

Chairman's Report Arthritis Foundation of South Africa October 2019:

2019 has been an ambivalent year for the Arthritis Foundation. There have been notable gains in some areas and losses in others, as we have adapted to changes in leadership and readjusted some of our operations to focus on core matters such as governance, legal compliance and financial security while at the same time trying to deliver to the members of the Arthritis Foundation the support and advocacy that they deserve.

Board Membership:

2019 was a time of change on the board of the Arthritis Foundation. Numerous members had served beyond their terms and stepped down as a result while others resigned for various other reasons. In no order:

Dr Anne Halland
Dr Ingrid Louw
Dr Johan Van Rensburg
Ms Sue Van Der Valk
Prof Bridgit Hodgkinson

We would like to thank each of these unique and gifted individuals for the time, energy and skill that they gave voluntarily to the Arthritis Foundation. You will all be missed.

The process of appointing new board members is underway and newly appointed members will join the existing board members:

Mr Luvuyo Zahela
Dr Elsa Van Duuren
Dr Ann Stanwix
Sr Margeret Phillips
Ms Thandi Ramathesele
Prof Chris Scott

We hope to attract a strong group of people who will continue to keep the mission of the Arthritis Foundation as their goal and bring a new range of skills and ideas to take us forward.

Regional Offices and activities:

There have been numerous changes at regional level. A process of centralizing certain functions was undertaken late in 2018. Branches in Pretoria, Durban and Helderberg have closed or are dormant. Branches in Johannesburg, Soweto, PE have held numerous events and are to be warmly congratulated on their efforts. The Cape Town Community Liaison team have had a busy 3 months with more than 30 support group meetings in the last 3 months. This is a great achievement. Membership numbers show that Gauteng and Western Cape have the highest numbers, followed

closely by KZN where we currently do not have any branch activities. Consideration should be given as to how this can be remedied.

Financials:

This has been a very challenging year for the Arthritis Foundation. Our current model of operations is unsustainable. Office rental and staffing costs, in addition to the day to day functioning of the AF have means that our operating costs are not adequately covered by fundraising. A more sustainable model is being sought and changes that will bring us to a healthier position will have to be made.

The CEO:

Ann Olivier has resigned for personal reasons, bringing to an end her very busy tenure. Ann came into the organization at a difficult time and has committed great effort into structural reorganization and improving governance structures and accountability at National and Regional level. On behalf of the board I would like to thank her for her hard work and commitment to the task and wish her every success in her new role.

Membership:

While membership numbers are up compared to March this year there is still a great amount that needs to be done in ensuring that we attract new and active members. We will only do this by providing patients with support and advocacy that improves their lives in some way and perhaps even excites them and inspires them to contribute to the cause of improving the lives of all people living with arthritis. We some work to do in deciding how we can improve the service that we deliver and what it is that motivates people to join and become active members. Active members who are not just consumers but are activists and fundraisers will enable us to fulfill our mandates. I have no doubt that our membership is willing and able to contribute in a multitude of ways and it is up to us to work out how best to empower them to do so.

Awareness:

The last year has seen the Arthritis Foundation really starting to exploit the social media space to get their messages out there. From the CEO's blogs to Facebook and other social media postings the footprint and increasing numbers of hits and "likes", our social media influence has been transformed. Our challenge lies in how to grow this even further and transform passive consumers of social media to become active members. The Arthritis Insight magazine continues to be an important part of our awareness mission. The recent WORD (World Young Rheumatic Diseases) day celebrations gave opportunities for numerous social media, television and radio interviews. The South African event, a trip/climb up Table Mountain for children with Rheumatic Diseases from Red Cross, Groote Schuur and Tygerberg was a massive success and singled out as one of the most impactful events from around world. The International social media impact for WORD day attracted 2585 Facebook followers, 959 000 video views, 40 000 likes, shares or comments and posts were seen 646 000 times.



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The Arthritis Foundation of South Africa continues to deliver on its mandate, though challenges abound. While some tough choices will have to be made in the coming months, I remain positive about the future of our organization. We will emerge from these stormy seas stronger, more united and more motivated than ever before.



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