



The final year housing students at Thabo Kolodi's home. With them are Thabo's mother, sister and brother-in-law. Photo: Marianke Saayman

Housing students learn from extraordinary man

Marianke Saayman

“You really don’t have to be ordinary. Don’t be ordinary, be extraordinary.”

These were some of the motivating words that Thabo Kolodi, a man who has recently made quite a name for himself, spoke to a group of students outside his double-storey shack last week.

A group of final-year Town and Regional Planning students from the NWU’s Potchefstroom campus visited Kolodi last Thursday. They wanted to hear his inspiring story – a story of how a man who had nothing, exceeded all expectations and, in spite of being called crazy, built himself a double-storey dream house.

Kolodi started his dream in 2015, after deciding not to wait any longer for the RDP house that the municipality had promised him in 2014. He has built most of his home from wooden pallets and corrugated iron.

Karen Puren, a lecturer at the NWU, decided to bring her students to Kolodi as part of their housing module. One of the aspects of this module has to do with people who have built their own houses and she knew Kolodi would be the perfect example.

“Karen teaches them the theory but here they can learn more about the practical parts,” Kolodi told the Herald.

The students had the opportunity to listen to Kolodi’s heart-warming life-story and then took turns in taking a tour through his house to see what he had achieved through hard work.

Kolodi’s next step is to build a park for children to play in – a haven in Ikageng. He said he could not bear the thought of small children playing in the streets without safety or parental guidance. He plans to enclose the park and divide it into different sections. In it, he wants to erect a playground for the children, vegetable gardens and maybe even a conference centre.

There is a piece of open land close to his house, which residents use as an illegal dumping site. He is

hoping to use this land for his project.

“I was supposed to begin in April next year, but I decided to start earlier. How many more children could get hurt before then?” he said.

Kolodi wants to use this project, not only to help children stay safe but also to create employment for residents in the area.

His first step would be to enclose the piece of land but he is still busy collecting the barbed wire.

“As soon as I have enclosed it, I can go and clean it up,” he said. Puren said she aims to get her second-year students involved with this project next semester.

Anyone who would like to be involved or is willing to donate materials can contact Kolodi on 074 644 2629.



Karen Puren gave Thabo Kolodi a gift voucher from the class to help finish his beautiful home. Photo: Marianke Saayman.