

Retail veteran digs deep to support her community in Scottsville

Community members in Scottsville, Kraaifontein know they can knock on the door of Donita Stephens when they are in need, especially if their need is for food.

Stephens, the Fresh Foods Manager at Checkers Hyper in Brackenfell, has worked for the retailer for the past 30 years, but has been serving her community for even longer. Most recently she made up 50 food hampers that were distributed to the increasing number of destitute people in Scottsville as the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

On Mother's Day, Stephens distributed 30 pamper packs to older women in Scottsville. The Sunday before that she cooked a warm lunch and pudding for 45 people in the suburb because it was her day off and she believes everyone should have a warm plate of food on a Sunday. Every week Stephens is involved in some activity to help people who are hungry.

Her passion to help others comes from her father, who died twenty years ago, and whose funeral service was packed with young people whom he had helped. He taught Sunday School and would round up the neighbourhood kids on Fridays and Sundays to give them a nutritious meal, which her mother usually cooked.

According to Stephens her community work initially focused on youths with drug habits and the elderly. "However with the outbreak of Covid-19, the need in our communities is so great that I now help whoever I can." Her food hampers are distributed in areas like Durbanville, Ruyterwacht and Eersterivier.

She pays for everything out of her own pocket and says she's able to afford it because most of her adult children are out of the house.

"My father always said that your tithe [10% of earnings set aside for the church] can be ploughed back into your community. You don't have to only give to the church as God sees every good deed you do," says Stephens as she quietly goes about helping her community without drawing attention to herself.

As she is required to do at her work place, Stephens adheres to strict hygiene measures, which includes but is not restricted to constant sanitising of surfaces and hands, when making up the food or other hampers.

All the volunteers who deliver the hampers to people's homes wear masks and have been provided with hand sanitiser for their personal use. "We maintain social distancing at all times and at no point is there any physical contact between the person delivering and the one receiving the food hamper," concludes Stephens.

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