

WINTER WARMERS LIGHT CHILDREN'S HEARTS

[Cape Town, 22 June 2011] Many South Africans will enthusiastically embrace the warmth of their homes during the coming winter months but for some less fortunate people, June heralds a battle of survival against the bitter cold of winter.

Recently, a special discount by Pick n Pay afforded the non-profit-organisation, The Ukajede Foundation, the opportunity to purchase 504 blankets for young children from several informal settlements in the Boksburg area.

The Ukajede Foundation – an acronym for the five informal settlements in which the foundation operates (Ukana, Kanana, Angelo, Jerusalem and Delmore) - supports 9 crèches in this area; supplying each school with the means to prepare a warm meal for each child daily, stationery; cleaning material and maintenance assistance.

These settlements have an estimated total population of 80 000 inhabitants living in crude shacks without any sewerage, electricity, running water, garbage collection, healthcare or schools. A large percentage of the shacks house families with no adults. The eldest child, usually not older than 10 years of age, has to try and find food and also protect the younger children.

With the support of Absa and Pick n Pay, The Ukajede Foundation recently purchased 504 Pick n Pay blankets for children attending school in this informal settlement in Boksburg. Members of the Absa graduate programme, who are committed to making a difference through a “Give Back” committee, had been hard at work to raise funds for Ukajede and reached their target of R10 000 recently.

Said Pick n Pay spokesman, Tamra Veley: “Keeping warm during winter is difficult for those less fortunate than us. We’d like to thank the People for the Ukajede Foundation for their hard work in ensuring that these children are well-equipped for the bitterly cold months which are usually experienced in this informal settlement.”

At least 385 school-going children between the ages of three and six years old were presented with a warm blanket and a track suit jacket provided by web-hosting company, Ensync on a movie day held last week. The children were invited to the Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre to watch a movie and receive some winter warmers. The remainder of the blankets and jackets would be given to children below the age of three.

“As winter draws nearer and the barometer drops so the conditions in the crèches worsen. Getting to school to attend a formal class is near impossible due to the distraction of cold and hunger. As electric heaters are not an option and paraffin gas stoves are unsafe, we undertook to provide a blanket and tracksuit jackets for each child,” Deidre Jonker, project co-ordinator for the Ukajede Foundation said.

Said Jonker: “We hope that a warm tummy and some warmth inside and out with a meal and blanket will help a bit towards alleviating some of the home responsibilities and help them to concentrate on their lessons.”

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