

**Donations**

**ABSA helps address crime and violence problem among youngsters**

ABSA Foundation has entered into a partnership with Natal University to pilot the country's first "critical response" teams for young trauma victims.

The innovative addition to the stable of acronyms residing in the newly renovated basement at MTB (UND) was launched on June 22, when STAG (Schools Trauma Action Group) joined CADD (Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines), the DACST-funded (Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology) CRISP (Crime Reduction in Schools Project) and COSL (Community Outreach and Service Learning), among others.

While humour sprinkled the addresses at the formal function to thank ABSA for its support and seed funding of R32 820, the subject matter is deadly serious. For STAG is training people to "debrief" children who have witnessed or been involved in trauma such as

sexual and physical abuse, motor accidents, hijackings and other abnormal events that induce intense fear and horror.

STAG's "parent", the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP), was assessed as the foremost undertaking put forward for Innovation Funding during the first round last year, said DACST evaluator Terry Dowdall.

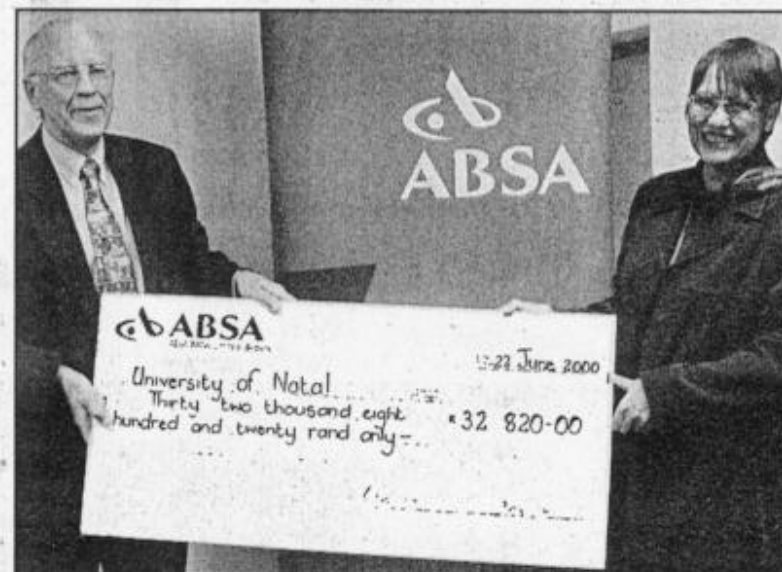
"Natal University is moving in exactly the direction the country needs to be heading, in integrating training with service delivery in areas where it is most needed. And crime prevention is a critical area, with serious ramifications for the whole country.

"You are contributing enormously by producing a new generation of practitioners who are providing much-needed, practical services through active and creative input," he told the gathering. "I know DACST believes its Innovation Funding was especially well-spent money."

CRISP, which received R3.7 million from the Innovation Fund, addresses issues of violence and crime that impact on learners and the communities served by the schools. The project had identified quite clearly that schools and their populations were affected, in some cases on a daily basis, by crime and violence. STAG will provide the means for a concerted response to the impact of violence or criminal events, particularly when these occur within the school environment and influence school routine. Colin Collett van Rooyen is the programme director and project manager of CRISP and STAG.

The services provided by STAG include an emergency telephone response service – initially for the six target schools in and around Durban – the development of a database for dissemination of information to police, and follow-up mechanisms.

Trained personnel are despatched to the school to carry out



**Gary White, ABSA's Regional Manager: Communications/Public Sector, hands over a symbolic cheque for R32 820 to Professor Eleanor Preston-Whyte, the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development), for STAG**

debriefings and referrals where necessary, and STAG trains volunteers in crisis management and trauma debriefing.

Training facilitator, Cathy Haselauw, commented that in traumatic events, while the experience is "burnt into the brain" of the victim, debriefing helps them to cope

with the symptoms – "normal responses to abnormal events".

These can include physical symptoms such as heart palpitations, a heightened "startle" reflex, an inability to sleep; and psychological effects such as nightmares, lack of concentration, fear, anxiety and frustration.