

Nivea and Thanda partner to create fairytale ECD classrooms

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Ninety percent of brain development happens before the age of fiveⁱ, yet more than two thirds of South African children under the age of five are still not receiving the crucial Early Childhood Development (ECD) education that could make or break their future potentialⁱⁱ. Their development - physical, cognitive and emotional - is compromised because they are not receiving the services and care needed at this very crucial time in their young lives. This is because the right stimulation and nutrition in the first five years of a child's life directly impacts the development of neural pathways, which will later enable learning and the development of vital interpersonal skillsⁱⁱⁱ.



With this in mind, global skincare company Nivea is offering hope for children in a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal. It has partnered with Thanda, a community-based organisation, to bring an innovative ECD programme to children in this rural community. Nivea provided R2m in funding to design and build ECD classrooms, which was officially opened at the Nivea Thanda Community Centre in rural Mtwalume, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7 December 2017.

The classrooms were designed with sustainability in mind and with the aim to provide, not just the bare minimum, but the best quality. The floor-to-ceiling glass panels allow natural lighting and frame the picturesque view, while the unique double roof design enables natural ventilation and shading to keep the classrooms below cool during hot summer days. The lower insulated roof maintains a more constant temperature during winter.

Nivea Brand Manager, Shayna Amaldas, said that the new ECD space will eventually cater for up to 90 children up to the age of five, and has already enabled Thanda's programme to grow from 10 to 60 children, with a growing waiting list. These classrooms provide inspiration and learnings for what can be achieved in other regions.

Each classroom has a reading area, creative area, play area and cognitive learning area. All are theme-based with classrooms inspired by *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, animals and African design in order to foster the idea of interconnectedness and remind children that they have a responsibility to protect the environment.

"This is the age when children develop an active imagination that fuels their creativity to later develop lateral thinking and

problem-solving skills. Not only have classrooms been designed to inspire curiosity, spark imagination, and foster interconnectedness, but our ECD teachers have received further accredited training to develop and strengthen the children's individual capabilities," says Angela Larkan, Co-founder and Director of Thanda. Nivea's support has been a tremendous opportunity to change the way we, as a society, approach education, as they share our mission of bringing experiential and innovative learning to children, while also understanding the importance of strengthening communities as a whole."

After a long search, Nivea identified Thanda as the perfect partner to align with their Nivea Cares for Family Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, which aims to uplift one million families globally.

Amaidas explains, "What is unique to South Africa is that the spirit of togetherness extends beyond what the rest of the world perceives as the nuclear family. Family revolves around Ubuntu - the understanding that 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. Through working together to serve the wider community, people can become more."

Additionally, Nivea helped fund the expansion and strengthening of The Thanda Community Centre which is now able to stay open every day of the year. It is home to the new ECD Classrooms, as well as the only library in the area, a playground, skate park, art centre, science centre and feeding centre. Since the partnership began, there have been 7485 visits to the Nivea Thanda Community Centre from children in the surrounding community.

With Nivea's support, Thanda was also able to double the size of their kitchen where hundreds of meals are prepared every day. Since the start of the partnership, Nivea has funded 112,665 nutritious meals for over 780 children in Thanda's ECD and after-school programmes. Thanda was further able to educate an additional 18,954 children in neighbouring communities through the mediums of puppet shows, dramas and workshops.

Amaidas said that Nivea's support for The Thanda Community Centre had also moved beyond its South African office. Parent company Beiersdorf's Dubai office had been so impressed with what the partnership had achieved that it had raised funds for Thanda's feeding scheme and for eco-friendly ablutions and tippy-taps.

Nivea celebrates the beauty of caring for ourselves and others. Care is at the heart of the Nivea brand – not only through providing world class skin care for beautiful and healthy feeling skin, but also through caring for the wellbeing of people. It is a brand that is committed to creating a life that is truly worth living, both now and in the future.

ⁱ The Long Island Index, a project of the Rauch Foundation.

ⁱⁱ Statistics South Africa: General Household Survey (2015).

ⁱⁱⁱ South African Early Childhood Review 2016 is a joint publication between Ilifa Labantwana, the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency.

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