



Vicky O'Brien takes a water sample from the tributary.



Gabriel Molepo shows the grass seeds he will scatter.

## Clean-up on 5th Avenue

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Under the warm morning sun and the sound of running water in the nearby streams, residents, volunteers, and local business owners gathered for the second Parkhurst neighbourhood clean-up on April 13. Hosted by the Parkhurst Residents and Business Owners Association, the event took place at 5th Avenue Park, bringing together community members for a morning that combined hands-on work with environmental education.

The morning was elevated by the presence of Jozi Trails and Being a River, who facilitated a skills and knowledge-sharing session, covering topics such as the identification and removal of invasive vegetation, safety tips, and best practices for clean-ups. Participants also had the opportunity to take part in water quality testing.

Led by Jozi Trails director Jaco Louw and environmental coordinator Sam Brown, residents learned practical methods for caring for their park. They focused on identifying and replacing alien vegetation with indigenous trees.

Support from within the community helped move the day along smoothly. A generous resident arranged for their gardener to mow the grass, improving access to the park for walkers. Another

resident sponsored the removal of several bags of rubbish, mostly plastic and other debris collected from the park and stream banks.

The clean-up marked the inaugural session of Being a River, a new initiative focused on exploring Johannesburg's water systems through both citizen science and creative expression.

Water samples were taken from the Braamfontein Spruit and a tributary by the team from Bubele Africa and local volunteers, guided by Dr Teresa Dirsuweit, from the Department of Geography at Unisa.

Being a River will continue to test water quality at the same sites through WaterCAN's RiverWatch programme. Results are expected to be shared in the coming days.

Resident Vicky O'Brien noted, "The Bubele Africa team play an important role in reducing the amount of plastic and other debris along this part of the Braamfontein Spruit." After heavy rain, she explained, stormwater often deposited a 'mantle of plastic and other debris', along the banks. After the citizen science activity, participants took part in a reflective group experience facilitated by residents Sally Clark and Rachel Adatia. The session encouraged individuals to tune in to the natural environment – its sights, sounds, and smells – and to reflect on their emotional responses. "It's a relief to see

the trees and bushes free from the plastic that the stormwater draped over them," said Adatia. Clark added, "It was good to sit and talk to members of the team, informally, about how these kinds of public places are important for all our well-being."

Association member Pauline Borton echoed the value of the effort: "With regular testing, we can help to monitor the health of our streams. Working so closely with

the water, it is important that Bubele team members are aware of the potential risks of polluted water and how to take necessary safety precautions."

The association plans to host eight clean-ups this year, and invites residents, volunteers, and partners to take part in future efforts to keep Parkhurst clean. Those interested can contact Pauline Borton at support@parkhurst.org.za.

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