

Pupils dip into their pockets to help needy

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HIGH school pupils sold muffins, hosted shows and saved their pocket money to raise more than R40 000 to support charities.

Nine schools in the Western Cape participated in the fourth annual Youth in Philanthropy Programme South Africa (Yippsa), in which pupils are taught social responsibility and fundraising, and receive support to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Juanita Theo, 17, a Grade 12 pupil who has been a Yippsa social committee member at St Andrew's High School in Elsies River for two years, said it was the small things that counted.

The committee sold 150 muffins every day at R1.50 each, and hosted a disco karaoke which raised R7 000 for the Cravenby Care Centre.

"A lot of pupils at our school do not have their basic needs met. We couldn't see it and not do something about it," she said.

The committee also regularly visited the centre, and the money was used to cover the costs of electricity, clothing and shelter for abused women and children in the area, she said.

Juanita said many of her schoolmates lived there.

She said it was when she met a pregnant teen with HIV last year, who had also used drugs, that her own life changed.

"It made me think differently. You can't judge people you meet on the streets. My approach to homeless people has changed. Now I have faith in them and know they wouldn't be there if they didn't have to be," she said.

Nomzekelo Marala, 18, a Yippsa social committee member at Luhlaza High School in Khayelitsha, said it was difficult to entice youth to volunteer.

"They don't understand that they won't be getting something in return.

"They don't understand that when you give, you feel good, and have belief that things are going to change," she said.

While pupils at her schools did not have money to give, they could offer their services.

"We did not collect a large amount of money, but the volunteering means a lot," she said.

The committee hosted a drama festival and washed the teachers' cars, which raised R800, and also collected toys for the Zandi Educare Centre.

The programme aims to build a culture of giving and service among high school pupils, and equip them with the knowledge and skills to deal with topical issues.

The 47 participants received celebratory certificates at a function in Sea Point yesterday.

"Raising the sort of money they have - in the communities in which they work" is never easy.

"But their efforts illustrate that volunteerism and philanthropy are possible even in the most difficult of circumstances," said Yippsa programme co-ordinator Samantha Castle.

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