

Florida Road's "LIFE" Begins

On Wednesday 20th April, the Florida Rd UIP Sidewalk Monitors graduated from the roads' first LIFE Programme, kick-starting a long-term plan to support The Wellness Centre Trust in their efforts to reintegrate homeless people into the work-force.

LIFE is a partnership between The Wellness Centre Trust, Western Star Recruitment Agency and the Florida Rd UIP, and stands for Local Investment - Future Employment. This collaboration sees The Wellness Centre Trust providing mentorship, discipleship and skills development for Florida Rd Sidewalk Monitors (the Men In Red); the Florida Rd UIP providing work experience and references, and Western Star Recruitment Agency assisting in job sourcing.

LIFE not only aims to provide current and future Sidewalk Monitors with the skills and guidance to find permanent jobs, but the drive and confidence to plan for their future. "It is one thing to put people through courses and programmes, but employers want work experience and good references when looking for staff, which is why we see this programme as a full circle solution," said Wayne Stainforth of Western Star Recruitment Agency and chairman of the Florida Rd UIP. "Ultimately, we want businesses in Florida Rd and surrounds, to think of LIFE graduates first when they are looking for staff to employ," he said.

The LIFE is structured in such a way that it allows for a cycle of job creation that will see Florida Rd Sidewalk Monitors moving onto permanent jobs, hence opening up space for other unemployed people to take their place as monitors, and slowly reducing the unemployment rate in the area.

This said, Florida Rd UIP precinct manager Jarrod Evans stresses that while this cycle is important, so too is the success of the Sidewalk Monitor Programme, which is dependent on the dedication and focus of the monitors. "All our current monitors were car guards on the road before we implemented the Sidewalk Monitor Programme, and while the UIP doesn't employ them, it has integrated them into a managed structure, which has elevated their status, given them a strong sense of purpose and has taught them pride in themselves and the road.

Instilling this in the new Sidewalk Monitors is non-negotiable and can only be achieved if the monitors are on the road for a reasonable period of time. "This means the cycle of job creation will be slow and steady, which not only suits what we need in terms of monitor commitment, but allows for the time and experience needed to generate the references required for formal employment.

On the issues of criminal records and background checks, Jarrod explains that all current and future Sidewalk Monitors undergo full background checks for past and current criminal offences. "None of our Sidewalk

Monitors are linked to current or unsolved crimes, but some do have criminal records. This said, our monitor programme positive experience with all our monitors, reminding us that a criminal record does not necessarily define the character of a person," he said.

A pilot project, the hope is that in time LIFE will make a small difference to the unemployment rate of the City and a significant difference to the lives of the individuals, and their families, who take part. "So when next you are assisted by one of the Men In Red on Florida Rd, know that they are more than just monitors but are part of a programme aimed at upskilling and giving people a second chance," concluded Wayne.



Pictured above are the first graduates of the Florida Rd LIFE programme: The Wellness Centre Trust staff from left to right: Eloise Briggeman - Founder and CEO of the Wellness Centre Trust; Nozipho Ngidi – The Wellness Centre Trust’s caterer; Mike Chauke - from Tsoelopele Consulting and Training, a skills development contractor to The Wellness Centre Trust; Simon Kozlowski – a discipleship contractor from Down-the-line Skills Development and Nhlanhla Eugene Ngidi – a field worker for The Wellness Centre Trust. The Florida Rd Sidewalk Monitors are from top left to bottom right: Lorraine Barnard; Harry Barnard Thulani Khuzwayo; Japhet Sishi; Sakhile Mthembu; Nelson Nduli; Simon Maduna; Thulani Dlamini; Siphon Ngcobo; Lucas Mhlongo; Maxwell Dlamini; Derrick Cele; Xolani Ndlovu. ABSENT: Ephraim Ngcobo.

ENDS

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