

Checkers baker motivates team to learn sign language

Taswell Smit, a deaf Baker at Checkers Mountain Mill in Worcester, has spurred his colleagues to learn South African Sign Language (SASL). The result is greatly improved communication among the team as well as with the supermarket's many customers living with hearing impairments.

Smit joined the supermarket chain eight years ago as part of Youth Employment Services (YES), a learnership programme aimed at reducing youth unemployment. After successfully completing 12 months of on-the-job training, Smit was permanently employed by Checkers initially as a Bakery Assistant, followed by a promotion to Baker. He credits this opportunity with improving his life and boosting his self-confidence.

"I enjoy being able to communicate with deaf customers and to make them comfortable with their shopping experience," says Smith. "It has also been exciting to see my colleagues so eager to learn sign language – it makes me feel valued and understood."

His team members are inspired by his tenacity and success. "Having Taswell part of the Bakery team has taught us humility and respect for others," shares Evie Valentyn, Bakery Controller at Checkers Mountain Mill.

"Taswell's presence has been a blessing in so many ways. He has proved that small changes or improvements can make a big difference to the deaf or hard of hearing. I am proud and honoured to work for a company that promotes a diverse and supportive workplace," added David Hartzenberg, Branch Manager.

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