stay focused, committed, dedicated and honest. You must communicate. You must always remember as a nurse that you are dealing with patients' lives. That's very important. Also, you must stick to the ethics of the workplace, then you will go a long way.”

She believes the impact of nurses in the value chain of healthcare is such that the profession should be the most recognised in the world.

“Nurses save people's lives. They have the lives of patients in their hands, unlike doctors, who are in short supply all over the world. As a nurse, you are the eyes, the ears... you're everything, of the patient. You'll be the first to recognise a change in the patient's condition. You have to know your patients. You have to be there for them, on the ground. And it is very rewarding. When you see that you've saved a patient's life, nothing compares to the feeling... I loved working in casualty and in the resuscitation ward.”

She joined the Department as a nursing student at RK Khan Hospital in Chatsworth, Durban, in 1973. She then worked her way up the ranks, becoming a midwife at Northdale Hospital before getting her diploma in nursing education in 1981. This allowed her to become a nursing lecturer. In no time, she had been promoted to senior lecturer. She became assistant manager at Grey's Hospital nursing college in 1997. The following year, she became deputy principal of the then Natal College of Nursing, acting as the principal soon afterwards until 2004. For the past 11 years, she has been one of two vice-principals of the KZN Nursing College, responsible for 10 of the Department's 25 nursing schools and four campuses in Zululand, Amajuba, Umzinyathi and King Cetshwayo (ex-Uthungulu) districts.

When she retires in 18 months' time, the mother of two and grandmother of one hopes to find time to pursue some of her hobbies. "I love flowers. I love knitting, and doing lots of community work."

*** **

Jabulani Gumede

Mr Jabulani Gumede, a father of four children and two grandchildren who lives at Imbali Township, Pietermaritzburg, joined the Department in 1976, as a general worker. He became a driver five years later. The soft-spoken, well-dressed 64 year-old is a stickler for time management, and says he has never been involved in a single motor vehicle accident in his career - except for minor fender-benders which were caused by other drivers.

"Time is everything," he says, in IsiZulu. "You have to be on time. It's a mark of respect for other people. When you are late, you end up making mistakes. You must also give people your time. My job has often entailed working away from home, ferrying people to conferences, sometimes during weekends. You can't be in a rush. You can't just leave people, you have to wait."

A devout man of God, he adds: "My Maker has been good to me. It is not of my own doing that I've had such a long career without accidents. God has been protecting me all this time."

He is just as meticulous when it comes to ensuring the roadworthiness of all vehicles that he uses. "You have to check the vehicle thoroughly before using it, and be convinced that it has no problems. If there are, then you must endeavor that they be fixed, or you don't use the it. That way, everything will always go smoothly."

His advice to others who wish to have similar staying power in the workplace?

"You must learn to be content with what you have. Finding faith at a young age has helped me a lot in my life. Many people that I started working with left. I must admit, there were times when I thought I'd leave, but I didn't. There'll be ups and downs in life. You just persevere, work hard, and respect yourself, your job and the people around you."

Mr Gumede says that when he retires next year, he will spend most of his spare time preaching the word of God.

**** **

Prasheeka Padayachee

Commitment to service excellence is Ms Prasheeka Padayachee's second name. Never one to settle for less, her job entails providing executive support to the Head of Department and the MEC, covering a wide range of strategic activities. This includes managing relationships with

stakeholders, managing identified special projects, and co-ordinating functions relating to donations and sponsorships. She also prepares complex reports and presentations, and the project management of the prestigious MEC's Annual Service Excellence Awards ceremony (MASEA), among others. She is also responsible for the overall leadership of Inter-governmental relations, which includes international relations. She also manages ethics in the workplace.

"I developed a passion to serve and always believed in doing the very best in my job, so that I could realise a sense of achievement in serving the needs of others," she says.

"I've also benefitted from the set of values that were inculcated in me in my early days of employment – a strong sense of discipline, loyalty and commitment have remained high on my agenda throughout my career."

The 59 year-old, who has three children and one grandchild, was born in Pietermaritzburg and has lived there all her life.

She started out as an administration clerk at Northdale Hospital on 01 May 1975. Having served for 17 years at the hospital and having achieved the post of Administrative Assistant, she was promoted to the post of Principal Personnel Officer in the former General Provincial Services which was based at Natalia building, in Pietermaritzburg at the time. In March 1993, the amalgamation of the former KwaZulu-Government Services and the Natal Provincial Administration resulted in the disbandment of the General Provincial Services Unit. This saw staff being redeployed to different departments.

She moved to what was known as the Community Services Branch at the time, which was later renamed Local Government and Housing and which is now the current Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta). Whilst there, she was promoted to Personnel Practitioner and thereafter to Senior Personnel Practitioner and remained there in the Human Resources Policy Unit until July 1998. That year, she was promoted to Deputy Director in the Office of the Head of Department of Health. She became Director in the same office, a position which she held until a further promotion in 2006 wherein she took up the position of General Manager: Corporate Governance. She held this position until December 2012. At the start of 2013, she became Chief Director: Executive Support Services in the office of the HOD, where she is currently based.

Sharing her pearls of wisdom about life, she says: "Nothing comes easily. It takes hard work, sheer dedication and perseverance to achieve your goals in life. I've always lived by the values inculcated in me by my parents. Education is the best legacy that I can give my children so that they can have a good quality of life – the rest is up to them. Life has also taught me that it's critical to embrace change, in order to be successful in life.

"Young people should learn that a qualification does not get you to where you want to be immediately – give yourself time to acquire experience and become an expert in your job before taking the next step. Build confidence, be hungry to learn new things. Do not be afraid of new challenges – they will make you stronger and help you grow. Remember that when you choose your career, you must have a passion for it. Always be true to yourself and hold on to your dreams and aspirations. Always put aside emotions in a difficult situation and deal with the issue. Be objective, honest and conduct yourself with integrity. Never give up."

At a high-level management meeting held at the Department's provincial headquarters, Natalia building, in Pietermaritzburg yesterday (13 September 2016), KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali congratulated the three employees for their loyalty, and for serving the Department with distinction.

“We are really fortunate to have in our midst people who are so dedicated to their work. They are a huge inspiration and a good example for others to learn from. They are an inspiration and deserve to be congratulated,” said Dr Mtshali.

MEC Dhlomo added: “We are indeed honoured to call this distinguished trio our own colleagues. Between themselves, they have 120 years of invaluable institutional knowledge and experience in their chosen fields. This kind of loyalty is rare. It is truly special, and it’s something that no amount of money can buy. We hope that other employees will learn something from them before they retire,” said MEC Dhlomo.



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and Head of Department Dr Sifiso Mtshali with the recipients of the 40 years Long Service Certificates, Ms Shanti Ramlakhan; Ms Prasheeka Padayachee and Mr Jabulani Gumede.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health