

# Quigney event raises funds to treat heart defects in newborns

**BOMIKAZI MDIYA**

Heart Kids SA held a run/walk event at the beachfront in Quigney on Saturday as part of a campaign to highlight congenital heart defects (CHD).

Young and old entrants completed the five kilometres to raise funds.

The organisation supports mothers with children who have heart defects, both financially and emotionally.

Saturday's winners received gift vouchers, medals, and vegetables.

According to the World Health Organisation, CHD is the number one birth defect in the world and affects one in 100 babies.

Thembeke Kondile of Ndevana said her daughter was diagnosed at Cecilia Makiwane Hospital in 2017. That was her first encounter with Heart Kids SA.

"She was six weeks old when she was diagnosed and was sent to Cape Town's Red Cross Children's Hospital, where she had an operation.

"She does go for regular check-ups but has never encountered any challenges since," she said.

Kondile said she had received much needed support from the organisation. Her daughter is doing well now and is in grade one.

Nomfundo Jakavula of Unit P said her child had been diagnosed in March 2023 with CHD and had an operation in June.

"Heart Kids SA are very supportive. During the time I was at the hospital in Cape Town, they would visit.

"They never came empty-handed; they would bring necessary items such as toiletries and gifts for the children."

Nurse and mother of Unakho Ntshintshi, Noxolo, said she had known of the organisation since 2014.

Her daughter, known as East London's heart warrior and Daily Dispatch Local Hero 2019, was born with a complex set of congenital heart disorders.

She received her life-changing heart transplant at Groote Schuur Hospital more than a year ago and is doing grade 12 at Westbank High School.

"They helped us form a support group.

"I got to know them via Facebook. They visited us at the hospital and made sure we were cared for.

"To have a child with CHD means surgery and frequent check-ups.

"Heart Kids created a platform for children to look forward to their hospital visits because they are given gifts according to their age groups," Noxolo said.

Paediatrician Dr Chere Goldswain said she has two to three new patients diagnosed with CHD every month.

"There are screening units to measure the level of oxygen in babies. Unfortunately, hospitals don't always have all the equipment," she said.

Goldswain said parents

should check a newborn's oxygen levels before leaving the hospital.

"If they notice the baby's mouth is blue when they cry, get tired and short of breath when they are feeding, then they should be concerned."

Goldswain said they send most of their patients to the Red Cross.

Heart Kids' director Charlotte Lombard said: "The NPO was started when my grandson was born with CHD.

"My daughter researched it and started the organisation to educate people.

"We know how we felt when we heard the diagnosis, so we try to support parents. We work in various hospitals across the country."

She said there was a huge lack of resources.

"We support parents on their journey because it can affect relationships with the other children in a family," she said.

Lombard said they worked with both Frere and Cecilia Makiwane hospitals.

●● **To have a child with CHD means surgery and frequent check-ups**

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