

MEDIA RELEASE

Special Needs School at Canelands Benefits from a R365 000 Classroom Refit, with Donation from the South African Muslim Charitable Trust

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Special needs learners at a Canelands, Durban, school are set to benefit from smaller classes and more personal attention following the construction of several new classrooms, the result of a R365 000 injection by the South African Muslim Charitable Trust (SAMCT) recently.

Commenting on work done at Golden Steps School in using the donation to convert several garages into fully-fledged classrooms, SAMCT Trustee, Mr Gaf Osman, said: "A sound education is an absolute necessity, a necessity to which every child has a right, not least our youngsters who have special needs. Sadly, with ever-increasing numbers of learners entering the school environment and seemingly ever-diminishing funding, there is a growing shortage of classrooms in KwaZulu-Natal, a tragic fact which also affects schools serving those with special needs, such as Golden Steps School."

For children with special needs, inadequate special education facilities can have a major effect on their ongoing learning capacity and Mr Osman said that effective teaching and learning could only be achieved in a decent classroom environment and that this put young people 'on the front foot' towards overcoming life's challenges.

"This is doubly important for those whose disabilities have thrown-up additional challenges to their development. Schools, such as Golden Steps - which do remarkable work in preparing special needs learners to take their rightful place as useful members of society - require small classes. This is vital so as to enable teachers to pay significantly closer personal attention to the learners in their charge. Small classes mean, by definition, the provision of greater numbers of classrooms - and that is the challenge," Mr Osman stressed.

Access to education by all is regarded as a right, inclusive of even the most severely disabled young people. The inclusion and involvement in the educational process of children with disabilities serves to optimise their development, enabling their participation in society. This heightens the need for the construction of additional classroom facilities in KwaZulu-Natal.

Project Build Trust, which brought the plight of Golden Steps School to the attention of the SAMCT, is mandated to facilitate the provision of classrooms, health facilities and community buildings.

"This organisation does sterling work in identifying needy institutions and stepping into the breach as a developmental catalyst. Its officials have highlighted Golden Steps School as a priority. With more than 200 special needs learners, its classroom environment is simply inadequate to promote the ideal of personal attention for the benefit of learners," added Mr Osman.

Project Build Trust has a track-record of making things happen and is dedicated to ensuring that children, especially those with special needs, are afforded the opportunity to gain the knowledge necessary to become contributors to the economy, regardless of their backgrounds and challenges.

Mr Osman said: "The SAMCT was delighted to partner with Project Build Trust, complementing that organisation's preliminary development work here, with a R365 000 donation for the financing of the conversion of several garages into classrooms. This classroom project was a perfect fit for us and we consider ourselves privileged to have been able to make a financial contribution."

He added that it was hoped the additional classrooms would enable Golden Steps School's dedicated teachers to devote more personal time to learners in their care, nurturing their development and preparing them for a productive post-school future.

The South African Muslim Charitable Trust was established in 2008 to assist in providing funding, services and other resources for the improvement of the lives of the vulnerable, deprived and disadvantaged. It has successfully delivered sizeable assistance solutions throughout the country, irrespective of race or religion and works to support needy organisations in the fields of health, social development, poverty alleviation and education.

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For more information about SAMCT or the Golden Steps School's classroom development donation, contact: **Rasheeda Motala:** Social Responsibility Co-ordinator – samct@samct.co.za