

MEDIA RELEASE

A R400 000 Vehicle Donation Ensures Continued Support For Early Childhood Education In The Deep Rural Areas Of KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast

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The impending curbing of vital early childhood development support, training and mentorship programmes for 500 teachers, affecting some 1 000 disadvantaged young children, across four Municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal's Ugu District has been averted, following the provision to the Network Action Group of a brand new R400 000 vehicle.

Speaking at a recent function to celebrate the official hand-over by the South African Muslim Charitable Trust (SAMCT) of the vehicle, SAMCT representative, Gaf Osman, said: "Reliable transport is a critical factor in the Group's day-to-day business activities. Unsurprisingly, one of its only three vehicles - a 22-year old Golf - was just not up to the task any longer, throwing into jeopardy the amazing work the Network Action Group undertakes."

"The importance of early childhood development cannot be over-emphasised. There can be no question that the emotional, social, cognitive and physical development of young children has a deep and telling impact on their overall development and on the adults they will grow to become. The early years play a key role in brain development and provide the foundation for a child's future development, providing the basis for lifelong learning and learning abilities, meaning that early childhood education offers an essential building block in a child's successes into the future. Investing in the development of the very young is, therefore, critical in optimising their future well-being."

"This is clearly the best investment we can make as a society in ensuring the success of future generations in this country, "Mr Osman maintained.

In South Africa, however, this powerful tool is still only available to a few. The country has a long way to go in terms of improving very young children's access to education. The lack of early childhood development opportunities in, especially, rural areas, continues to significantly disadvantage young children, radically diminishing their potential for success.

Children from poor backgrounds are far less likely than children from wealthier families to enjoy the benefits of early childhood education initiatives, meaning that upon entering Grade 1, they are already at a notable disadvantage.

Commenting on the Network Action Group's work with community-driven early childhood development organisations in the rural areas of the Ugu District, Mr Osman said: "This is an organisation intent on changing the status quo; to bringing much-needed early childhood development interventions to those otherwise forgotten youngsters in the rural deep south of KwaZulu-Natal. Its efforts in this respect are most laudable, mobilising communities to improve the standard of early childhood development here, addressing barriers to improve such interventions and supporting the implementation of efficient policies and systems."

He added: "The bottom line is that in the Network Action Group we have an organisation which is intently focused on investing in early childhood development. It actively collects vital data

and delivers crucial training and mentoring across no fewer than four local Municipalities in the Ugu District."

The Group supports some 250 rural pre-schools, works with 500 teachers on a daily basis and impacts on the development of 1 000 young learners who attend the Network Action Group's member early childhood development centres across the district.

"That is an heroic effort by any standard. However, it is an effort which also takes its toll. Reliable transport is vital to the organisation's day-to-day business. It only has two vehicles with which to traverse the district, often further impacted by trying road conditions. With its one aged vehicle becoming unserviceable, its remarkable community work was thrown into jeopardy," he said.

Learning of the organisation's plight, the SAMCT was keen and quick to intercede.

The charitable organisation provided the Network Action Group with a robust R400 000 replacement vehicle with which to continue its work of ensuring that children younger than five throughout the area's marginalised communities are afforded a fair start in life through community-driven, good quality and effective early childhood development.

The SAMCT was established in 2008 to provide funding, services and other resources for numerous deserving organisations and the associated upliftment of the lives of South Africa's deprived, poverty-stricken and historically disadvantaged communities - irrespective of race or religion.

"We, of the SAMCT, are very pleased to have had the opportunity to play a role in assisting many organisations - such as the Network Action Group - which are committed to the furtherance of South Africa's peoples," Mr Osman said.

He added: "We salute the work of the Network Action Group and, especially, its effective development of our very young children, and trust that our humble contribution towards ensuring its staff are able to reach all those it supports will make a telling difference going forward."

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For more information about SAMCT or its Network Action Group vehicle donation, please contact:

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