

HUMANS OF YearBeyond

● ● ● BE INSPIRED.

Library of Dreams: A story of self-discovery through opportunity

Connecting oneself to a dream, a goal, or a task is essential in establishing a sense of purpose. Resources and opportunities are vital in making one feel the possibility of reaching their future self is real. Young people need mentors and support systems that can guide them with the wisdom and skills to make this journey within reach.

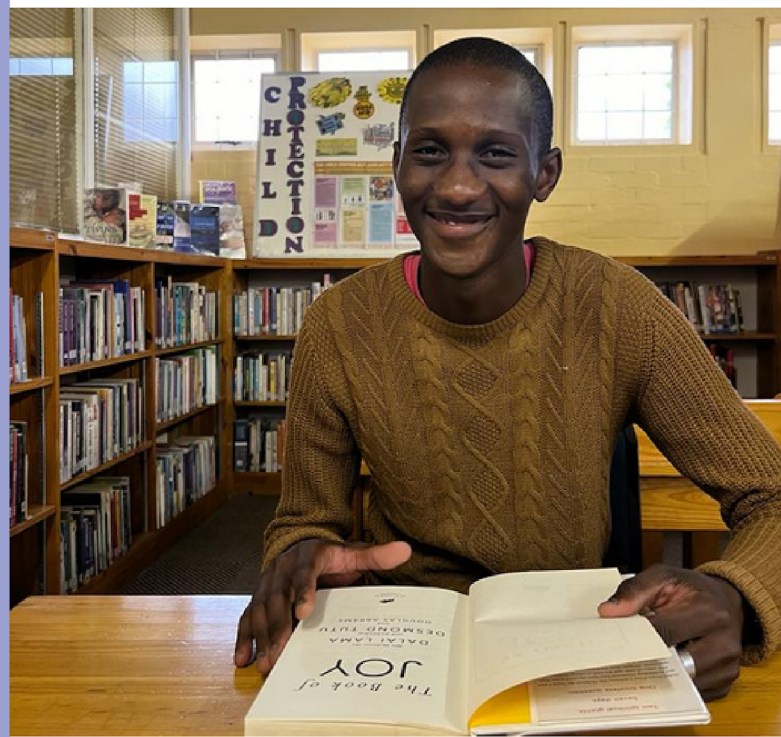
As a child growing up in Dunga, a small village within Mount Frere, Anam was searching for a life more significant than what he saw at home. While he appreciated the simplicity of his childhood, he has always yearned for more. Little stimulation around him motivated him and interested his curious mind.

Living with his grandmother, who instilled discipline and accountability, he felt he had the foundations to become the person he envisioned. She became his first inspiration. Describing her as his everything, she was more than a mother and father figure; she was his idol. Watching her as a hard worker, he followed her example, immersed himself in his chores, and performed them diligently. After school, he committed to all the domestic work at home, including cooking, attending to the garden, and rounding up the cows that spent the day grazing in the village. He recognised the importance of purpose at an early age and took pride in performing his duties, ensuring he did them well because, at the time, that was his purpose, and it kept the frustrations of having nothing else to do at bay.

At school, he was quiet and withdrawn; he used his time outside social circles to study people. In doing so, he found himself influenced by his Economics teacher. He loved how his teacher dressed in suits daily, presenting himself like an intelligent businessman, something he did religiously.

Anam decided that when he grew up, he wanted to be like him and get a job that would make people look at him the way he saw his teacher. While he was also the only teacher in the school who did not practice corporal punishment, he still commanded respect by how he carried himself.

Anam decided to study accounting after school solely because of this teacher, but he also had a keen imagination and wished to use it more. He loved learning new subjects, especially historical topics like ancient Egypt and the world wars, but he needed more resources.



At his school, the only books they had were textbooks. When his grandmother brought home story books from work, she introduced him to a world he was waiting for and wanted to explore. Life was expanding beyond his Eastern Cape village. Since his grandmother worked at the Department of Education, she would bring him books as often as he could. He was obsessed with these stories and read them daily until she brought him a new one. While he loved these books, he found them to be short and straightforward, with lots of pictures, but he still enjoyed them because they were his.

