

# Belgian family's high court quest to make SA beaches safer

Warning signs go up nearly a decade after brother drowns in Wild Coast rip tide

RAY HARTLE

The family of a Belgian man who drowned in the ocean off the Ntafufu River mouth in April 2011 have spent most of the past decade being activists for greater safety at beaches along the SA coast.

They now have the benefit of a high court order to ensure that signs will soon be posted at Ntafufu beach on the Wild Coast, and elsewhere, to warn beach visitors of the dangers of the SA coastline — efforts that may prevent a similar tragedy being experienced by another family.

Belgian tourist Bavo Verheyden, 21, joined his brother Bart, a doctor at a hospital in North West, for a mid-April 2011 holiday on the Wild Coast at Khululeka Retreat (now known as Ntafufu Eco Lodge), north of Port St Johns.

While swimming at a beach near the Ntafufu River mouth, the brothers were pulled deeper into the ocean, until a big wave hit them.

Bavo disappeared but Bart managed to swim out. Bavo's body was found a few days later, about 5km from where they had been swimming.

After an assessment of sea safety measures in the coastal region where Bavo drowned,

Many of these drowning victims come from regions or countries where the sea is far away and no attention is paid to open water swimming education.

members of his family were galvanised into initiating a project to promote safety for visitors to SA beaches.

Bavo's mother, Caroline Deneels, confirmed on Friday that she was implementing a court order for signage to go up at Ntafufu beach.

Every hour of the day, one foreign tourist drowns in the ocean somewhere in the world, the family states on the website of Safe Coastal Tourism.

The organisation works to ensure coastal hotels or resorts indicate on their website or erect a sign on its property or the nearest beach warning visitors of the danger of swimming in the ocean in the absence of a lifeguard and of the possibility of rip currents.

"Many of these drowning victims come from regions or countries where the sea is far away and no attention is paid to open water swimming education.

"The absence of the sea and

the ocean in their daily lives makes those tourists completely unacquainted with the dangers of the sea."

Danneels led the family's campaign to the high court in the Western Cape in a civil claim for damages against the owners of the former resort where the brothers stayed, Khululeka Retreat.

The family was concerned that visitors to SA beaches should be made aware of potential hazards such as rip currents, hidden rocks, unexpected high waves, bluebottles, sharks and jellyfish.

Since trained lifeguards are typically alert to these hazards, it is advisable that beachgoers only swim at beaches where lifeguards are on duty.

In terms of a R500,000 settlement agreement, which was confirmed by the high court in September 2019, Khululeka acknowledged its failure to comply with its legal duty to warn the Verheyden brothers of the

potential danger of swimming at Ntafufu beach "where local knowledge is required to identify the risks" of rip currents.

In line with the family's objective, and as ordered by the court, the resort must place a sign on Ntafufu beach and on the lodge property warning of the possible presence of rip tides and the danger of swimming in the ocean in the absence of a lifeguard.

Dr Eckart Schumann of the Nelson Mandela University department of geoscience was an expert witness in the claim for damages which the family brought against the resort.

He confirmed a 2011 police report that the Verheyden brothers probably were caught in a rip current, a regular occurrence along that stretch of coastline because of the straight, exposed coastline, strong winds and sandbanks.

The family, whose hometown of Louvain in Belgium is the seat of the International Lifesaving Federation (ILF), has been able to leverage international support for their SA initiative. They also attended the international conference on drowning prevention in Durban in 2019.

The family has worked closely with Lifesaving SA (LSA), which annually presents the Bavo Verheyden award for SA's best drowning prevention programme and promotes related safety initiatives and advisories.



SEEING THE NEED: Bernadine Norton outside her home during one of her recent soup kitchen feeding days. Picture: SUPPLIED

# 'Just a little love' from Egoli good Samaritan

MADELEINE CHAPUT  
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"You can't just sit back, you have to do something."

So says kind-hearted Egoli resident and founder of the Net 'n Bietjie Liefde soup kitchen, Bernadine Norton.

Norton, who has lived in Egoli for the past 22 years, runs her soup kitchen two to three days a week.

Primarily running operations from her home, Norton manages to feed 200-300 people each day.

Norton said when she was able to she also visited Vergeenog, Pefferville and Parkside to distribute the soup she made in her kitchen.

"Seeing the poverty in my community is what inspired me to do this," said Norton, 52.

"Seeing all the children in the streets that are so full of alcohol and drug abuse, I had to do something."

Norton said her soup kitchen was made possible by the friends and family who helped her every week.

"I have no permanent sponsors so I usually get donations from my friends, and my hubby helps me a lot too," said Norton.

Chanell Norton, a fellow Egoli resident and extended family member, joined Norton this year.

Chanell said the community was rife with unemployment and poverty.

Many elderly residents lived on Sassa grants and had to take care of grandchildren.

"I wanted to start my own soup kitchen because there is such a big need for it. Bernadine

was helping me to start it up, but when lockdown happened I joined her," Chanell said.

"This soup kitchen is so essential for the community. People are really struggling."

Norton said the lockdown had been particularly difficult, but that she had continued to run her soup kitchen throughout.

"In lockdown it's definitely become worse. Everyone is struggling, and more and more people are in need of food.

