

Bree Street Book Mountain rises for Mandela Day

By [THIAS ACKERMAN](#) July 20, 2017



Kelly Hendricks, Cape Heritage Hotel front office manager, donates to the book mountain.

In the giving spirit of the holiday, Community Chest summoned all corporates, staff and public in the CBD to bring 67 books or more to build a Mandela Day Book Mountain on Bree Street on Tuesday July 18, International Mandela Day.

“The whole idea came from the concept that Nelson Mandela was a man who uniquely understands the times in which he lived and he was influenced by reading,” said Lorenzo Davids, CEO of Community Chest. “We thought that one of the best ways, again, to rekindle that spirit of understanding is to lead it with his passion for books and reading.”

Campaigning with the hashtag #67books4mandeladay, Mr Davids said the NGO’s objective with the book mountain event is to bestow the latest generation with the same inspiration Mandela brought to the Robben Island prison through the gift of reading.

Community Chest is an NGO with a mission “to improve the lives of all South Africans by mobilising the caring power of communities, business and government to advance the common good,” according to its website.

The organisation partnered with a number of institutions – like early childhood development centres and schools – to receive the books that are gathered for the book mountain.

Community Chest identified Khayelitsha, Mfuleni, and Ashton as the three main book donation areas.

However, if the book mountain has a surplus, the organisation wants to distribute it to more locations including Hanover Park, Manenberg and Langa.

“The idea is there is no limit to what we will give away. Every single book must make its way into the hands of a child so that he understands what Mandela meant when he studied while he was in prison,” Mr Davids said. “My dream is that if we get to 27 000 books for 27 years it would be magical.”

A number of Community Chest’s corporate donors, other NGOs and civilians stopped by to contribute to the Bree Street Book Mountain. The book mountain event featured a picture session for contributors and a poster painting session.

The first to paint on the #67books4mandeladay poster was 11-year-old Hannah Duncan.

“I wanted to put my hand next to Mandela because it is quite special,” she said.

Hannah’s mother, Charleen Duncan, has a leg injury but insisted on bringing herself and her family out of their home Tuesday morning to donate to the book mountain and contribute to their community for 67 minutes.

“I think as parents it’s important for us to be able to teach our children about some of the historical events that is a part of our legacy,” Ms Duncan said. “And to enrich [my daughter] by understanding why it is important to give back and why it’s important to embrace the spirit of Mandela especially in South Africa today.”

Ms Duncan is on Community Chest’s board. “It’s sad we need to wait for an event like this to get together to celebrate the values Mandela has etched in our hearts,” she said. “I think it’s just an awesome opportunity and that we should really try and do more of this because our country really needs it at this time.”

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