

## GOLDEN GAMES 2024: CELEBRATING SENIOR SPORTING EXCELLENCE AND FITNESS IN MBOMBELA



Last week, the vibrant city of Mbombela in the scenic Mpumalanga province hosted the annual Active Ageing programme known as "The Golden Games" at Hoerskool Nelspruit, organized by the Department of Social Development (DSD). This two-day extravaganza, under the theme **"Leaving No One Behind during the Decade of Healthy Ageing,"** served as a testament to the unwavering commitment towards empowering senior citizens by providing them with a platform to showcase their indomitable spirit and prowess in various sporting activities. Participants from across the nation

gathered at the prestigious venue to showcase their unwavering dedication to fitness and competition.

Other activities were educational workshops, social engagement, and the provision of healthcare services. The programme aims to enhance the quality of life, reduce isolation, and foster community belonging, aligning with national efforts.

*"As a future pensioner myself, this is one of the most important initiatives for senior citizens, and as the NDA, we support this initiative."*

*It also encourages us to keep active so that we can age gracefully." – emphasized Mr. Maxwell Mathebula, NDA Provincial Manager in Mpumalanga regarding the significance of the Active Ageing Programme.*

Participants' stories showcased determination and resilience, inspiring attendees to embrace healthy aging and the boundless potential within them, regardless of age. Here are some of the stories from the participants highlighting the significance of the event:

Say "No" to Gender Based Violence #Kwanele

## 1. Faith, Fitness, and Fortitude: Joseph Goma's Inspiring Path to the 2024 National Golden Games

We spotlight an outstanding individual whose rise to the peak of sporting excellence defies age and geography. Mr Joseph Goma (74) of Dipeni in Limpopo province, a Bishop of the United African Apostolic Church (UAAC), emerges as a source of inspiration as he prepares to compete in the coveted event. With persistent determination and a lifetime of dedication, Mr Goma symbolises the spirit of resilience, illustrating that age is no barrier to pursue one's sporting devotion.

He has competed in the National Golden Games since 2017, representing Team Limpopo in the 800m relay. Coming into the 2024 National Golden Games, Mr Goma was thrilled to have made it to the games, through finishing first in the regional, district, and provincial qualification rounds, and was now looking forward to helping his team claim the ultimate prize.

He is a part of the Pastors forum and the Community Forum that assists the community in various social issues they are facing.

*"I encourage other elder persons to get used to the idea of exercising and make it a habit as it will keep their bodies fit. It also suppresses the burden brought by various chronic illnesses. To the youth, I say you can learn a thing or two from the elders, it will keep you trouble free and combat unnecessary illnesses."* said Mr Joseph Goma.

Mr. Goma finished second in the 800m relay and was already looking forward to next year, where he hopes to go one place better than this year.



## 2. Strength in Unity: Northwest Pensioners Unite for Active Ageing and Sporting Excellence

From the Northwest Province we had chat with Mr. Zenzele Mdidimba (62) who is from Mogwase Village. Mr. Mdidimba is a member of the Active aging Programme organising Team.

Although Mr. Mdidimba is concerned about the lack of sufficient funding for the team, he is encouraged that older persons are so eager to participate in active aging programmes to an extent that they fund some of the equipment required.

*"I am incredibly happy to see many older persons participating in sports and looking after their wellbeing. Being here makes me proud and I am motivated to continue. I am now fit and always ready to jump unlike before where I was always tired and I did not see the reason to keep fit,"* said Mdidimba.

Mr. Mdidimba's countenance dimmed a little when he spoke about the youth. He said, "my wish is that young people behave well, refrain from drug use and alcohol so that they can age well and healthy." They should also protect and respect their elders. He continued to say the notion of accusing older persons of witchcraft is due to lack of information, people must learn about mental illnesses for the witch hunt to stop.



## 3. Thriving through Wellness: A Free State Resident's commitment to health

Mrs Jemina Thapeli (76) resides in QwaQwa, Free State. She got into a culture of exercising and participating in sports after the realization that people develop all sort of illnesses as they age. There was a team of other elder persons in her community that she then decided to join.

Mrs Thapeli said, "the team does all kinds of exercises. We get support and encouragement from the youth and community which makes it even better. I love farming and sewing, that is how I keep myself busy. I share the produce from my garden with the less privileged in my community".

She thanked the organizers of the games. She was mostly encouraged by the media people and the young people who were present to witness what elder persons can do. "I am honored and I feel so special," said Mrs Thapeli.



Say "No" to Gender Based Violence #Kwanele