



Leading the way in **KINDNESS**

Making the world a better place, for everyone | BY CHANDREA SEREBRO



HUGO'S GREENHOOD *Seeing the unseen*

'#See the unseen' is the catchphrase of Hugo's Greenhood, and it's the perfect fit. Hugo Paluch, who was the brainchild of the project and in whose memory it continues after he passed away at the age of 14 last year, "always noticed the little things", says his mother Nicole. He had a gift for seeing what most people missed, and it was this gift that helped him to see a gap that hadn't been filled and inspired him to do something about it. "When Hugo was in grade three, he had a project to do at school on recycling. Most kids came up with elaborate ideas and homemade machines, which looked to turn waste into energy and the like. Hugo built a recycling trolley." He always

noticed the recyclers rummaging through the bins in his road, greeted them with a smile, and recognised the good they were doing for the community and the world by recycling the community's waste and reducing the carbon footprint at the same time. He wanted to help others #seetheunseen.

Hugo's Greenhood began as an outreach project in his bar mitzvah year, when he committed to raising money to take sandwiches to the recyclers once a week and get to know them a bit, treating them like people as he wondered why so many treated them less just because they spend their days going through bins. "What he did? It's such a simple thing that it is a wonder why no one thought to do it before. But, there

was Hugo, seeing the unseen." Hugo began to seek new ways of making the lives of these men more dignified at the same time as increasing the impact of their recycling, and the fundraising grew to new heights with a year-end raffle in which Hugo didn't think small. "When he was younger he had to sell raffle tickets at school, and while the most others were selling was 20 books if they were lucky, Hugo was thinking big. He thought nothing of calling up one of the biggest businessmen in the country and imploring him to support his cause. He sold almost 100 books."

Hugo developed a warm relationship with the recyclers, organised them into an association, and dreamed of getting them full-time employment. Now, since



Hugo's death, the project has grown beyond anyone's wildest dreams, and the benefits to the 26 recyclers under Hugo's Greenhood mandate, as well as so many others who have benefitted from the awareness that Hugo's Greenhood has created and the change in consciousness of people through the knock-on effect of Hugo's powerful dreams, has been immense. "Everyone wants to be on board. Schools are hosting the recyclers to talk about what they do and how everyone can help. Students are inspired by these men and their stories of hope and perseverance. People are involved in meal schedules for the recyclers, clothing them and feeding them, sending them home with weekly hampers of food for their entire families through Kosher-world's collection points. People are separating their rubbish at the source; aware of environmental issues when before they never were.

American and Australian youths have taken up the cause, raising mindboggling sums for Hugo's Greenhood. The community and beyond are experiencing a huge awakening that is long overdue." Everyone wants to be a part of this green revolution of #seeing the unseen, and the sky's the limit. The eyes of the youth have been opened, and they aspire to follow in Hugo's footsteps and change the world in some small way. But, the real power behind Hugo's Greenhood is that it's "just a bunch of people" – mothers mainly – "carrying on a fourteen-year-old's dream," says Nicole. "Hugo was a smart, good-looking kid, a defender of the weak, and there was no stopping him." His dream lives on, and his legacy is impacting the lives of so many – givers and receivers – every day.

**For more information go to
facebook.com/HugosGreenhood/**



Mission to Kakuma, February 2018 pictured after delivering an ultrasound machine to the Kakuma refugee camp. Dovi Braum (far left) and Michalya Schonwald Moss (far centre) represented Cadena South Africa on the mission

CADENA Hand-in-hand

In 2005, in the aftermath of Hurricane Stan in Chiapas, Mexico, a group of young men from the Jewish Mexican community decided to transport and hand-deliver the provisions donated by the Jewish Mexican community to the hurricane victims, making sure that the aid would really reach the people most in need. This experience changed their lives forever, and encouraged them to create Cadena. While it began as an initiative of the Mexican Jewish community to help their country in the face of natural disasters (Mexico faced natural disasters every year between 2005 and 2008), Cadena quickly evolved to become an international NGO, which now has eight offices around the world in Miami, Mexico, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Israel, and the newest country office - South Africa.