"I've bought some disposable masks and distributed them. Many don't know or don't take the situation seriously, so I'm trying to get some health workers to come out and do awareness talks.

"I've thought of stopping my soup kitchen once or twice because it's a risk for me too, but when people come to my door it just breaks my heart," Norton said.

Norton sanitises outside her home every week for everyone's safety.

She has also been making food parcels for the elderly in her community during the lockdown.

"There were quite a few people who didn't receive food parcels so whatever we have left over or can find in my cupboard we put together as food parcels for those who need."

Norton said the soup kitchen had become her number one passion.

"I really enjoy it and it's definitely my passion — you can't do it without passion.

"Helping others is second nature to me and I thank God for giving me the strength to do it."

## Local Hero

Do you know a selfless person who goes the extra mile for the good of others, a local hero who makes something good out of nothing but a desire to improve the quality of life for the community. That's the person we would like to meet!



## NOMINATE YOUR LOCAL HERO

Email your local hero's name and contact number, and yours as well, to: [localheroes@dispatch.co.za](mailto:localheroes@dispatch.co.za) or call 043-702-2000/2242

## Royal Funeral



Queen Noloyiso Sandile is laid to rest in Mngqesha near King William's town. Pictures: LULAMILE FENI



## Pupils can now explore Table Mountain virtually

School pupils and the public can now explore Table Mountain virtually.

As a way to provide greater access to the mountain, in 2001 the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC) launched its Class in the Clouds programme.

The programme gives pupils and their teachers the opportunity to step out of the classrooms for a fun day of interactive learning at the top of the mountain.

According to Wahida Parker, MD at TMACC, Class in the Clouds was started as a way to give back, educate and inspire the youth of local communities.

"We aim to empower and upskill youngsters to improve their access to tertiary education and possible job opportunities, adding value to the lives of our youth."

More than 325,000 pupils have taken part in the programme.

As part of the lockdown regulations, the cableway has been unable to open its operations to accommodate visitors.

But this has not stopped the organisation from finding new ways for pupils to access the mountain, including the development of a 360 virtual tour of

the top of the mountain. "This brings a whole new dimension to our Class in the Clouds programme," Parker said.

"Learners and educators now have the chance to explore the mountain virtually. The experience allows students and teachers to traverse the pathways and experience our beautiful scenery online."

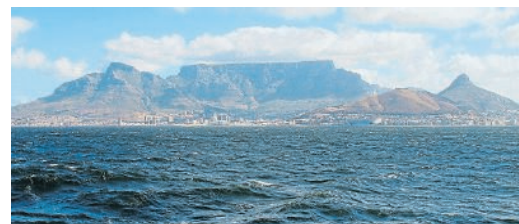
The tour is available on the TMACC website, and there are plans to incorporate storytelling and voice activated narration as part of the experience.

The programme includes educational packs with fun, interactive activities for pupils such as word searches, quizzes, crosswords and group challenges.

Facilitator notes equip teachers with a summary of the information contained in the packs, as well as mini assessments they can set for their students.

"The educational materials for our programme are all available online and can be downloaded from our website to provide teachers and educational assistants with unique resources for their students." Class in the Clouds programme manager Fiona Magobiane said.

Parker added: "As a leader in



School pupils and the public can now explore Table Mountain virtually.

responsible tourism, social investment forms an important part of this — particularly through programmes like Class in the Clouds."

The virtual Table Mountain tour can be found at <https://www.tablemountain.net/content/page/class-in-the-clouds>. — DDR



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### NOTICE CALLING FOR THE INSPECTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY VALUATION ROLL (2) IN TERMS OF THE MUNICIPAL PROPERTY RATES ACT 6 OF 2004

The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality wishes to give a notice in terms of Section 49(1) (a)(i) read together with Section 78(2) of the Local Government Municipal Property Rates Act 6 of 2004 (As amended), that the Municipality's Supplementary Valuation Roll 2 for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2024 will be open for public inspection at All Municipal offices during office hours, from 13 July 2020 to 28 August 2020.

- At All Municipal Office's in Raymond Mhlaba Area ( EC129)
- At All library's in the Raymond Mhlaba Area

Notice is further given in terms of sec 49(1) (a) (ii) read together with Section 78(2) of the Municipal Property Rates Act 6 of 2004 (As amended), that the owner of an immovable property or any other person who desires may lodge an objection with the Municipal Manager in respect of any matter reflected in, or omitted from the Supplementary Valuation Roll 2 within the above mentioned period.

In terms of Sect 50(2) of the Municipal rates Act 6 of 2004, an objection must be in relation to a specific individual property and not against the Supplementary Valuation Roll. The form for lodging an objection is obtainable from the Municipal offices or the Municipal Website. [www.raymondmhlaba.gov.za](http://www.raymondmhlaba.gov.za)

Completed forms must be returned to any Municipality offices in Raymond Mhlaba Area on or before 28 July 2020, please note that objections lodged after the closing date will not be considered.

For Further enquiries please contact the Project Manager (Mr.Britz) at Raymond Mhlaba Municipality Property Valuation Office at: (046) 645 7437.

**Municipal Manager**  
Me. U T Malinzi

RAYMOND MHLABA MUNICIPALITY