

Swellendam opens Early Childhood Development Centre

The youth from Railton, Swellendam recently moved into the new premises of the Mickey Mouse Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre. The centre is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1996 when the need for early childhood education was identified in Swellendam and the surrounding farming communities where many children were not receiving any form of pre-primary education.

Until recently, the centre's 235 learners, aged between one and six years, were being accommodated in the local community hall, but it did not have sufficient space for the growing numbers or sufficient facilities to stimulate inquisitive minds.

The dream of building a school for the community was initially that of Ms Kriel, the former principal, who started the groundwork on the project. Unfortunately, due to limited funds, the project was never completed. When Patricia Williams took over the reigns as principal on Kriel's retirement, she pursued the dream of building an ECD Centre.

Williams approached the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) and was overjoyed when her request for funds was approved. Shortly afterwards, Worcester Minerals, distributor of The Coca-Cola Company products in the Boland and Southern Cape regions, also adopted the Mickey Mouse Centre as part of their "Live for a Difference" campaign and assisted with much needed additional funding to get the building completed.

Accept the responsibility to make a difference

"Children are our most valuable asset and we need to invest in their futures. Today is truly a highlight for Swellendam and I am proud to be here and to see what the community of Railton has achieved. This goes to show that people with the necessary drive and vision can make dreams a reality. You are truly an inspiration and an example of what can be achieved," Swellendam mayor, Nicholas Myburgh, said.

"Offering Early Childhood Development Services to create healthy environments for children to develop holistically, especially in communities that are in less fortunate areas, is very important to us," Rae Bjerre, GM of Worcester Minerals, said. "It is important for us to help build healthy sustainable communities. A positive contribution in communities and supporting education has the power to expand and increase the understanding between cultures and we accept the responsibility to make a positive difference in our world," Bjerre concluded.

Yolinda Krige from the Department of Social Development in Caledon said: "Making children feel safe from a young age is pivotal for their development. Research has shown that children who feel safe, feel better about themselves, learn better and adjust to working environments a lot easier later in life. We are incredibly proud of this centre of excellence and will be using it as a model for others to follow, and to showcase what communities are able to achieve if everyone works together."

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