

## Protea provides for pooches during 'Dinner in the Dark'

General Managers and staff from Protea Hotels around the country and Africa recently got together and raised R212,883 for the SA Guide Dogs Association at a unique dinner where they were all blindfolded.

The initiative created an understanding, awareness and tolerance for the blind, with the funds raised providing guide dogs for 21 blind people in the Western Cape.

"We all too often get caught up in merely giving money to charity without understanding the cause or the impact our donations can have on people in physically challenging situations." said Arthur Gillis, Group Managing Director of the hotel group, "This particular set-up exposed all our people to just a small part of a blind person's day, which I am convinced created a deeper awareness of the cause we're supporting."

This awareness initiative not only raised money for a valuable cause but instilled an element of understanding of the needs of disabled guests, whether physically or visually. Guest speaker for the function Eugene Pierce, who lost his vision suddenly 25 years ago through glaucoma, expressed how useful it is to have his chair pointed out and told that his drink is on his table by a waiter at a restaurant - he said it is this sort of detail that makes a visually impaired guest feel welcome and cared for.

"For me as a blind person, it was an 'eye-opener' listening to the reaction of sighted people in this situation that is the norm for me, and from the comments I heard, this "Dinner in the Dark" has been a life changing experience and we at the SA Guide Dogs Association are most grateful for the contribution from Protea Hotels."