"Cadena aims to aid vulnerable communities when disaster strikes, irrespective of one's place of origin, gender, religion, or beliefs," explains Dovi Brom of Cadena. This is important in the South African context specifically when you consider the history of our nation, and Cadena South Africa is a shining example of how South Africans, specifically Jewish South Africans, can take it upon themselves to make an impact in such a critical, openhearted, and non-judgmental way.

Cadena centres itself around a 'hand-in-hand' chain link of aid (Cadena is the word for 'chain' in Spanish) that helps reach those in need in high risk natural disaster areas as well as those suffering humanitarian crises, from both a physical and a psychological standpoint, through a "collective effort" of direct delivery, which means that the people that need it the most will be the ones to receive the aid. "We have a 'Go Team' of 24 doctors and rescue specialists including crisis-intervention psychologists, rescuers, and damage-evaluation experts (and one dog!) who can be on the ground anywhere within 24 hours, providing disaster and medical relief and aid. We also have a large base of volunteers that assist with follow-up missions to address the needs of the community in the long term," with health and dental wellness, shelter, and food – areas often mismanaged or overlooked after the immediate danger has passed.

Under the new leadership of Leanne Gersun Mendelow, Cadena South Africa, based in Johannesburg, will function as a hub for local aid and relief initiatives giving the South African Jewish community the chance to contribute to the lives of fellow South Africans here at home. A volunteer network will partner with local communities in need, bringing Cadena's 'hand-in hand' vision home, in areas such as health, environmental, water and sanitation, food security, education, and others. Michalya Schonwald Moss, an impact



LEADERSHIP



A Cadena volunteer with local Turkana population in Kenya



ABOVE: Mission to Kakuma where Cadena South Africa helped to distribute emergency food packages (packages pictured)



consultant working closely with innovative initiatives with a footprint on the African continent and member of Cadena's Board, was invited to participate in the first Cadena South Africa mission to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya earlier this year, where the team distributed critical medical supplies to the refugees. "Through organisations like Cadena, the Jewish people will continue to work tirelessly to provide emergency aid and relief for refugees," she says, finding the need and answering it where possible.

And now South Africa can be a part of it as well by both giving and receiving in critical ways and joining the ranks of the 200 international missions carried out by Cadena over the past 13 years which have benefitted 774 136 people to date.

For more information, visit:
www.cadena.ngo or contact
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LITTLE GIVERS

Giving big, no matter how small

For the past five years, SA Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein's Generation Sinai initiative has brought Jewish parents and children together in classrooms across the country to learn and discuss Torah values relating to living a meaningful, socially-conscious life. For this year's Generation Sinai, in addition to the learning module, the decision was made to take the learning "outside the classroom" and into the world, through the 'Little Givers' initiative. One Sunday a month, primary school learners are joining Chief Rabbi Goldstein on visits

and volunteer expeditions at various Jewish welfare organisations around the country. But, in honour of Mandela Day on 18 July, and to celebrate 100 years since Nelson Mandela's birth, Little Givers will be taking the concept of giving beyond the boundaries of the Jewish experience. "In his name, we are called on to make this world a better place by giving 67 minutes of our time," says Siobhan Wilson of Little Givers. "We visited the kids at the Surgeons for Little Lives clinic at Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg and Afrika Tikkun's Zolile Malindi Centre in Cape Town so that our Jewish children could have the chance to entertain, gift, and brighten the day of these children in turn."

Surgeons for Little Lives is a non-profit organisation run by a group of dedicated paediatric surgeons and ordinary people who all have in common a powerful commitment to saving the lives of sick children. Through their efforts, the Surgeons for Little Lives team is making it possible for very sick children and their families to receive a standard of care that matches the standard of skill of their surgeons.

