

# EAT OUT, HELP OUT

By Eugene Yiga



**StreetSmart SA is a public benefit and non-profit organisation. It uses donations from restaurants in the Western Cape and Gauteng to help street children rebuild their lives. On the eve of the organisation's 10th anniversary, founding member and new chairperson Melanie Burke reflects on the journey so far and the route ahead.**

StreetSmart SA celebrating 10th anniversary



Making a difference in the lives of street children

## How did it all start?

StreetSmart SA was created in 2005 by a group of concerned Capetonians under the patronage of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. It comprises resourceful board members representing business, as well as the hospitality and tourism industries.

## How does it work?

StreetSmart SA is a registered and properly constituted conduit fundraising organisation. We raise funds by adding a R5 donation to each table's bill at the participating affiliated restaurants. This donation is voluntary and diners are able to contribute more if they wish to.

## Where does the money go?

We raise funds for organisations that run education, skills training, and family reunification programmes for street children and children at risk of becoming street children. We ensure that every cent donated by diners goes towards these programmes. This makes StreetSmart SA a community initiative working towards social reintegration and normalisation.

## What specific examples can you share?

In 2015, StreetSmart SA has given substantial financial support to beneficiary organisations in various areas, such as Cape Town (Cape

Town Multi-Service Centre, Home from Home, Learn-to-Live, Ons Plek, and TLC Outreach Projects), Franschhoek (The Kusasa Project), Stellenbosch (Home from Home), Plettenberg Bay (Masizame) Johannesburg (Kids Haven), and Pretoria (PEN Streetwise Project).

## What impact have you had so far?

Nationally, 90 restaurants have currently embraced StreetSmart SAs vision to make a real difference to the lives of street children. Last year alone, they raised more than R1 million for our beneficiary programmes. Imagine the impact we could enable if more restaurants signed up to StreetSmart SA!

## What inspired you to be a part of

## Street Smart SA?

Starting StreetSmart SA was a no-brainer. It's such a simple way to support credible organisations that do essential work towards creating viable lives for vulnerable children and street children.

This is active citizenship at work and the members of the board of StreetSmart SA all serve in this way. There is something in the quote by John Bunyan: "You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." This is the StreetSmart SA response to a specific need in our society.

## How do you feel about taking on

## the role of chairperson?

I am delighted to be of further service to StreetSmart SA in my new role as chairperson of the board. I am grateful for the continued support our organisation enjoys and invite all South Africans to build on our collective efforts of contributing to organisations that are helping to create viable lives for vulnerable street children.

## What are you doing to achieve your goals for the future?

There are several initiatives to respond to the opportunities ahead. A restaurant recruitment effort is underway, several information and engagement campaigns are planned as part

of our 10-year anniversary celebrations, and we will continue to build on the foundations and goodwill achieved since we started. I will be working to cement all of the commitment and goodwill to this cause and to increase its impact and scale of donations.

## Besides eating at a restaurant and donating money, how can the public contribute?

StreetSmart SA encourages collaboration with other organisations in business, government, and the not-for-profit sectors. Of course, we always welcome donations and prizes for our annual raffle, which has already started ticket sales for 2015, and is the main fundraiser for StreetSmart SAs administration costs. *✶*