

# Legal firm supports Life Matters Foundation

Gunston Attorneys, a legal firm which operates from the Steenberg Office Park at the base of Ou Kaapse Weg in Cape Town, has become one of the first organisations to sign on as volunteer helpers with The Life Matters Foundation and has called upon businesses in the area and others who live or work in the Constantiaberg area to do likewise.



The Life Matters Foundation, which has been in existence for thirteen years, is a non-governmental organisation that assists learners at primary schools in previously disadvantaged areas, like Steenberg on the Cape Flats, to improve their life skills and educational standards. They do this by providing literacy and numeracy training, counselling and mentoring.

The literacy training is based on a model created by the Shine Centre. It involves one-on-one coaching and reading for one to two hours a week with learners who are struggling. One survey showed that the average Life Matters child receiving this assistance increases his or her literacy score by 78% in six months.

## Significant results

The numeracy training involves sitting with two learners twice a week to work through difficulties they have with mathematics. Working interactively and making the subject a challenging but enjoyable game had significant results. One survey showed a 63% increase in ability to order numbers, a 64% increase in addition calculation speed and a 25% increase in subtraction speed. All of these figures are far higher than those of learners not given special tuition.

The Life Matters Foundation's counselling service takes many forms, but it might, for example, involve seven to ten 40-minute sessions with the learner, and experience has shown that these will almost always result in greatly improved emotional control, especially for those living in stressed situations, a new readiness to learn and obey instructions and improved peer and teacher relations.

"Malcolm Gladwell, in his bestseller 'The Tipping Point' has shown that any society in which fewer than 5% of the population are serving as role models will be in danger of becoming dysfunctional. That, regrettably, is the predicament in Steenberg, Westlake and other areas served by the Life Matters Foundation," said Garth Watson of Gunston.

## Time needed, not money

Kamesh Flynn, executive director of Life Matters Foundation, recently challenged Capetonians to serve as models to children at schools where role-models are needed. Studies, she said, show that a few more role-models in a community make a truly significant difference to the welfare of the community.

"The temptation in these situations is to give only money not time, but the Life Matters Foundation is above all in desperate need of time donated by concerned, qualified 'advantaged' people. If enough role-models get involved it is possible to reach a tipping point," Watson said. "It is exciting to think that if fairly small numbers of people commit, say, an hour of their time every two weeks to read to the children, help them with Maths or be a mentor, we can make a completely disproportionate difference - something way bigger than any of us might imagine."

Members of the public who would like to assist with any of the following can get more information by contacting Garth Watson on (021) 702 7763 or Alneré Turck at [alner@lifemattersfoundation.org](mailto:alner@lifemattersfoundation.org):

- numeracy (an hour every two weeks or every month);
- literacy (an hour every two weeks or every month);
- group or individual mentoring (an hour every week or two weeks); or
- special interest groups: if you have a special skill or interest that you would like to share (an hour every week or month)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>