

# **PRESS RELEASE**

***JUNE 2002***

## **MONTECASINO HELPS EDUCATE LOCAL COMMUNITY ON HIV/AIDS**

Montecasino have joined forces internationally with the University of Michigan in the USA and locally, with the Return to Roots Africa Programme, in a positive initiative to educate local communities on HIV/AIDS.

Thirteen students, together with [Professor Nesha Haniff](#) from the University of Michigan, are currently in the country to implement their Pedagogy of Action Study Abroad programme which seeks to contribute to the fight against HIV/Aids in South Africa .

Montecasino has come on board to assist in implementing this programme by hosting a five day educational session carried out by six of the students.

Montecasino has also involved the Witkoppen Health and Welfare Centre in this project as they have been given the responsibility to source 25 people from the surrounding communities to partake in the programme. Historical infusion has taken place, as five of the 25 participants are traditional healers who are enthusiastic and eager to play an integral role in this programme.

The module of HIV education 1 is designed to educate the non-literate and to empower them to become second-generation teachers to enable them to teach HIV prevention to their own communities. The programme at Montecasino will run from 10 June to 14 June. At the end of the training, all 25 participants will receive certificates from Montecasino.

Issues of public concern such as HIV/AIDS and Breast Cancer Awareness form a significant part of Montecasino's social responsibility programme. "We are honoured to be a part of a programme which can reach people in our surrounding communities at grass roots level and which can have a far reaching effect," says Steve Howell, general manager at Montecasino.

"Montecasino has been a corporate pioneer in this programme as they have not only extended their commitment of upliftment and education to communities which are in need, but have also included their staff in the programme," says Professor Haniff. The final leg of the training necessitates that the participants teach the module in order for the trainers to ascertain whether the correct message will be taken back into the communities. A group consisting of Montecasino staff will form part of the audience which will be taught the module by the participants.

Professor Haniff from the Center for Afro-American and African Studies and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan says "the programme has been devised to not only assist communities in need of HIV/AIDS awareness, but also to impact, challenge and enrich the worldview of the student participants". The study abroad programme accomplishes this goal by having students work with community groups in South African townships and surrounding areas to help with HIV prevention education efforts.

Through the training of teachers, the education intervention is completely sustainable. The programme therefore aims to not only give students and members of participating South African townships an invaluable exercise in activism and social responsibility, but also to leave communities with an HIV/AIDS education that has tremendous potential to positively impact community health.

Professor Haniff, who has dedicated the most part of her life to this programme has even managed to get the buy in from certain governments.

The Caribbean Government, for example has adopted this methodology as part of their national HIV/AIDS programme which has proven to be successful over the last 12 years. "The positive spin offs from this kind of training initiative go beyond the obvious. In many countries participants have either learnt to read and write on their own accord or have entered into the health field," says Professor Haniff.

"It has been a great desire and commitment of mine to implement this programme in South Africa, a country which has fallen victim to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We are optimistic that we'll achieve great results in South Africa too."