

African Bank Limited press release

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### **African bank sponsors first ever RDA Countryside Challenge for riders with disabilities in Africa**

“The loose flexible body and improved posture attest to the success of the SARDA formula, and Meluli’s happy mood at the end of each session is a wonderful bonus. These constitute the precious blessing to us from SARDA.” **Mathokoza Nhlapo, a mother of a SARDA Cape Town Rider, Meluli Nhlapo**

SA Riding for the Disabled Association, (SARDA) in Cape Town, will be hosting the first ever RDA Countryside Challenge in Africa this year from the 17 - 22 October at the SARDA Centre in Brommersvlei Road, Constantia.

Horse riding therapy is more than just about riding. Over the past 40 years, hundreds of adults and children living with physical and learning disabilities from the greater Cape Town area have benefitted from the free therapeutic riding lessons that the SA Riding for the Disabled Association have offered.

SARDA Cape Town was established in 1973 by Belinda Sampson and Joy Finlay according to the principles of the British RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association). It provides children and adults living with disabilities the opportunity to take free therapeutic horse riding lessons. Since its inception, SARDA Cape Town has grown from 5 riders to its existing 180 a week as well as its two satellite branches in Sleepy Hollow in Noordhoek and SARDA in Sedgefield

The event forms part of African’s Banks Community Champion Awards and was proposed and championed by African Bank staff member, Stacey Baisitse. Baisitse, who was inspired by her 12-year-old nephew suffering cerebral palsy, has witnessed first-hand the incredible benefits from this kind of therapy and wanted to help support SARDA in some way. What started out as a small involvement has grown into a meaningful sponsorship of the full six-day event

Teri Smith, Senior Instructor, and Bee Lukey, spokesperson for SARDA, explained that the idea behind holding this event is to provide the opportunity for SARDA riders to show off the skills and prowess they have achieved through their therapeutic riding classes in front of members of the public. “The confidence that every rider develops through this therapy and the recognition achieved by participating in an event in front of an audience, are a pinnacle of the hard work achieved at SARDA. It spills into the lives of the communities the riders live in,” says Smith.

All of SARDA Cape Town's 180 children and adults living with disabilities will be participating in the obstacle course from Monday to Friday (17 to 21 October) between 09:00 - 12:00 and 14:00 - 17:00 and on Saturday (22 October) between 10:00 and 12:00. Any horse riders that do not ride at SARDA are also invited to take part in this unique event.

Brian Riley, CEO of African Bank, concludes, "We are so delighted to be associated with such a life-changing event. Our community involvement through our Community Champion Awards speaks directly to the bank's value of empathy and we were looking for initiatives that could really show our commitment to changing the communities around us. We already have a comprehensive CSI programme in place through our Development Trust and ad hoc projects which are encouraged at branch level but we wanted to include another leg. We challenged branches to join the executives in identifying projects that require financial rescue but fall outside of the bank's geographical mandate. We applaud Stacey and SARDA for the incredible work they do and encourage everyone to come and support these riders and witness the therapy in motion."

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