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Atlas Copco and Rand Air dedicate 67 hands-on minutes to Cotlands in honour of Mandela Day

Atlas Copco South Africa and Rand Air, part of the Atlas Copco Group, paid tribute to Mandela Day by participating in two hands-on initiatives in support of Cotlands' development programmes for infants and young children.

On Monday 21st July, Atlas Copco ACademy's Mopane training room was a hive of activity and tables groaned under the weight of baby products as Atlas Copco staff prepared and wrapped 72 baby hampers. Valued at approximately R250, each hamper was filled with baby essentials such as nappies, aqueous cream, shampoo, soap and wet wipes. Wayne Jacobs, Business Line Manager, Atlas Copco Compressor Technique Service Division, says "It is easy to donate money or buy nappies and say 'I have done my bit'. But actually doing something physical like making up these hampers allows you to put a little of yourself into the initiative; you feel part of it." Bongi Manqebele, Credit Manager, Construction Technique, is a 'Gogo' of three and says that she loves anything to do with babies. "This is such a good initiative especially because baby products are so expensive and there are so many mothers who have a great need." Administrator and PA, Construction Technique, Dalene Jacob, adds that this type of initiative should be done not just on Mandela day but every day "because there is always need out there."

2/...Atlas Copco and Rand Air dedicate 67 hands-on minutes

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The hampers will be handed out by Cotlands as starter kits to mothers from the rural Hlabisa community in KwazuluNatal upon registering their infants into the specially developed care programme.

“Located in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, this isolated community is in extreme need as there is no access to shops, clinics or hospitals,” explains Karen van Zyl, Investor Relationship Manager at Cotlands.

Established in 1936, Cotlands originally helped HIV/AIDS children. When the introduction of Anti Retro Virals lessened this need, the NGO changed its focus to ensuring that children are ARV compliant and receive an education. Two non-centre based early learning programmes, one for new-borns to two year olds and the other for two to six year olds, are run at Cotlands Early Learning Groups based in six provinces.

Mothers are encouraged to enroll their infants into the naught to two year old programme as early as possible. This programme which includes BabyGym and infant massage also checks for malnourishment and if vaccinations and inoculations are up to date. Mothers have access to a nurse, and a social worker during the sessions and are referred to a doctor or hospital if necessary. “We also check that the infants have birth certificates as this is important for child support grants as well as for school enrolment,” adds Karen.

Once they reach the age of two, the children graduate to a 21 week childhood development program under the professional supervision of trained and NQF-qualified Early Learning Facilitators (ELFs) employed by Cotlands. Karen points out the importance of supporting and working closely with the community. “We use community church halls and local clinics, where possible and employ ELFs from local communities to help alleviate unemployment.”

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With its strong focus on education, Cotlands has developed mobile toy libraries to support early learning playgroups. Run by qualified toy librarians, these libraries service the Cotlands Early Learning Groups as well as other Early Childhood Development Centres in needy communities where kids can ‘take out’ toys for two weeks.

“What better way to honour Nelson Mandela who held education in very high regard,” continues Karen. “We are always in need of toys as these toy libraries are very popular with the children; it is often the only toys they have access to.”

It was therefore fitting that Rand Air dedicated 67 minutes to a toy making workshop on Friday 17th July. Staff used their creativity to make educational toys out of recycled materials. “We really enjoyed making these toys and hope that they will go a long way in filling the mobile libraries and give joy to the children,” comments Rand Air Marketing Manager, Byrone Thorne.

“Cotlands establishes long-term relationships with corporates because we recognise that working together on sustainable projects is key to addressing early learning and developmental gaps timeously in order to give children the opportunity to not only survive, but to thrive into adulthood,” affirms Karen. “We extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to the staff of Atlas Copco and Rand Air who gave of themselves to support us.”

When Kgothatso Ntsie, Atlas Copco South Africa’s Corporate Communications Manager, was approached by Karen to participate in the toy making and infant hamper projects, she felt they were great initiatives for Atlas Copco’s 67 minutes in honour of Nelson Mandela. “These types of projects are in line with our approach to involve human resources rather than just offering finance or making donations. It’s a great way for the staff to get involved and I was so pleased when Rand Air also agreed to join us in our support of Cotlands.”

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Kgothatso adds that sustainability is key throughout the Atlas Copco Group. “From our engineering departments and manufacturing processes to the final operation of our products and equipment in the field, we strive to ensure sustainable productivity for our customers. We can therefore easily identify with Cotland’s sustainable approach to funding through building partnerships with corporates in order to work together on long-term projects.

“Thank you to Cotlands for providing us with these wonderful projects. What a rewarding way to spend our 67 minutes!”

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Captions to photos

1. FLTR Bongi Manqebele, Dalene Jacob and Mabatho Sothoane from Atlas Copco – another baby hamper completed for Cotlands in honour of Nelson Mandela Day
2. Karen van Zyl with some of the Rand Air staff dedicating 67 minutes to a toy making workshop to fill mobile toy libraries
3. Kgothatso Ntsie - spending 67 hands on minutes making up baby hampers is in line with Atlas Copco's approach to involve human resources in our community initiatives.
4. Wayne Jacobs, Business Line Manager, Atlas Copco Compressor Technique Service Division contributing his 67 minutes to making up baby hampers
5. We really enjoyed making these toys and hope that they will give joy to the children - Rand Air Marketing Manager, Byrone Thorne standing with Karen van Zyl

Atlas Copco is a world-leading provider of sustainable productivity solutions. The Group serves customers with innovative compressors, vacuum solutions and air treatment systems, construction and mining equipment, power tools and assembly systems. Atlas Copco develops products and service focused on productivity, energy efficiency, safety and ergonomics. The company was founded in 1873, is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has a global reach spanning more than 180 countries. In 2014, Atlas Copco had revenues of BSEK 94 (BEUR 10.3) and more than 44 000 employees. Learn more at www.atlascopco.co.za.

Rand Air (part of the Atlas Copco Group) is a market leader in portable compressed air and power generation rental. The company boasts the largest and most extensive fleet of over 700 latest technology electric, diesel and oil-free compressors and diesel generators for hire in southern Africa. With 40 years’ industry experience and support from 10 branches and agencies across southern Africa, Rand Air delivers targeted business solutions and uncompromising service levels.