

2010 children's christmas party

08 December 2010

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the 2010 children's christmas party, Rhodes Park, Kensington – Johannesburg

Programme Director

MMC for Community Development: Clr Bafana Sithole

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Chairpersons of Council Committees

Fellow Councillors

Managers and Officials

Sponsors

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Most importantly, the children

Programme Director, this is a wonderful day. We meet here to celebrate a very special occasion - every child's birthday. Many of you would be pleased to know that this party is now an annual event.

A birthday, as you know is an annual anniversary of the day on which a person is born.

For children all over the world a birthday party is something that everybody looks forward to with eager anticipation. In most cultures birthdays are associated with presents, with something special to eat and with much fun and laughter.

Let me tell you about the oldest known person in the world:

- Name – Juana Bautista de la Candelaria Rodreguez
- Born 11 February 1885
- Country: Cuba
- Village: Santa Rosa
- Age: 125 years old

This grandmother and great old lady has celebrated a total of a hundred and twenty five birthdays! All of us here must celebrate many many birthdays and live to a ripe old age.

Sadly, we also know that there are thousands of children in our country and in our City who seldom, if ever, get an opportunity to celebrate a birthday. We know, that many of our children come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. Some, at an early age, fend for themselves, become heads of families, are victims of abuse and/or domestic violence.

Today's party comes at a time when our annual 16 Days of Activism campaign is drawing to a close. This global campaign draws the public attention towards the issue of violence that are directed against women and children.

As a responsible and caring City, we cannot sit back with folded arms while so many young children find themselves on the streets begging for a living, vulnerable to crime and unable

to receive decent food and shelter.

To those children we would like to take this opportunity to say that in the City of Johannesburg we love you, we care about you, we are concerned about your situation and we are determined to do everything possible to improve the quality of your lives.

Those who are familiar with the issues will agree with me that this is formidable challenge. To succeed, we need a partnership. At this special time of the year when most of the major religions and communities are celebrating the festive season, we are calling upon all stakeholders: the social workers, NGOs, civil society organisations, volunteers and all others to join us in addressing this complex challenge.

Programme Director, I would like to urge the private sector to get involved in such initiative at a much larger scale than is currently the case. Quite often, companies are looking for opportunities to direct their corporate social investment spending and I think that they should explore support for initiatives dealing with neglected children and women.

Today – we are celebrating your birthday. Happy Birthday!!!

To the one thousand children who are celebrating this birthday with us today, I would like to emphasise once again that:

- the City of Johannesburg love you and care about you.
- You have a right to be treated with respect, dignity and love.
- It is our responsibility to protect you, to ensure that you are not neglected and
- To also ensure that you grow up into responsible and caring adults and citizens.

As government and as society at large we must be inspired by this event to dedicate ourselves to the protection of our young children – and all other vulnerable individuals – to ensure that the fruit of a better life is shared by all.

Happy birthday to all the children present here today, and may you be blessed with many many more years to come!

To everyone, have a happy and joyous Festive Season.

Enjoy the occasion.

Thank you.