

Rhino Force gets support from Mitsubishi to fight poaching

Mitsubishi Motors SA has joined up with Rhino Force, a well-established organisation which is involved in creating public awareness and support for initiatives to save the local rhino population from poachers. The organisation has already raised more than R1 million for rhino conservation.



"We see this cause as being very close to the hearts of many South Africans and it fits in well with some important core principles of the Mitsubishi brand, namely adventure and the outdoor lifestyle, while also being an worthwhile corporate social investment opportunity," says the marketing manager of Mitsubishi SA, Braam Faul.

Involvement of local communities

Rhino Force, which was founded by Chris Thorpe and Joanne Lapin in 2010, has a sustainable business model that raises funds for organisations such as the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) which are involved in the protection and conservation of the endangered rhino population. Rhino Force's business model includes an important corporate social responsibility element where local communities are involved in producing and packaging beaded Save-the-Rhino, call-to-action bracelets that are sold at more than 600 retail outlets throughout South Africa.

The bracelets are sold for R30, with 40% of the money going to the communities which produce and pack the items and 30% going to EWT to fund projects such as the Rhino Orphanage, skills development, the purchase and training of specialised sniffer dogs and supporting anti-poacher ranger units. The balance of 30% goes to marketing and distribution costs as well as providing a small profit for the retailer.

Objective is two million bracelets

Lapin says the objective is to sell a million bracelets in South Africa and a further million internationally. A combination of retail selling, corporate promotion and electronic communication, including the social networks, are being used to market the products. Rhino Force enjoys the support of well-known conservationists Dr. Ian Player and Clive Walker who are honorary patrons of Rhino Force, while ambassadors for the cause include the Parlotones, Jonty Rhodes, the Golden Lions and KZN Sharks rugby teams, and artist Ed Jordan.

Mitsubishi's sponsorship includes the loan of a double cab Triton bakkie with Rhino Force branding to the organisation, while the motor company will use its dealerships as retail outlets for the bracelets. In return Rhino Force will get involved with joint promotional events with Mitsubishi and its dealers, all of which will benefit the project in terms of publicity and brand awareness.

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