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'Feed Our Crew' Initiative in South Africa

Feed Our Crew is an NGO initiative (non-government organization) in South Africa co-founded by Johannesburg-based Tamsyn Strydom (project manager from production and rental company MGG), Kagiso Moima Wa Masimini (KG) who owns Blackmotion Production and Marcia Alves from We Are Boundless.

The goal is to focus on urgent fundraising for the temporary support of freelance live event technicians.

Working in collaboration with another NGO, People4Purpose - that provides individuals and families with basic necessities like food and clothing - donations are converted into 1000.00 ZAR vouchers (around £50) - which are distributed to qualified recipients via their cell phones. This is calculated to provide enough money - with some care and creativity - to support a family's fundamental needs for a month.

While the SA government has pledged to provide relief packages for virtually every sector in the country, the enormity of the task has made the process slow to get to those in the most desperate need.

With a lockdown, an already fragile economy in SA and no prospects of a bounce-back in the live events sector for some time, some people are literally starving!

Feed Our Crew's Daria Higgins, who runs a normally busy events company True North, commented, "There has been an immediate and devastating impact on the show and event industry across South Africa, and freelancers - the often invisible backbone of that usually vibrant industry - are particularly badly hit."

The vouchers are redeemable at the major retailers ShopRite / Checkers and can be used to buy groceries, medication plus other essential utilities like electricity, cell phone data and airtime - all fundamental to sustaining themselves until government assistance comes onstream.

In two weeks, the scheme has received hundreds of applications as well as generous support from companies and individuals in a position to help.

Robe's South African distributor DWR is one of these key sponsors, together with equipment rental production companies including MGG and Blackmotion as well as many individuals.

The story began when public events in SA started getting cancelled across the country in early March, soon followed by a nationwide lockdown which still continues.

KG started drafting a letter to the President's office to highlight how dramatically the entertainment industry has been affected by the pandemic and the consequential shutdown, while Johannesburg-based artist management and booking agency, About Entertainment, campaigned for videos and messages of support from local and artist celebrities that could be used to encourage donations.

As these videos started flowing, more people joined the conversation, including technical manager Marcia Alves. As the need to for more action on the ground became glaringly obvious, Tamsyn, KG and Marcia founded Feed Our Crew together with the assistance of several others.

Anyone meeting the criteria can apply for assistance, but the aim is to reach the most vulnerable of those who have been working across all the technical disciplines - lighting, audio, rigging, stage and set building, SFX etc.

As word spread about Feed Our Crew, a Facebook page and website were established, starting on the 16th April. By the Friday of that week, the first donation had landed, they had partnered with People4Purpose led by Landy Yeatman who is also from the event industry and the plan was being activated.

Applicants can apply through the website or Facebook page and need to have an Email and a cell phone number. They complete a form, submit their ID together with two references for verification that they have been actively engaged in the shows and events world.

Feed Our Crew volunteers work every day to collate and process all the applications and manage the database, while the voucher distribution is coordinated by the People4Purpose team.

The first 160 vouchers have just been dispatched.

As Feed Our Crew has gained traction, the organisers have been reaching out to all their artist contacts, launching various social media campaigns to raise awareness and encourage those who can ... to get behind it and donate.

"We want everyone to realise that whatever the event - from an intimate wedding to a large international conference - it's all the technicians who are working unseen and backstage on the

production who ensure the magic happens to make it a special and memorable occasion,” stated Daria, who also feels “truly inspired with how our amazing industry is uniting, collaborating and pooling resources and ideas to help each other out on a practical and human level.”

In the absence of any official help right now, for many this is an essential lifeline for survival.

To donate please visit www.feedourcrew.co.za and click the ‘donate’ button or email the team at help@feedourcrew.co.za

Photo Credit: Tamsyn Strydom (MGG Productions)







