

# Mars Africa targets Marconi Beam Primary School for IT education

Associates from food company Mars Africa spent the day at Marconi Beam Primary School, Milnerton, Cape Town, as part of their Mars Volunteer Programme, which continues the IT education and training of staff, and ensures that facilities such as the library are properly run.



Marconi Beam Primary was first choice for this Mars Africa initiative, due to its proximity to the Mars Africa offices in Montague Gardens, making it easy for Mars associates to make regular visits to the school.

One of the key focus areas of this year's programme is the IT upskilling of staff and so Mars Africa hosted an IT training seminar to which nine staff members were invited. "The main objective of the Volunteer Programme is to improve the lives of both the learners and staff at Marconi Beam Primary. Our focus this year has been on IT training to staff members as we believe that by improving their IT skills we are making them better educators, which benefits the learners by giving them access to more knowledge," said the IT manager of Mars Africa, Nathan Levey, who runs training programmes and visits Marconi every month to ensure that skills are constantly updated.

More than half of the schools in South Africa are unable to provide learners with access to computer facilities, which is why Mars Africa is committed to improving Marconi's IT facilities with a state-of-the-art computer lab worth R150 000 and equipment such as a projector, screen, multi-function printer and stationery donated by Mars Associates.

## Improvement of the school library

This programme has also contributed to the improvement of the school library. A total of more than 40 volunteers helped cover and label books and enter all book information into a computerised catalogue system. With only 7% of government schools in South Africa having functional school libraries, improving the library at Marconi Beam Primary has changed the learning environment at the school, with children now having more access to reading material.

"The improvement of the library's administrative system and the donations of new and used books by Mars Associates have

contributed towards a better learning experience for the students, many of whom are taking more interest in reading now," said Marconi Beam Primary's principal, Elizabeth Plaatjies.

Additional donations included Shoprite Checkers/Mars Associates Soup Kitchen, gardening equipment, vegetable seeds for the food garden, Royco soup, Oxo and Alphabet noodles.

## **Vegetable garden**

This year's Volunteer Programme follows on the success of last year's initiative, which had Mars Associates assist in establishing a vegetable garden at Marconi Beam Primary to serve as a source of daily food and nutrition for the learners, many of whom are only fed at school. These 40+ volunteers have sustained the garden this month by planting more vegetables and educating Grade 6 and 7 learners regarding health.

The garden has now become a sustainable source of food and where previously only 250 learners were able to be fed now all 1141 learners are properly fed five days a week. The result has been improved performance. Since being given regular, healthy meals, learners are now concentrating better in class and have increased energy levels. "We have definitely noticed a difference in the children's attitude and approach to their learning since this initiative launched. They attend school more regularly and they have more energy, which has a positive impact on their school work. They are also able to concentrate better because they are not hungry anymore and there is noticeably less bullying. Previously the older learners would force the younger children to give them their food whereas now that everyone is being fed, there is less of this happening," said Plaatjies.

For more information on Mars Africa, go to [www.mars.com/south-africa/en/index.aspx](http://www.mars.com/south-africa/en/index.aspx).

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