

New mobile ICT classroom to bridge the digital divide for Cape learners

Deloitte brings technology to vulnerable communities

02 February 2016 – A new mobile, solar-powered, multi-purpose IT unit that aims to bridge the digital divide for learners from vulnerable and rural communities, was launched in Cape Town today by Deloitte Belgium, in partnership with non-profit organisations, Close the Gap and Langa-based Brothers for All. Close the Gap is a global organisation that brings high-quality computers to projects in developing and emerging countries, while Brothers for All focuses on equipping vulnerable youth in Langa with technology and entrepreneurship skills.

“Technology is fast changing the face of education. Learners today not only have computers to help them with schoolwork, they also use the Internet for research while teachers use technology to enhance lessons. Yet, very little ICT infrastructure exists in vulnerable communities. Through the DigiTruck, Deloitte Belgium hopes to positively impact the education of learners in rural communities with technology,” said Olivier vanden Eynde, Director at Deloitte Belgium/The Netherlands and Founder and MD of Close the Gap.

Unveiled today by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a patron of Close the Gap, the DigiTruck has the ICT infrastructure to teach 18 learners. While it was financed by Deloitte Belgium and designed and built by Close the Gap, Brothers for All will be the DigiTruck’s beneficiary. The unit is currently at the V&A Waterfront, following which it will move to Langa and across South Africa where Brothers for All will train learners between the ages of seven and 35.

Vanden Eynde says that since Close the Gap’s inception in 2003, various Deloitte member firms across the world have been forming partnerships with the organisation, including Deloitte South Africa. “We realise that access to new technologies in rural and off the grid communities is a challenge. As a fully autonomous, solar-powered unit, the Deloitte DigiTruck will travel to various communities across South Africa to inspire learners to experience the power of technology through education,” explains Vanden Eynde.

He says that this initiative is part of a four day journey. A group of

40 CEOs from major European companies, together with their teenagers, are with Close the Gap on an inspirational learning journey, exchanging views with South African partners of Close the Gap.

“One of the highlights of the trip will be a meeting between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and 15 teenagers from Europe, exchanging, amongst others, leadership principles.

Deloitte Cape Town will be hosting 26 teenagers from Close the Gap and Brothers for All today to showcase the importance of technology in a fun and exciting way, with flying drones and interactive education tools such as 3D printing. Deloitte Netherlands will engage via a live video connection from Amsterdam to Cape Town on topics of cyber security and privacy, and how this affects children who use the internet.

“We hope to see the children from South Africa and Europe exchange ideas and experiences, which will ensure the sharing of ideas across continents,” says Marius Alberts, head of Deloitte Cape Town.

Alberts says that Deloitte’s support of the initiative will allow for skills and knowledge transfer, which may inspire learners to pursue careers in the IT space, or to follow an entrepreneurial path in this sector, which they would not have ordinarily been exposed to.

“Deloitte is committed to this project. As such, the project is aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP), which is government’s strategic vision for the country that calls for corporate South Africa to promote employment and education,” concludes Alberts.

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Roline Bosch

Magna Carta (PR)

Account Director

+27(0) 82 503 2689

roline.bosch@magna-carta.co.za

Ipelegeng Thibedi

Deloitte & Touche

Senior Manager: PR

+ 27(0) 11 304-5618

ithibedi@deloitte.co.za