

# Couple dream of saying goodbye to unemployment

CLAUDINE BALIE

A married couple have turned their darkest hour into a flame of hope for unemployed people by establishing an NGO which is backed by the Department of Social Development.

Ronald and Tania Bownes opened Dreamworker in Tembe Street, Athlone, and they hope to find work for unemployed people. Dreamworker was started two years ago in Hout Bay and is funded by the Department of Social Development.

Last year the NGO made its home in the Athlone CBD and they are planning to open offices in Hermanus and Strand.

The Bownes speak from experience when dealing with unemployment.

Mr Bownes was unemployed for two years, even though he had a background in finance.

"It's a struggle, anyone going through that will tell you. Not being able to pay school fees, the pain and angst you feel. You have to be resourceful and have to find creative ways to generate money. But I never gave up hope," he says.

It has been a hard but rewarding road back to a normal life.

Now, through Dreamworker, this Hout Bay couple feel they can make a difference in the high percentage of people who are unemployed by helping people get jobs one by one.

Mr Bownes says they want to build hope for people who are unemployed, feeling down and despondent.

"We want them to believe they have worth," says Mrs Bownes.

According to Mr Bownes, the NGO serves the bottom third of society which is the less-skilled and less-educated but says it is also for any-

one facing unemployment, even school leavers. Dreamworker mainly focuses on the employment of gardeners, domestics, cleaners, barmen, waiters and painters.

Together they dream of making unemployment history.

"Our dream is to have zero unemployment in South Africa by 2020," says Mr Bownes.

"If we have zero unemployment there

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■ Ronald and Tania Bownes who started the NGO Dreamworker, dedicated to fighting unemployment one person at a time, have opened their doors in Athlone CBD.

will be less social ills," he says.

Mrs Bownes says that many people visiting their offices come with a "victim energy".

She says that's why they also focus on people's qualities, something they often neglect to look at themselves.

Dreamworker does not act as a labour broker or get involved in "labour issues" but simply "matches people"

There are no fees for either the employer or the unemployed person.

However, there are certain guidelines for the prospective employer for the rates of payment and different communities have different rates.

Each person who arrives on their doorstep is seen and heard.

For more information call Dreamworker on 021 696 4048