

Students making a difference on Phelophepa

Being a psychology student on rails was probably the last thing on Asisipho Petela's mind when she registered for her tertiary studies. But she accedes, that the Transnet Foundation's Phelophepa healthcare train has given her more than she bargained for, in terms of experience.

"Coming on to the train has opened my eyes to so many different things. Going out into these communities has also awakened my spirit of 'ubuntu' and encouraged me to want to make more of a difference in the communities..." she says.

For many students and volunteers, the train gives them an opportunity to do a lot of things for the first time. For some, it's seeing their first client, making their first mistakes or even touching and tasting snow for the first time. It's also about personal growth and self-reflection.

Asisipho says Phelophepa has made her more passionate about her career path and helping those in need.

It's a different way of life on Phelophepa, but there is a great sense of community and mutual respect between staff, volunteers and students, she says, and for many, the most satisfying and worthwhile experience is being able to help others.

"Volunteering is such rewarding work because you do it for the people and your reward is that smile on someone's face at the end, just that feeling of knowing you have changed a life or left a fingerprint on someone's heart."

Asisipho's words highlight the caring attitudes of staff members and the gratification of working on this unique healthcare train.