

550 deaf and hard-of-hearing South Africans employed by the Shoprite Group

“When I was in matric I became very sick and that is when I lost my hearing. I was very worried and sad. Where I live, in Nongoma, there are no deaf people,” says Sbonelo Ndwandwe.

“I was not able to communicate with other people. I had no hope for employment, but then I came to Durban and my life changed. Now I earn a weekly income which I never had in the past. Checkers provided me with an opportunity to work towards my future.”

Sbonelo works at Checkers Amanzimtoti in the fruit & vegetable department. He is one of the 550 deaf and hard-of-hearing people currently employed by the Shoprite Group after successfully completing the NQF Level 2 Wholesale and Retail Chain Store Operation qualification.

The Group was the first employer in the retail sector to offer this qualification, and it has been doing so in partnership with Employ and Empower Deaf (eDeaf) since 2009. Learners are recruited and trained by a specialised team of deaf facilitators using South African Sign Language (SASL), after which they are placed in a Shoprite or Checkers supermarket for a one-year learnership.

There are an estimated 500 000 deaf people living in South Africa and many are unemployed, so for most of these deaf learners it is their first entry into the workplace.

“Being at home was very hard. I couldn’t support my daughter and my family no longer wanted to help me,” explains Ziliswa Mzana, who was jobless for eleven years. Today she works at Shoprite Khayelitsha. “I’m proud of myself and excited about my future again.”

As the largest private sector employer in South Africa, the Shoprite Group is committed to ongoing skills development and will continue its Decade of the Deaf programme so that even more people may be empowered through gainful employment.

ENDS

Additional staff profiles

Name: Lucinda Goliath

Store: Shoprite Paarl

After school Lucinda was unemployed for eight years. “My time at home was lonely because not many people took the time to speak to me. Now I get to engage with customers every day and I love it. I want to help other deaf people understand that they can have a future.”

Name: Mzuvukile Galo

Store: Checkers Mountain Mill Worcester

Mzuvukile Galo was unemployed for more than two years and the father of two struggled to provide for his family. “All I can say is thank you Checkers. Life was tough but since I started working, my life is so much better. I can provide for my family and plan for the future.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Photo 1: Mzuvukile Galo (Deaf Bakery Assistant from Checkers Mountain Mill in Worcester, Western Cape) serves a happy customer

Photo 2: Mzuvukile Galo (Deaf Bakery Assistant from Checkers Mountain Mill in Worcester, Western Cape) serves a happy customer

Photo 3: Lucinda Fiona Romarca Goliath (an all-rounder from Shoprite in Paarl, Western Cape) says thank you to a happy customer

Photo 4: Ziliswa Mzana (Deaf employee working in Shoprite Makhaza Centre's fruit and veg department)

Photo 5: Ziliswa Mzana (Deaf employee working in Shoprite Makhaza Centre's fruit and veg department)

Photo 6: Ziliswa Mzana (Deaf employee working in Shoprite Makhaza Centre's butchery)