

Change a life and save the planet

CHRISTELLE WIESE

BREAD TAGS FOR WHEELCHAIRS is a charity with a difference. Here you will not find any requests for donations – simply a desire to help those in need while helping the planet.

“It’s a win-win situation,” says Mary Honeybun, founder and organiser, when describing the environmentally-friendly project.

After hearing about a project through which “people collect the plastic tags at the top of bread bags to raise funds for charity projects”, Honeybun looked around and found that nobody was running such a project in the Fish Hoek area at the time.

“I thought it was quite a good idea,” she says; at the end of 2006, she started the Bread Tags for Wheelchairs Project.

First on board to help her collect the tags was St Peter’s Church of England in South Africa, which is situated in Nelson Road, Fish Hoek. “They have been very supportive since the beginning,” says Honeybun.

There was a good response from the community, and soon her grandchildren initiated collection drives at their schools. Today, collection boxes can be found in the Vet Shop, Fresh Stop, Mama’s Bakery, The Nut Bar, The Write Shoppe and the Sun Valley Pharmacy in Longbeach Mall; several schools, churches and organisations, some as far as Stellenbosch, collect the tags.

During the past two and a half years, the project has donated four wheelchairs to people in need.

This is no small feat: 763 530 tags – about 270kg – have to be collected to buy one wheelchair.

Although several people have made cash donations to the project, Honeybun is adamant that the tag collection should stay central to the project, as it “stops plastic from ending in our bins and helps to save the planet”.

Collectors take their tags to Honeybun’s Fish Hoek residence, and when there are enough for a wheelchair, a local recycling company collects them, and a wheelchair is purchased from Sun Valley Pharmacy.

Although the chairs purchased are “very basic”, they make a big difference in the lives of those who receive them.

The most recent wheelchair donation was made through Malibu High School to an Eerste River resident as a Mother’s Day gift. Honeybun had received a phone call from a Stellenbosch resident shortly before Mother’s Day, telling her about a woman who really needed a wheelchair and how the students of Malibu High School had managed to collect 100 000 tags.

Luckily, a chair could be organised before the special day, and students decided to invite the recipient, who does not wish to be named, to the school for the handover of the chair on the following Monday.

“During the handover there was spontaneous applause, and not a dry eye in the place,” says Honeybun.

The other three chairs were donated to the Ocean View Centre for the Handicapped, the Masiphumelele Seniors’ Club, and the Carlisle Lodge Home for the Aged.

Through a partnership with Adri Spangenberg, director of the Polystyrene Packaging Council (PSPC) of South Africa – a non-profit organisation – Honeybun hopes that soon even more people in need will be given their independence.

Spanenberg is currently working on a deal with a Durban recycling company through which a “premium price of R5 per kilogram” can be obtained for tags. The standard price is R1 per kilogram.

During recycling, bread tags are turned into plastic ingots, which are used to make items such as photo frames and clothes hangers.

According to Spangenberg, PSPC is currently running similar projects in Middel-



HOT WHEELS: Seen here, Charlotte Swartbooi (left), Mary Honeybun and Florence Mbunzu stand proud during the handover at the Masiphumelele Seniors’ Club at the end of last year.

burg and Durban, and plans to take the initiative countrywide.

However, Spangenberg stresses that the decision of who to donate the wheelchairs to will still rest with Honeybun, as she is in charge of the project.

Honeybun points out that she does not do-

nate chairs to individuals as there are so many people in need, but rather donates to organisations who contact her.

“This is a unique situation, and it just seems to work out every time.”

● Mary Honeybun can be reached for more information on (021) 789-1831.