

Mandela Day: Sappi spreads goodwill across South Africa

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From Hillbrow to the Lowveld, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape... Sappi employees reached out far and wide to make International Nelson Mandela Day a memorable occasion in the lives of hundreds of needy adults and children. Even the environment benefited.

In the company's areas of operation across South Africa, staff from Sappi offices, mills and plantations keenly volunteered 67 minutes and more to make a practical difference among the frail and elderly, the ill and destitute, the mentally handicapped, as well as abused, abandoned and underprivileged children.

Acts of goodwill ranged from cooking and serving lunch to fixing dilapidated crèches, old age homes and school buildings, painting walls, fences and sheds, cutting grass, planting vegetable gardens, handing out blankets, female hygiene packs, toys and school supplies, and hosting several kiddies parties at local schools and crèches.

In some areas, even the environment benefited from the voluntary goodwill of Sappi's employees. A river clean-up, in collaboration with government stakeholders, took place at Nels Stream in Nelspruit. And in response to a call from the Wild Horse Fund, staff worked hard to clear wires and rubbish at the picturesque Kaapsehoop in Mpumalanga.

As a multinational, diversified woodfibre group, Sappi is well aware of its corporate responsibility towards the social upliftment of the communities in which it operates. Many of these areas are situated in rural parts of our country, where poverty and poor access to resources present a myriad of opportunities to make a positive difference.

"Mandela Day is one of the many ways in which Sappi reaches out to these communities," says Group Head Corporate Affairs, André Oberholzer. "Investing in these areas and improving the quality of life in these communities, is our way of helping to build a better South Africa and contribute towards economic growth."

Sappi is a major employer in many of these areas. The company also runs several health- and environment-related, HIV/AIDS awareness, job creation and educational upliftment programmes in its surrounding communities.

Highlights of Sappi outreach activities on Mandela Day:



The elderly, chronically ill and destitute at the Tswelopele Frail Care Centre in Hillbrow were thrilled to receive goody bags containing comfy gowns, socks and snacks. They also enjoyed a lunch prepared by volunteer Sappi staff.



In the Sappi Lowveld region, local Sappi managers and their support teams took part in a 'Master Chef' competition in aid of Mandela Day. The teams cooked 130 meals, which were donated to the Nelspruit Community Forum (NCF) feeding scheme. The food was distributed to people in need.



The environment also benefited... Employees from Sappi Ngodwana Mill participated in a river clean-up campaign in the spirit of Mandela month. In order to protect SA's freshwater ecosystems, IUCMA (Inkomati Catchment Management Agency), in collaboration with the Department of Water and Sanitation, invited Sappi to join them in cleaning up Nels Stream, which runs across Nelspruit.





At Sappi's Saiccor Mill in KwaZulu-Natal, 13 outreach projects were undertaken by over 300 employees. The projects mainly focused on maintenance work at centres caring for children and the disabled. The mill's management team also spent time packing food for local crèches, which will receive a monthly supply of packed meals for one year.



Sappi's Westville office staff in Durban chose to support the Sibusiso Senior Citizen's Service Centre near Pinetown. The team served tea and cake, but also left a more lasting legacy by establishing a vegetable garden, from which daily meals can be prepared. An additional income can also be derived by selling surplus veggies.



Sappi's Clan Nursery staff, near Albert Falls in KwaZulu-Natal, supported the nearby rural school and fulfilled its wish-list: patching classroom floors and cutting the grass on the premises.



The Sappi team from Mooiplaas plantation gave out home-made biscuits and soft drinks to youngsters at the Qalakahle Crèche. They also filled up the crèche's Jojo tank with water, a scarce resource in this area.



Thandi House, a home for abused and abandoned children situated in Chase Valley, Pietermaritzburg, benefited from a donation of groceries and educational toys, as well as Sappi staff doing much-needed maintenance work on the property.



Sappi's Project Growteam in northern KwaZulu-Natal donated tables, chairs, sleeping mats, blankets and books to the Osizweni Crèche in Manguzi. The children were also involved in singing, dancing and storytelling on waste, pollution and recycling.



Sappi's Highflats foresters repurposed their skills to plant cabbages, spinach, beetroot and carrots to ensure a fresh supply of veggies at the Thathane Crèche in the Kwa-Thathane community near Ixopo.

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