

Toy Story - touching the lives of KZN's HIV/AIDS orphans

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With the festive season fast approaching, Toy Story, an annual East Coast Radio community social investment initiative (CSI,) is currently being rolled out in KwaZulu-Natal. Every year the broadcaster uses its dominance of reach, as well as listener involvement, to uplift the communities in which it operates.



While Toy Story delivers a ray of light and a moment of joy to families and children in the province affected by HIV/AIDS, roots are underpinned by a disturbing reality. Five years ago there were an estimated 300 000 orphans in South Africa; five years from now, this figure will have grown to almost three million*. One third of all South Africa's orphans are found in KwaZulu-Natal.

In 2004, East Coast Radio's Toy Story broke away from the large Christmas party format, where underprivileged children were invited to a short-lived respite from their living conditions. The new strategy introduced food parcel distribution to child-headed households, providing affected families with two meals a day for 4-6 weeks. It also included new toys to these households and to government hospitals.

Toy Story 2004 set the tone by delivering 6,000 food parcels and 8,000 toys. In 2005, this figure grew to 8,000 food parcels and 70,000 new toys being delivered. This year, the station intends distributing more than 8,300 food parcels and over 70,000 new toys. Pietermaritzburg NGO, Gift of the Givers, has donated 6,000 food parcels to kick-start the campaign. The co-action on air started in October, food parcels and toy deliveries take place during the next two months.

"The manner in which the community has embraced Toy Story in the past has been inspiring," reflects Managing Director Trish Taylor. "We are confident that the generosity of our listeners will mean that more food parcels and toys reach those who need them the most."

***Source: South African Case Study of the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children (November 2001)**







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