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UCT staff member learns to read and write at age 60

For her 60th birthday, Edna Dirks, who works at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Groote Schuur Residence, received the gift she had been wishing for – an opportunity to learn to read and write for the first time.

Due to circumstances, Dirks was never able to receive any form of formal schooling and hence was never given the opportunity to learn to read or write. With her birthday coming up she shared with a colleague that her one wish was to “write from her heart”. The Student Housing and Residence Life team got together and raised funds to make this dream come true before her surprise 60th birthday party in June.

Having worked for the residence for the past 18 years, Dirks is part of the family. She lost her husband in the past few years but has remained committed to her job, a testament to her determined character. In August 2018, Dirks started her literacy lessons at Portlands High School in Mitchells Plain. The lessons are provided, for six months, by the Western Cape Community Education and Training College who provide Adult Basic Education and Training and Matric training for UCT staff.

This was possible because of funding from Advocate Thuli Madonsela, assistance from psychologist Charissa Bloomberg (Hidden Dimensions) and the generous gift of bifocal spectacles from Lesley-Ann van Selm (Khulisa Social Solutions) and Spectacle Warehouse in Wynberg (Optometrist Craig Banda & Dispenser Maysive Ngilana).

In her first ever written letter, Dirks shared that although it is not easy for someone of her age to sit and learn in a classroom she is excited to experience what it would have been like to learn as a child, an opportunity she never had. She also thanked everyone involved for making her “dream come true”.

At Dirk's birthday party, manager of Student Housing Lt Cdr Anthony-Glenn von Zeil, shared that he and the team were “looking forward to hearing about her progress and our community will be supporting her initiative to write from her heart.”

To his team and everyone who contributed, he added: “Thank you again for making this all possible! It demonstrates to our students and future leaders that we can make a positive difference and build a winning nation”.

To :- NERGESHA.

Received - N. Ndlovu
29/10/2018

Where
is
the
bed

For somebody knew nothing about AOB so far for these few months I learn a lot. This is my first words I can write out of my head for out looking on a paper or something. But it is not easy very tough for a person at this age who never ever been at school and at this age to be in a classroom. It is so excited so now I can feel how should it have been as a child to be at school but never had that opportunity maybe it was not meant to be that time everything got a reason. But I want to say Thank You to all of you who were involve to make my Dream come true.

Give me time to write my own letter to say Thank You when the time is right. Things can't happen over night

First letter written by Edna Dirks.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Aamirah Sunday

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