

Shoprite prioritises training opportunities for disabled youths

The Shoprite Group is offering young, disabled South Africans the opportunity to gain valuable retail experience through two skills development programmes.

The Group is putting 250 disabled youths from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal through its eight-week Retail Readiness Programme. Comprising five weeks practical training in stores and three weeks of theory, the programme provides young people with basic skills to work in retail or start their own business. Successful participants receive NQF-level 3 qualifications.

The retailer has also rolled out a year-long learnership for disabled youths, which will see them working at various in-store departments and being awarded an NQF-level 2 qualification upon successful completion of the programme. The Group has partnered with the National Institute for the Deaf and the Tshirologo Disability Group to present this learnership.

A new intake of participants for both programmes takes place in March. These opportunities cater for people with a range of disabilities, including hearing and visual impairment, epilepsy, intellectual disability, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Ntabiseng Jacobs (25) from Vosloosrus in the East Rand completed Retail Readiness at Checkers Boksburg in January this year. She has a learning disability and trained mainly as a cook in the deli. "The kitchen is my happy space, so I really enjoyed learning new recipes and other aspects like hygiene and cleaning," says Jacobs.

She feels it is important that disabled people are not overlooked for training opportunities: "Just because you are disabled does not mean you can't do anything. My hands are as capable of doing work as those of an able-bodied person."

Mbhekiseni Mthethwa (28) from Umlazi in KwaZulu-Natal believes programmes like these are essential to foster understanding between able-bodied and disabled people, "There is such a lot of misunderstanding about disabled people and their capabilities. By working with us, normal people will come to understand us better and vice versa," he explains.

Mthethwa, who is visually impaired, says he thoroughly enjoyed working and learning at Shoprite Britannia West Street in Durban. "I love learning new things, but most of all it was a great pleasure meeting new people and interacting with the customers on a daily basis."

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CAPTION 1: Young people with a range of disabilities receive training at Shoprite and Checkers stores as part of the retailers' drive to create opportunities for these normally marginalised individuals. Kgaohelo Nkabinde (left) and Winnie Maluleke are part of this programme and are here being shown the retail ropes by cashier Mercy Mathoma at Checkers Hyper at Eastgate Mall.

CAPTION 2: Young people with a range of disabilities receive training at Shoprite and Checkers stores as part of the retailers' drive to create opportunities for these normally

marginalised individuals. Lindokuhle Mhlongo is part of this programme and is currently being shown the retail ropes at Shoprite Chatsworth.