

Pop-up pediatric Covid-19 unit opens in Paarl

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5 May 2020

Community jumps in to provide support

Thirty-nine days into South Africa's national lockdown, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and South Africans are showing their resilience and ability to pull together as a community in new ways. With the coronavirus showing absolutely no discrimination as it sweeps across the country, people are becoming more resourceful and innovative than ever before.

Only two weeks ago, pediatrician Dr Jaco Murray, the Head of the Clinical Unit at Pediatrics, Paarl Hospital, under the Western Cape Rural District Health Services department, appealed to the local community for support. It had become clear that an additional pediatric unit was needed at the hospital to treat children who may be affected by or are currently being tested for Covid-19. Due to the highly contagious nature of this virus, patients must be kept as far apart from each other as possible.

While the space and structure were already in place, in a letter to residents in the area, Dr Murray pleaded "To open the area, we require two fridges, one to use for medicine and another for the children's feeds and milk to be stored. Any assistance or help will be greatly appreciated to acquire these fridges."



L-R, Calvin Du Plessis & representative from Hisense, Dr. Dahné Beukes & Dr. Nazlee Botman (Community Service Doctor) at the Paarl pediatric unit.



Medical team at Charlotte Maxeke hospital

Within a day of hearing about this appeal, via the Val De Vie Foundation, appliance manufacturer Hisense made two large fridges available for donation to the unit. Local transport company, CA Mobile Solutions provided a vehicle and driver to deliver the two fridges, which were installed over the weekend. The pediatric unit at Paarl Hospital is now fully functional, treating children who require special infection prevention and control measures.



Newly furnished area at Charlotte Maxeke hospital

“We hope that this small gesture will contribute to saving lives during this unprecedented pandemic, and we encourage all companies to support in whichever ways they can” said Jerry Liu of Hisense. “It is wonderful to see how people stand together in this time to fight the pandemic. The donated fridges will benefit many children over the next few months. It is with great appreciation that the Department of Paediatrics thanks Hisense for the generous donation,” added Dr Jaco Murray.



Aircon installation at mask factory

After hearing of a factory in the area making masks, being unbearably hot, Hisense donated an industrial air-conditioner to make conditions more comfortable.

In a similar situation in Gauteng, the Charlotte Maxeke hospital appealed for help due to being under-appointed with no waiting area furnishings. Hearing of the need, Hisense donated 4000 masks, 1000 bottles of hand sanitizer, two television sets, a microwave and a fridge. Hirsch's also kindly came to the rescue and donated two couches, carpets, fans, a coffee machine and cups. “The hospitals really are at the front line of this pandemic. If we can help them, I believe we can help protect the country” concluded Liu.

Amazing things happen when people pull together for good, and perhaps the Covid-19 pandemic has united South Africans in new ways.