

Hero town Mafikeng pulls out the stops when donating to the Solidarity Fund

The generous residents of Mafikeng distinguished themselves by making the biggest contribution to the over R1.6 million donated to the Solidarity Fund by Shoprite, Checkers and Usave customers countrywide.

Shoprite Mafikeng came out tops among the Shoprite's Group's over 1 000 supermarkets, while Checkers Mafikeng raised the most money of the more than 250 Checkers stores in the country. Customers make donations via the Shoprite Group's till-point donation facility, the Act for Change Fund, and together with the retailer's R2 million donation raised R3.5 million in total for the Solidarity Fund.

"We're a small, remote town, so it is really special that our loyal customers made the biggest donation of all the supermarkets to the Solidarity Fund. I am very proud of my team for faithfully processing these transactions. I keep them motivated by relaying what President Cyril Ramaphosa says every time he addresses the nation," says Peter Ntshupetsang, branch manager of Shoprite in Mafikeng.

Jairus Mantlhasi, branch manager of Checkers Mahikeng Mall, was so inspired by Ntshupetsang's example that he also started encouraging his team to the point where the majority of them now give regularly to the Solidarity Fund.

"My colleagues on the shop floor are donating the money they would have spent buying lunch, as our employer since the start of the lockdown provides us with a daily lunch of soup and *amagwinya*. All the managers in the store give R100 or more after payday and will continue to do so."

Councillor Betty Diakanyo, the town's executive mayor, was full of praise: "We appreciate the efforts of Shoprite to facilitate [donations] so the people of Mafikeng could contribute to the Solidarity Fund. We answered President Ramaphosa's call *thuma mina* and I am the happiest mayor because of our achievement."

Odette Anton (40), a regular shopper at the local Checkers, says she's lost count of how many times she's donated. "I give whenever I'm able to and won't stop giving until we've stopped this virus." She adds she's satisfied that the money is being put to good use and encourages friends and family to also contribute when they do their grocery shopping.

Another Mafikeng resident, Desmond Nkokou (27) was glad and grateful that his home town was making a name for itself for the right reasons. "I feel extremely proud that our contribution to the Solidarity Fund has put us on the map," he says.

Aobakwe Seadira (24) hoped that her donation would go towards providing employment for all those who lost their jobs during the pandemic. "I'm extremely pleased that our Shoprite store is number 1 in the country because of our donations."

Contributions from rural towns to the Group's Act for Change Fund, a till point donation facility, have been unprecedented and the overall top contributing stores after Shoprite Mafikeng are Shoprite Middelburg in Mpumalanga and Shoprite Kokstad in KwaZulu-Natal.

The generosity of rural communities played out on a provisional level as well, with the Free State, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal claiming the top three positions from among the nine provinces

The Group manages the Act for Change Fund on behalf of its customers and pays all the money received over to the Solidarity Fund. There are no administrative costs. Anyone interested in using this facility to give to the Solidarity Fund can inform their cashier to add R5 or more to their purchase in any Shoprite, Checkers or Usave store.

In addition to collecting for the Solidarity Fund, the Shoprite Group has since the start of the lockdown donated surplus food to the value of over R20 million to 261 vetted, registered non-governmental organisations. While the Shoprite Mobile Soup Kitchens have delivered in excess of 700 000 meals to more than 1000 beneficiary organisations in the same time frame.

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