

Helping hand as ECD Centres set to return to school

Sasolburg, South Africa – Sasol and the Golden Triangle Chamber of Commerce (GTCoC) expanded their “A Million Gifts for Life” partnership to support 95 independent Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Metsimaholo to welcome

6 958 children back to school when lockdown restrictions allow these centres to reopen. Sasol and the GTCoC launched the “A Million Gifts for Life” project on 28 May 2020 that entails collecting and distributing masks and food parcels in our



Sasol and the Golden Triangle Chamber of Commerce (GTCoC) are supporting 95 independent Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in Metsimaholo with food, liquid soap, hand sanitiser and cloth masks to welcome 6 958 children back to school. At the handover were from left Klippiess Kritzinger, CEO of the Golden Triangle Chamber of Commerce (GTCoC); Rightwell Laxa, Senior Vice President of Sasol's Sasolburg Operations; Musi Mdola, responsible for Special Projects in the office of the Executive Mayor of Metsimaholo Local Municipality; Alice de Jager, Project coordinator Women, Charity and Welfare from GTCoC; Melia Ratshikopa, Rampadise Early Childhood Education Centre and Pule Sello, Chief Education Specialist: curriculum from the Fezile Dabi Education District.

communities.

Many of the young learners at Early Childhood Centres in Metsimaholo are from disadvantaged homes and they rely to a large extent on the feeding schemes the centres offer for daily nutrition. The donation by Sasol and GTCoC of 7,58 tons of food for the learners is therefore crucial to the centres. The donation consisted of 3 980kg dry vitamin enriched soya/vegetable mix (approved by the National School Nutritional Plan), 1 200kg potatoes, 1 200kg rice and 1 200kg samp.

To further assist the ECD centres to improve their state of readiness, 2 900 litres of liquid soap, 2 050 litres of hand sanitiser, 547 sanitiser dispensers, 380 liquid soap dispensers, 190 funnels and 632 cloth masks for 316 practitioners were donated.

“We realise that these ECD centres are in no financial position to fund the stringent protocols they need to meet to reopen their doors. As safety is a priority to Sasol, it is our duty as responsible corporate citizens to assist our communities to also meet COVID-19 requirements in terms of cleaning, disinfecting and wearing of cloth masks,” said Sasol's Sasolburg Operations Senior Vice President, Rightwell Laxa.

According to the GTCoC CEO, Klippiess Kritzinger, “the donation to the ECD Centres in Metsimaholo is a further commitment to bring much needed relief in our communities and make a tangible contribution to the independent ECD Centres that are operating as micro

enterprises, not supported financially by the Department of Basic Education”.

The donation from Sasol and the GTCoC is seen as a basic start-up kit that will allow young learners to return to their centres where they can prepare to enter formal basic education. The “A Million Gifts for Life” project forms part of Sasol's support for the fight against the corona virus. These donations include jet fuel used to repatriate South African citizens stuck abroad due to border and airport closures, fuel to the SANDF and SAPS as well as hand sanitiser.

Sasol contributes locally by supplying hand sanitiser to the Free State Department of Health, SAPS, SANDF, Correctional Services, local and district municipalities, schools and universities. With its joint venture partner, Natref, Sasol donated several items to the Metsimaholo Local Municipality and Free State Department of Health towards the minimum facility equipment requirements of a Quarantine Centre for the people of Metsimaholo.

Further donations to the Department of Health included latex gloves and FFP2 masks, while a mobile science laboratory, gazebos and chairs assist the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) where community screening and testing are done. Cloth face masks were also donated to elderly and disabled grant recipients, patients at clinics and at the COVID-19 screening and testing stations. The SAPS and SANDF received rechargeable torches, while accommodation is also provided to the SANDF.

Plans underway to welcome back more grades to school

Plans are underway to welcome back more pupils to schools across the country as the Basic Education Department continues with its phased reopening of schools amid COVID-19. In just few days, pupils in Grades R, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10 and 11 are set to return to school on 6 July 2020.

Earlier this month, Grade 7 and 12 pupils returned to the classroom as government implemented the phased reopening of the country and the economy. Briefing Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Basic Education, the department's Director-General Mathanzima Mweliso said while the department is

prepared to welcome back 52% of pupils next week, it will consider the trend of infections.

“Although we are saying 52% of learners, we are not fixed to bringing the 52%. We have heard that community infections are flaring up, we discussed this last night with unions, and we are saying our plan is extremely flexible. “We are not going to push for 52% to come if we can see that there is danger. The community infections

that are happening might spill over to schools. We are very cautious of that,” he said. Since the reopening of schools on 8 June, the Education Department noted that 523 pupils, 1 169 staff members and 775 schools have been affected by COVID-19. Mathanzima said, while the department is prepared to welcome pupils, it is also mindful about the capacity of the health sector. “We not only look at our capacity to

run the system but also have to be mindful about the capacity of the health sector to deal with the flaring up of infections in communities because those schools are located in communities, so we are alive to that reality.”

Rotational school attendance

In an effort to maintain social distancing at schools, Mweliso presented the department's plan to amend the timetable to ensure that only 50% of the total learner enrolment is present at a given moment. Under the plan, the department suggests that learners either attend school on a bi-weekly basis, rotate to be present ever second day or all learners attend on a particular day. – SAnews.gov.za

We have heard that community infections are flaring up

SASSA Sends Lifeline to Rejected COVID-19 Grant Applicants

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) has taken a decision to relook declined COVID-19 grant applications and get to the bottom of the reasons for rejection. The high numbers involved raised questions and SASSA decided that it would be wise to reconsider these before subjecting them to an appeal process, which comes at a cost and resultant delays, given the urgency to pay out the grant during these trying times for poor people impacted negatively by the national shutdown.

In early June close to 50% of processed applications did not qualify in terms of the criteria. Over 70% of those that did not qualify were either receiving or qualifying for UIF benefits according to the database that SASSA was using then to sift through the applications. Subsequently, SASSA took a decision to request an updated database to reconsider the declined UIF cases instead of advising the aggrieved applicants to follow the appeals route. Out of this reconsideration process it emerged that 85% of the UIF cases which were previously deemed not to be qualifying, actually qualify. They have

been approved and are being made aware of this development individually as and when such favourable decision is reached. Everyone affected will receive an SMS requesting them to provide their banking details. It is important to respond to the SMS as quickly as possible and to follow the link provided. Approved applicants are reminded that the link cannot be shared with others, as it is linked to a specific ID number for security reasons.

More than two and a half million applicants have already been paid so far from over 3.2 million who applied for the COVID-19 grant. “Updating the UIF database has brought such a relief to us and the affected beneficiaries, the numbers will rise daily until we have paid all deserving individuals who were previously declined”, said Totsie Memela SASSA CEO. She added that SASSA is working with the Department of Social Development to finalise the modalities of the appeals process for applicants who still feel that their applications were rejected unfairly. The appeals function will be added to the www.srd.sassa.gov.za website as soon as the relevant framework has been approved.