

Chatsworth Shopping Centre honoured for drug awareness programme

At the recent International Council of Shopping Centres (ICSC) Solal Marketing awards, Chatsworth Shopping Centre in Durban was acknowledged for a community project, initiated by the centre management, to raise awareness among schoolchildren of the serious effects of drug use.

The ICSC Solal Marketing awards recognise the most effective retail marketing campaigns across Europe and South Africa, and are seen as a benchmark of quality throughout the industry. The campaign award was for 'Sugars, The Bitter Truth' - a comic book addressing the dangers of 'sugars', the street name given to a drug, which is a highly addictive and even lethal combination of heroin and cocaine.

The centre is owned by Sanlam Life Insurance and managed by JHI Properties. With the assistance of the Chatsworth Anti-Drug Forum and Primedia Lifestyle, the centre decided to take action and created a comic book to raise awareness of the devastating impact this increasingly popular drug is having on families in the local community.

Comments Rubecca Khan, portfolio manager of JHI Properties, "The Sugars Comic Book was initiated in 2010, with the launch event held in August that year and the first edition comprising 20 000 copies was distributed to approximately 45 primary schools (Grades 5-7) in the Chatsworth and Shallcross communities. To date five editions of the comic book have been produced and distributed, with each edition on a different theme but all related to the drugs issue."

"The centre is looking at re-producing the existing editions of the comic book as there will always be new learners who will benefit from the original storyline, which effectively communicates the dangers associated with drug use and abuse. The centre is also looking at producing actual costume characters of those featuring in the comic books and conducting road shows at schools, to bring the message 'to life' and further increase awareness," adds Nishtha Sanichur, marketing manager of Primedia Lifestyle.

"As a corporate company operating in the heart of Chatsworth and being genuinely concerned about the youth in the community, we identified the need to address this issue by talking directly to the primary school children in the area. In this way our aim was to address the drug issue in a relevant, attention-getting format aimed at the target age group ie grades 5, 6 and 7, before they become aware of it in high school - where the drugs tend to filter through. This is achieved in a comic book, which effectively deals with the reality and seriousness of the situation and the consequences," concludes Khan.

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