After matriculating, he moved to Cape Town. It was his first time away from home, and he felt overwhelmed by the fast pace of the city, especially within the hustle and bustle of the township, so he buried himself in his schoolwork and YouTube. When introduced to this platform in college, he discovered abundant knowledge, whereas back at home, teachers and textbooks were the sole custodians of information and truth. Like many young people, he was drawn to this digital world and began watching motivational speakers, something he counts as his favourite pastime. He felt not only supported by these videos, but they also became his support system. When his grandmother passed in 2022, he leaned on these videos for guidance after feeling like he lost everything. He needed to find a way to continue focusing on his future and become someone she could be proud of.

He discovered the Plein Street library in Stellenbosch as a supportive and productive space to work on school tasks. Not sure what to expect, he stepped into a library for the first time. He had never seen so many books in one place; the different genres and sizes excited him. He became a regular and returned every day for two weeks, staying until lock up. Spotting his love of reading, a librarian suggested he get a library card. After explaining that they would allow him to take books home, he was shocked and took out multiple books regularly; he was very proud of his library card.

When he placed his accounting studies on hold due to not finding the opportunity to complete the practical section of the course, he discovered that he was at the library a lot more. It was here that he was introduced to YearBeyond. One of the librarians told him about the Libraries Programme, helping him to apply.



Library YeBoneer Anam wishes to see his community have the opportunity to have its own library and is working hard to ensure it happens.

He experienced overwhelming joy upon acceptance, signifying a connection to the person he believed he was destined to become. This feeling had been absent even when he opted to study accounting.

His sense of pride in what he was doing was returning, and he enjoyed helping people with their ICT needs and helping them create CVs and assignments. He also took this opportunity to try and educate the community, stating that he felt it would be better to support people with skills rather than him doing it for them. He would share cover letters and CV writing skills by sharing tips and templates so people could leave the library feeling empowered to do it independently, even when he was not around to help. Equipping his community not only for the task at hand but for life is something he felt he wanted to do and is important to him because of his experience at the GoBeyond: Shape Your Future conference. He feels that attending the conference allowed him to gain skills that would set him up for a lifetime. Seeing a motivational speaker live is an experience he never thought he'd ever have, as he only saw speakers online and felt transformed by witnessing Farai Mubaiwa on stage and being in the presence of leadership like Minister Anroux Marais.

Becoming a YeBoneer opened him up to the idea that he was an important part of the community and instilled in him the importance of showing up for yourself and those around you, just like his grandmother once instilled in him back home. Having access to the library also helped him connect to his purpose.

This library environment, together with his favorite motivational speaker and psychologist Jordan Peterson gave him the idea to challenge himself. Peterson's videos suggest that every year a person should set themselves a challenge to work on daily and conquer it with the intention, of avoiding becoming idle or purposeless. Anam decided that his challenge was to read 50 books by the end of the year. On top of his reading, he has submitted a book report to the library about every book he read during this challenge.

He is currently on book number 46 and finds it hard to pick a favourite, but because he loves listening to people share advice and using their life experiences as motivation, he leans towards autobiographies like his current read *Indaba My Children* by Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa. A book he easily leans towards his own journey of following in the footsteps of his idols and his love for history.



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The knowledge he has gained in the short time he has been around the library has inspired him to one day write a book about his own story, as reading has naturally progressed into a love of writing. While he tries to live without regrets, he wishes he had the opportunity and exposure to after school programmes and libraries during childhood. Looking at the young people in his community in Kayamandi, he feels envious of his peers' opportunities, feeling like these resources are taken for granted. He often thinks about how far he could have been in his journey had there been a library or literature programme in the community he grew up in.

Looking back on his choices, he believes he would have chosen a different career path. Anam thinks he would have focused on a career within libraries, writing, or history had he known it was an option and had exposure to the resources. However, since he is near the completion of his schooling, he wants to finish what he has started. After completing his studies, Anam hopes to use the skills to give back to his community by pursuing a career in chicken farming, creating opportunities at home. Being successful, he hopes to have the freedom to pursue a library career and introduce a culture of reading and libraries in his village. He dreams of creating a future where more children can have the vision and opportunity to have hopes and access to various possibilities.