

Thursday, 9 July, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Dreams come true at Mugg & Bean**

Mugg & Bean recently made of their employees' dream come true. Fanie Ncongwane's life was completely changed when he had a cornea transplant in his left eye. Mugg & Bean sponsored the transplant of which the cornea was flown in from the United States and the operation was performed by an experienced eye specialist from the Pretoria Eye Institute. Fanie was born with a degenerative eye disorder called *Keratocunus*.

Fanie's condition was brought to the attention of Ben Filmalter, CEO and founder of Mugg & Bean, by Cathy Martin, the franchisee of the Witbank store, during a national marketing initiative of Mugg & Bean. The unique marketing initiative called "WHO MADE YOUR DAY CAMPAIGN" focussed on thanking regular customers for their loyal support and also focussed on recognising and rewarding Mugg & Bean employees. The entire board of directors travelled around the country, visiting all of the Mugg & Bean stores in South Africa. It was then when Fanie's life was about to change.

Cathy Martin employed Fanie as a sculler when they opened the store in 2007 and she quickly saw the potential he had and promoted him to a griller. After 8 months on the grill she noticed that Fanie's eyesight was deteriorating and had to take him off the grill. She created a special position for him because she just couldn't get it over her heart to let him go. When the directors visited the store she took the initiative to tell Fanie's story.

Ben Filmalter immediately felt that it was Mugg & Bean's responsibility to help Fanie. "Fanie has been an employee of Mugg & Bean since 2007 and has shown tremendous courage and loyalty towards the brand. This campaign was designed to reward our employees and we were only glad that we were able to help" said Ben. Ben said that "Fanie has been through a lot and the least we could have done was to make his dream come true, our employees are our most valuable asset, it was our time to give back."

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Since his operation, Fanie is slowly starting to regain his eyesight and his dream of becoming a manager is not far away. "I thank God and I thank Mugg & Bean for making my dream come true. My life hasn't been the same since and I am very grateful for this beautiful thing that has happened to me. I was born blind, but today I can see and I can smile," Fanie stated.

Fanie still has *Keratoconus* in his left eye. This degenerative disorder causes structural changes within the cornea which causes it to thin and change to a more conical shape than its normal gradual curve. *Keratoconus* can cause substantial distortion of vision, with multiple images, streaking and sensitivity to light. This disorder is only affecting one person in a thousand.

Fanie wrote a letter to Mugg & Bean management thanking them for making his dream come true. See attached letter and pictures. More pictures are available.

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More information on *Keratoconus*:

It is typically diagnosed in the patient's adolescent years and attains its most severe state in the twenties and thirties. If afflicting both eyes, the deterioration in vision can affect the patient's ability to drive a car or read normal print. In most cases, corrective lenses are effective enough to allow the patient to continue to drive legally and likewise function normally. Further progression of the disease may require surgery including intrastromal corneal ring segments or corneal transplantation. However, despite the disease's unpredictable course, *keratoconus* can often be successfully managed with little or no impairment to the patient's quality of life.

It seems to occur in populations throughout the world, although it occurs more frequently in certain ethnic groups. The exact cause of *keratoconus* is uncertain, but has been associated with detrimental enzyme activity within the cornea. A genetic link seems likely, as the incidence rate is greater if a family member has been diagnosed. The progression of *keratoconus* is rapid in patients having Down syndrome.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keratoconus>