



Local NPO Expands Board to Amplify the Joy of Giving

The JOG (Joy of Giving) Trust, custodian of the Santa Shoebox Project (SSP) – a collection of initiatives dedicated to uplifting underprivileged children in South Africa and Namibia – has elected Deidré Vrede and Samenthea Arendse to its board of trustees.

Over the past 18 years, the Project has brought joy to over 1.3m children through its Traditional Santa Shoebox, Virtual Santa Shoebox and SSP Legacy initiatives.

Vrede currently serves as Senior Manager: Corporate Social Investment and Wellness at the V&A Waterfront and is a registered counsellor with experience in working with at-risk youth in the education sector. This, coupled with a history of supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs), has given her a unique understanding of the challenges faced at grassroots level, which, when applied to corporate strategy, produces positive results for all involved. She believes that it is her mandate to foster and bring meaningful, lasting change to individuals and the communities in which they live.

Regarding her appointment she shares, “This is a huge honour for me. I am excited to contribute to the growth of what is already an amazing organisation that is changing lives.”

Arendse, the Head of Finance (HOF) at Business Partners Limited, brings with her 18 years of experience as a finance professional along with her expertise in governance as a Certified Director. Fuelled by a deep desire to give back, her decision to join the Trust aligns with a personal commitment she made: to make her 40s a ‘decade of purpose’. “Having received a bursary from an NGO that enabled me to complete my Bachelor of Commerce degree, I wanted to pay it forward. In doing so, I hope to touch someone’s life who will one day be in a position to give back too. I am so grateful for the opportunity and the confidence that such a well-loved initiative has now put in me.”

She hopes to leverage her skills to improve the Trust’s operations while also attracting new funders to grow its support base. “This will allow it to continue and expand the work that it does.”

Executive Trustee and CEO of the Santa Shoebox Project Deb Zelezniak, says, “Deidré and Samenthea's passion for making a difference aligns perfectly with our vision of giving, that goes beyond material or financial resources to include time, skills, knowledge, kindness and love. Their dedication and experience will be instrumental in helping us bring joy to even more children and to continue to uplift under-resourced communities countrywide. We are super excited to have these capable and compassionate women join our team!”

About the Santa Shoebox Project

Traditional Santa Shoebox: Over the last 18 years, 1 226 756 Santa Shoeboxes, each containing eight specified items of treats and essentials, have been given to underprivileged and socially vulnerable children throughout South Africa and Namibia. From 01 September each year, Santa Shoebox donors choose their beneficiary child/ren by name, age and gender and are given the child's clothing size. Each personalised shoebox reaches the very child for whom it was pledged.

Virtual Santa Shoebox: These shoeboxes are purchased online by donors and are available year-round, meeting the needs of donors who live too far from drop-off points, are too busy to shop or have health issues. Components are chosen by the donor on the Santa Shoebox website, the shoeboxes are packed by the Santa Shoebox Team and delivered to children attending far-flung rural facilities. A VSS contains the eight specified items, as well as additional items, such as a lunchbox and books, and costs R450 plus an optional delivery fee of R30.

SSP Legacy: All Santa Shoebox Project operating costs are covered by corporate sponsors. Privately donated funds and surplus funds generated by the sale of Virtual Santa Shoeboxes accrue to the SSP Legacy, and are used to bring permanent change to the lives of Santa Shoebox beneficiary children and the impoverished communities in which they live. SSP Legacy initiatives have thus far reached more than 80 000 children.

Fiduciary information: As a Level One Contributor to B-BBEE, the Santa Shoebox Project earns 100 points on the generic scorecard, and with Section 18A status, is able to provide a tax-deductible receipt in recognition of donations. The Project is an initiative of the JOG Trust (IT2671/2009). The Trust is registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO-930031301), a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO 102-098) and holds a current ICPR in support of 100% SED compliance.

Social media:

TikTok: @santa.shoebox

Facebook: /SantaShoebox

X: @SantaShoebox

Instagram: /santashoebox

YouTube: The Santa Shoebox Project

Pinterest: /santashoebox