

Editorial

December is holiday time. It's also a time to reflect on the year gone by. This year saw the introduction of the MyCiti bus system, which has been great for commuters tired of struggling to get out of the neighbourhood in the morning with their cars.

But, it's not perfect and the City of Cape Town's new card system has received flak for the load fees. This year also saw officials squabbling over the fate of shipwreck, Seli 1, which could become a permanent fixture on Table View's shoreline unless they come to some agreement.

Tabletalk readers also got news of illegal abortions in Summer Greens, a foetus dumped in Rietvlei and a woman from Brooklyn who had acid sprayed onto her face while travelling home in a taxi.

With all the bad news around, it's easy to expect the worst, but a Bothasig woman's faith in humanity was restored when she was saved by a passer-by – a good Samaritan.

She would have bled to death after she tripped over her dog and her arm ploughed through a window, severing an artery, but the kindness of a stranger saved her life.

If anything, that should represent the spirit of giving, kindness and faith over the festive season.

Tabletalk wishes all its readers a merry Christmas, a happy New Year and a safe journey, if you're travelling.



■ A young woman enjoys a moment of solitude on the beach at Milnerton.

PICTURE: COLIN BROWN

Speaking out against gender-based violence

"Peace in the home and peace in the world" was the theme for this year's international 16 Days of Activism Campaign to end violence against women.

The South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI) based in Zonnebloem emphasises the importance of addressing faith issues and interventions with men who abuse their intimate partners as central to the quest to reduce and eradicate gender-based violence.

"South Africa has come a long way in addressing violence against women and children and we are slowly but surely mobilising religious leaders and faith communities to become of the solution. This is the 12th year that South Africa has taken part in the international campaign and it is encouraging to observe the heightened awareness among the public," said Saffi director Elizabeth Petersen of Mitchell's Plain.

At its main 16 days event this year, SAFFI brought together religious leaders, NGOs and government institutions that intervene with perpetrators of gender-based violence at the University of the Western Cape. Reverend Mpho Tutu, patron of SAFFI, opened the multi-faith roundtable conference.

"This conference, the first of its kind, provided an opportunity for participants to learn about programmes for men who abuse their intimate partners and explored how religious leaders and faith communities can collaborate to hold perpetrators accountable and contribute to personal restorative justice.

"We must focus on interventions with perpetrators to expand safety options for abused women and their families. Religious Leaders play a unique role in the lives of victims, survivors, perpetrators and their families. Their presence and involvement during interventions with vulnerable families, can be the key to the healing and restoration of each individual affected by gender-based violence," Ms Petersen said.

Until such time that religious leaders recognise their crucial role and equip themselves to collaborate with existing NGOs and government institutions, eradicating violence against women will not be possible.

"In all our encounters during the 16 Days Campaign, there was an outcry for religious leaders and



■ Elizabeth Petersen of Mitchell's Plain and Saffi Patron Reverend Mpho Tutu of Milnerton.

faith communities to break the silence and speak out against gender-based violence.

While some religious leaders are taking the initiative and making their voices heard, others offer various excuses for not participating in the quest to reduce men's violence against women," she said.

The UWC Department of Religion and Theology, the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum, the Bishop Lavis Religious Leaders Forum, the Muslim Judicial Council and the Oudtshoorn United Congregational Church took part in this year's programme.

"This year we invited participation from the deaf community. The plight of deaf women's experiences of domestic violence has opened our eyes and hearts to become much more sensitive to their cry to be heard," Ms Petersen said.

Religious Leaders are invited to sign a pledge of commitment to Collaborate to End Violence against women.

Visit www.saffi.org.za to make a commitment.

● Contact Saffi on 021 462 2277; Fax: 021 462 2276 or Elizabeth Petersen on 082 475 5116 for more information.



■ The religious leaders who took part in the SAFFI Roundtable Conference at UWC on Monday November 28 are, from left: African Traditional Religion, Ladan Eshraghi (Baha'i Community), Rev Madika Sibeko (Methodist Church), Sheikh Igshaan Taliep (Muslim Judicial Council) and Sheikh Hamza Sodogar (Ahul Bayt Foundation SA).

■ Dr Frank Wygold of Brooklyn presents Dr Alice Ashwell of Marina Da Gama with the 2011 CapTrust Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to environmental education and awareness, especially in the Cape, for close to 30 years, at CapTrust's annual general meeting, at the Cape Town Environmental Centre, at the Valkenberg hospital grounds. The office bearers who were elected for the 2011 to 2013 term at the meeting are, chairman Paul Gray of Constantia; vice chairman Dr Frank Wygold; additional members Helene Binckes of Rondebosch, Dr Alice Ashwell, Pixie Littlewort of Rondebosch, Lynn Schluter of Kenilworth and Marie-Lou Roux of Vredehoek. At the symposium which followed the AGM, Dave Pepler gave an illustrated talk on The Little Things: Thoughts on Biodiversity. Angela Andrews spoke on the Strategic Approach to Environmental Management currently being put forward by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Sally Titelstad presented the work that has been done in the re-assessment of historical sites within the city centre.

