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DIEPSLOOT GOES CYBER THIS MANDELA MONTH WITH 67 DAYS OF DIGITAL ACTIVISM

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Johannesburg

In the spirit of making every day Mandela Day, The Wot-If? Trust and its partners are embarking on 67 Days of Digital Activism, launching in Diepsloot on 22, 23 and 24 July 2015.

“This is in keeping with our philosophy that 67 minutes is really not enough to celebrate Madiba’s life and honour his legacy,” says Gail Styger of The Wot-If? Trust, which incubates and accelerates small businesses and mentors emerging entrepreneurs in under-served areas such as Diepsloot, a township north of Johannesburg.

“Many communities are given ‘things’ by corporates, but they don’t have the skills or ‘software’, let alone the content or backup, to make it worthwhile. It needs to be activated to be valuable – and that’s what we will be doing over 67 days,” says Styger.

Commenting further, Terrance Booysen, who heads up the renowned corporate governance consulting services organisation -- CGF Research Institute -- says, “whilst the support from corporates is critical to the success of community upliftment projects, it is equally important that corporates stand alongside their efforts to ensure that projects of this nature are sustainable. Impoverished communities want assurance that these corporates will support their projects until they are self-sustaining, and that they will transfer the necessary knowledge and skill which is desperately needed. By organisations simply donating a sum of money, without the necessary standby support often leads to failed projects and community mistrust.”

Accordingly, The Wot-If? Trust’s 67 Days of Digital Activism initiative seeks to facilitate and fund a digital ecosystem in Diepsloot. Incorporating existing technology ventures, it will also culminate in the development of a media, information and communication technologies precinct, as well as the production of a full-length movie, a music video festival and lots more – all within 67 event-filled days.

Diepsloot is a community with a population of over 500 000 people, growing by some 200 every day. It is a vibrant community with many young people who are hungry for technology, but have little access to it.

Businessmen and -women are plentiful in this thriving area but, asks Styger: “How do you run a business these days without access to internet banking and other online services? Children who need to do research for assignments don’t want to use outdated encyclopaedias – they want immediate access to up-to-date and relevant research that access to technology provides.”

She adds: “Over the next 67 days we will be activating available resources, bringing together technology partners and players, raising funds to do some amazing technology projects, challenging the government about connectivity, showcasing the abundance of talent we have, exposing the youth to technology-based enablers, challenging entrepreneurs to become connected, telling good news stories and harnessing digital opportunities wherever we can.”

The 67 Days of Digital Activism campaign will culminate in a celebration of digital connectedness and collaboration at the Social Good Summit, to be held in Diepsloot on 28 September 2015. Globally, this summit will explore how technology is being used for social good around the world.

Each year, the New York-based conference invites communities around the world to host their own summits simultaneously. Last year, hosted by Africare and The Wot-If? Trust, the Diepsloot community came together for their own summit and coined the hashtags #LovingMyDiepsloot and #Diepsloot2030 – both avenues through

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which to aggregate positive stories of success from the Diepsloot community and change the face of Diepsloot online.

This year's Social Good Summit theme, "New Goals. New Power. New Technology. #2030Now", mirrors the same objectives of the 67 Days of Digital Activism, producing social good from technology, and asks: "What type of world do I want to live in by the year 2030?"

In addition, Straight2!, in association with The Wot-If? Trust, is using the 67 Days of Digital Activism to raise money to make a feature film (working title: *67 Days*).

The script, which is in development, focuses on the real, everyday issues that affect most communities around South Africa, like unemployment, education, drug abuse and xenophobia. Using a selection of Madiba's quotes and life philosophies, the film will detail the trials and tribulations of five separate but interconnected township families, showing how our individual heroes are able to triumph over adversity.

Says the project's Alan Farber: "The production will make use of a professional crew, but will also empower the local community by providing on-the-job practical training, giving various community-based SMMEs (like catering) an opportunity to develop and build their reputations as service providers." The film will also give opportunities, on a micro-economic level, to local community members who are unemployed by providing work as on-set labourers and extras. "Using Madiba's philosophies as not only a premise for the movie but also as a motivation for how the movie is produced, *67 Days* promises to meaningfully touch both audiences and communities alike," he says.

Corporates and members of the public are urged to pitch in and get involved in the 67 Days of Digital Activism – going beyond a single day's social activism to contribute meaningful and sustainable change through the life-altering vehicle of technology. Visit www.wot-if.co.za for more details.

ENDS

Words: 856

About 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

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