Afrika Tikkun's Zolile Malindi Centre in Cape Town is a Community Centre in



Mfuleni, an under-resourced area in the Cape Flats, a place where the children are given food, education, after-care services, and skills training. The Centre hosts various programmes for children of the Mfuleni community, including programmes for early childhood development, child and youth development, and skills development.

"Little Givers is about converting the Generation Sinai learning into action – putting the values of chesed and tzedakah into practice, and making an on-going, sustainable difference at some of our wonderful social welfare organisations – doing what we can to help them in their holy work," says Rabbi Goldstein. In August, Little Givers will be visiting Hatzolah in JHB and Ezra in Cape Town.

To join the Chief Rabbi's Little Givers campaign, email office@chiefrabbi.co.za or sign up at www.generationsinai.com

For more information, visit:
www.surgeonsforlittlilives.org or
www.afrikatikkun.org/zolile-malindi-centre/

THE SMILE FOUNDATION

A smile can go a long way

Nothing can make a person feel better or warm the heart more than bringing a smile to someone who feels he has lost hope. The Smile Foundation literally, and figuratively, brings a smile to the faces of so many, gifting more than 2,500 with a smile to date. "The Smile Foundation was established as a result of one determined mother's quest to give her child a smile," explains Hedley Lewis, CEO. Thando was born with a condition known as Moebius Syndrome, which causes partial or complete facial paralysis. "She had never been able to smile." Her mother, Thabile, began writing letters every month to former President Nelson Mandela, asking for assistance. One day, fate intervened and one of her letters found its way into Madi-ba's personal mail. Touched by her plea, he sought to help this little girl, and contacted Marc Lubner to assist.

At that time there were no surgeons in South Africa with the surgical exper-



tise to perform such a complex procedure and Thando would need to travel to the United States to consult with specialists there. It soon became clear that sending one child overseas at a time was not a sustainable model. Together with the Independent Newspaper Group and a host of other sponsors, Marc Lubner convinced world-renowned specialists, Dr Ron Zucker and Dr Craig van der Kolk, to come to Johannesburg to train Prof George Psaras to perform the intricate surgery, thus enabling him thereafter to help many more children throughout South Africa. Thando received her life-changing surgery and the Smile Fund began. As a result of growth and success of this project, the organisation became a registered Section 21 company in 2007 and the Smile Foundation was born.

"Our primary driving force is to see the transformation of children's lives post-surgery as well as the positive impact it makes on their parent's lives. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing a parent's face after their child's surgery," says Hedley. Together with the country's Academic Hospitals, the Smile Foundation, an NGO, works to put the smile back onto children's faces with corrective facial reconstructive surgery



and treatments. "We help children in need of surgery for treatable facial anomalies such as cleft lip, cleft palate, nose and ear conditions, facial paralysis (Moebius Syndrome), burn wounds, and craniofacial abnormalities. Even though we are a charity for children, we understand that parents want nothing more than to help their children in need and cannot do so due to financial restrictions. We aim to positively increase the quality of life for South Africa's disadvantaged families by encouraging, informing, and educating the parents throughout the process as well."

The Smile Foundation is currently based in eleven academic hospitals in South Africa and partners with the National Department of Health, dedicated to transforming the lives of children. "We continually support our teams of qualified medical staff by investing in further skills development programmes, as well as the purchasing of much-needed medical equipment for the departments specialising in plastic and reconstructive surgery within these hospitals."

"We are run like a business, with the empathy of a non-profit organisation. We consistently consider the patient first with every thought or decision we make. Our ethos is about creating smiles, as well as supporting families step-by-step in a journey that can be very daunting. We support the medical journey, yes, however the softer approach such as the help we give our recipients in other ways – like transport, accommodation, psychological support, as well our project 'Cleft Friends' – truly exemplifies our organisation and its ethos." ■

For more information, visit:
www.smilefoundationsa.org

