

Shoprite pays tribute to its everyday (s)heroes

“Like the proverbial mother in the house, she is the glue that holds everything together in our store.”

These words describe Shirley Rhode, Perishables Manager at Checkers Gordon’s Bay Mall, according to her colleague and the Back-end Manager in this supermarket, David Swanepoel.

Affectionately known as “Lala” by both colleagues and customers alike, Rhode is a passionate retailer, whose career stretches back 30 years when she started as a till packer at Shoprite Strand. The mother of one, her colleagues naturally gravitate to her when they experience difficulty. “I’m always available to both my customers and colleagues. When my colleagues come to me with their problems I usually offer them a cup of sugar water and my listening ears,” she says.

She goes the extra mile for her customers during the lockdown by alleviating the boredom while they queue to enter the store. “I crack a joke with them. Ask whether I can help them with anything, just to show them that I care and understand that what they’re experiencing is not pleasant and not what they’re used to,” says Rhode.

Two-thirds of the Shoprite Group’s 147 000 employees are women. Most of them serve on the frontlines in the more than 1 000 supermarkets in South Africa. This Mother’s Day the Group celebrates these women, many of whom are mothers, for their diligence and care in nurturing our nation in these challenging times.

Roslyn Moodley, the Cash Office Manager at Checkers Westville Mall in Durban, is another mother whose customers have grown to depend on her. Her first job in retail was as a cashier in the supermarket she currently serves in. She has a 27-year-old daughter and does not regret one day of the 28 years of service to her customers, who ask for her by name and at times consult her on ingredients and recipes.

Moodley ensures customer’s safety and health in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic by constantly being on the lookout for elderly and disabled customers and moving them swiftly through the store. “These are extraordinary times that we live in, so we cannot operate as if it’s business as usual. I am also part of the team, who puts together items on elderly customers’ shopping lists, which they then collect from us. In all my years in retail I’ve held to the belief that the customer is the most important person in the store and should be treated as such,” she explains.

Mother of three, Charity Mhlaba has since 2017 been the Branch Manager of Shoprite Cloverdene in Putfontein on the East Rand. Her career in retail started in Usave supermarkets, where she quickly moved up the ranks from cashier to branch manager. Mhlaba says she is not afraid of unhappy customers because nothing pleases her more than turning a disgruntled customer into a happy one. “I make sure I’m always visible in the store.

I also listen intently to our customers so that I can deliver on what they want the first time,” says the Crystal Park resident.

During lockdown she strives to make her customers feel safe and secure by keeping her store clean and making sure the measures to safeguard them are in place and visible. Customers have noticed the pride Mhlaba takes in her work and praise her for it. “I always put my customers first because without customers we would not have a business,” she concludes.

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