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Stellenbosch

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PARTNERSHIP BEARS FRUIT

By Michelle van der Spuy

Photo : Jurgen Hansmann

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Louise van Rhyn, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (IJR Patron), Ridwan Samodien (principal at Kannemeyer Primary School), Rosie Chirongoma (PiP recruitment & fundraising), Merlinda Abrahams (stakeholder engagement consultant), Andre Pretorius (principal at Heathfield Primary School) and Fanie du Toit (executive director of IJR) during a recent IJR

Reconciliation reward ceremony.

If you are a business leader from Stellenbosch who wants to use his resources and know-how to make a difference in local schools, Partners for Possibility (PiP) would like to help you to do so.

This initiative, the flagship social change initiative for Symphonia for South Africa, creates a partnership between business leaders and school principals from under-resourced schools in order to create a readiness for change.

PiP has already paired more than 200 business leaders with principals from under-resourced schools. "Some schools in Stellenbosch are lucky enough to have business leaders on their governing bodies. Managing the school and creating a budget is much easier for them than schools in, for example, Kayamandi who have no one to help them," says Louise van Rhyn, CEO and founder of Symphonia.

The specific goal for schools in Stellenbosch is to reach 100% grade 3 literacy for all children by 2020. "People are too concerned about matric results when we should try to help children before they reach grade 12. By improving literacy at a young age, we are giving them a better chance to pass their matric exams," van Rhyn explains.

By entering a partnership, business leaders often learn just as much as the school principals. "Business leaders who get involved with PiP are faced with complex problems that are a challenge to solve, making the partnership a learning experience for both the business leader and principal," she says.

One success story which is already unfolding in Stellenbosch is the partnership between Marliese Martin, the CEO of JF Hillebrand Logistics, and Calvyn Solomons, principal of AF Louw Primary School.

"Business leaders will be challenged beyond their everyday environment. What better way to shape our future business leaders? Why would you not encourage the business leaders of today to engage and build future strategies together with school leaders?" says Martin.

Solomons has been overwhelmed by the support he has received from his partner. "Initially I was under the impression that this programme would be conducted like any other leadership programme, where you sit with a wealth of information at the end of the programme, with no support structures in place for future reference.

"Martin has not just committed herself to being the school's managing director, but has also brought her whole management team on board to assist the school in addressing any issues."

VPeople who are interested in becoming part of PiP are invited to attend their next meeting in the VGK Hall in Idas Valley on Tuesday 24 November. Bookings are essential at: 2 melissa@symphonia.net or 0 021 913 3507

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