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NPOs LEND A HELPING HAND

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In a world filled with many selfish acts, it is refreshing to witness an act where someone -- or an organisation -- goes beyond their call of duty to help another without expecting anything in return. Indeed, there may be a number of these selfless deeds taking place which are not seen or promoted enough. Many of the people behind these good deeds are in fact people who do not actively seek recognition for their work and they continue their work driven by their passion, regardless of who may be watching. Upon reflecting more about the term 'selfless deeds', one may be reminded of the Dalai Lama XIV's wise words saying *that our prime purpose in this life is about helping others and if we cannot help them, we shouldn't hurt them*. This makes so much sense.

If only more people would roll up their sleeves and instead of asking what can be done to help another person in need, to just spontaneously greet a stranger, or offer a helping hand to an elderly person crossing the street, or pay for the loaf of bread to the beggar in front of you at the queue in the supermarket. These random acts of kindness are seldom seen, and when -- through some strange twist of fate -- a person witnesses such acts, they do somehow affect you in one way or another. For some people caught up in this moment they may have cynical thoughts, for others they may have a pang of guilt, or they may be consumed by the kindness of others and this invariably causes them to also want to get involved.

No matter whether a person wants to view these acts of kindness from either a philosophical, academic or emotional perspective, even the hardened tight-fisted corporate executive will have some sort of emotional activity taking place in his/her heads, no matter how slight this may be. In South Africa, most of her people were moved by the acts of one man -- Tata Nelson Mandela -- who initially was a fierce freedom fighter who stood for the principles of a democracy that would apply to all the people of South Africa. As the world learnt more about this extraordinary man after his 27 years of incarceration and subsequent release from Victor Verster prison in 1990, he showed the world, including his jailers, love and kindness instead of hatred and anger.

Tata Madiba was a person who personified the principles of "ubuntu". As the meaning of *ubuntu* was spread to all culture groups in South Africa, it was also spread to millions of people across the world. *Ubuntu* is all embracing. In one of Madiba's last public interviews, he explained how in the old days -- through the principles of *ubuntu* -- an African traveller would arrive in a foreign village and would not have to worry about asking for food and water. The village people welcomed their travelling guest, provided him with food and water, and they refreshed him as he moved on to the next village. This courtesy was never taken for granted, neither was it to be abused where one person would benefit at the expense of another.

As Madiba encouraged us to follow these old African values, enriched with tolerance and 'humanness', it is wonderful to see organisations such as the Wot-If?Trust -- who epitomise the type of values that seem to be from a by-gone era -- practicing their good deeds for impoverished people on a daily basis. Recently, the Wot-If?Trust (NPO) contacted CGF in search of another registered NPO (non-profit organisation), wanting to donate 250 Teddy Bears to small children who are less fortunate than others. CGF, who is a well recognised and networked organisation that specialises in a variety of corporate governance services, quickly jumped at the opportunity and

Teddy Bears meet their new owners on 13 May 2015



"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Speech by President Nelson Mandela at the launch of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund May 08, 1995

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contacted the Tshwane branch of Soroptimist International ('SI') in Pretoria in order to "find loving homes for the Teddy Bears".

As a matter of interest, the name 'soroptimist' is derived from the Latin word 'soror', meaning sister and 'optima' meaning best. It can thus be interpreted as 'the best for women'. Within minutes of CGF contacting the SI Tshwane branch, SI provided CGF a list of their registered NPOs who deal with infants and young children ~ and so the Teddy Bears were almost ready for 'adoption'.

On 13 May 2015 a surprise Teddy Bear party was arranged by SI, at the Rebokamoso Creche, at Tau Village for the toddlers. Later the same day, at the opening of the new library in Mamelodi, more young children from the Tateni Home Nursing Services' St Francis Drop-in Centre and the Mapula Embroidery Project were able to 'meet' their new Teddy Bears.

What a joyous occasion it was seeing the faces of so many toddlers being able to not just have their own Teddy Bear, but even more heartwarming was the fact that these cuddly toys were theirs to keep and take home.

In staying aligned with the principles of corporate social investment and good governance -- in commercial terms -- 'ubuntu' should be seen in a far broader context and it need not always be linked to some form of pay cheque. In reality, particularly considering the current and tough economic climate, many organisations and people may be financially pressed and are perhaps not in a position to contribute financially to others who are not as fortunate. It is often these acts of kindness that go a long way to make the lives of others somewhat better, and these are often the most memorable. **ENDS**

Words: 944

About Soroptimist International

Soroptimist International (SI) is a worldwide organisation for women with a social conscience working through service projects to advance human rights and improve the lives of women and girls. Globally, the first club was formed in California in the USA in 1921. Now one can go anywhere in the world and find a Soroptimist as the organisation is represented by some 90,000 members in more than 3,000 clubs in over 120 countries. Each club is based in a geographical area, such as a town or city. These international clubs are grouped into regions and grouped further into four federations: Great Britain and Ireland, the Americas, Europe, and the South West Pacific.

Soroptimist International South Africa (SISA) falls under Great Britain and Ireland. In South Africa there are nine clubs: Cape of Good Hope, Durban, Grahamstown, Johannesburg, Mafikeng, Mthatha, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria and Tshwane. Their work varies from advocacy (they enjoy consultative status at the United Nations) to fund raising, sponsorships and hands-on project implementation. Soroptimists are working women, artists, doctors, managers, farmers, scientists, accountants – women from all walks of life, all ages and cultures and they have one thing in common: A desire and commitment to give back to their communities and those around the world.

For further information, please contact: Leyden Field (SISA Foundation Trust: Chairperson) 0861-LEYDEN (539336) or email leydengibson@leydengibson.co.za

The Wot-If? Trust

The Wot-If? Trust operates in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general.

For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (**The Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee**) 083 625 3929 or email gail@wot-if.co.za

