

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **R910 000 Computer Laboratories Upgrade Donation Averts Threat To Midlands Community College's Education Programme In Fast-Developing Digital Age**

**For Immediate Release**

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A timely donation of R910 000 has enabled the upgrade and revitalisation of two computer laboratories at a Nottingham Road community college, facilitating the continuance of relevant, responsive and high-impact training at a time when the effect of its offerings was at serious risk.

The South African Muslim Charitable Trust (SAMCT) recently refurbished and re-equipped two computer laboratories at the Midlands Community College, replacing aging and outdated equipment which threatened to curtail the college's ability to continue delivering the kind of forward-looking, relevant education which has long defined its approach.

Commenting on its financial assistance intervention, SAMCT representative, Mr Gaff Osman, said: "Our upgrade involvement has assisted in revitalising a critical resource at the heart of the Midlands Community College's educational offering. It has enabled the college to continue delivering relevant, responsive and high-impact training across its programmes, giving effect to the maintenance of its standard of excellence, thus ensuring rural communities in the Midlands are not excluded from the benefits of the digital age. This refurbishment secures the future of a vital resource; one which has already proven its worth in the lives of thousands."

Established in 1981, the Midlands Community College is a non-profit educational institution and sets out to address the extremely limited access to education and skills development opportunities available to young people in surrounding rural communities. Its computer labs are regarded as a critical and often sole point of digital access for Early Childhood Development practitioners, students, educators and unemployed adults.

Mr Osman said: "In today's fast-paced technology-driven world, investment in digital inclusion and skills development is absolutely vital, especially in our country's largely deprived rural areas. We, of the SAMCT, recognise this fact and were, therefore, pleased at the opportunity to fund the replacement of aging technology at Nottingham Road's Midlands Community College, ensuring rural learners here are not left behind. We regard this as a high-impact opportunity to assist in sustaining digital pathways to education and employment."

The SAMCT was created in 2008, the result of a partnership between Old Mutual Unit Trusts and Al Baraka Bank, for the creation, marketing and distribution of a suite of Shariah Funds. The organisation provides funding, services and other resources to improve the lives of the vulnerable, deprived and disadvantaged. It has successfully delivered sizeable assistance solutions throughout South Africa - irrespective of race or religion - and continues to work to support needy organisations in the fields of healthcare, social development, poverty alleviation and education. The organisation has long served as a pivotal conduit for the channelling of funding, vital services, and resources to approved public benefit organisations, and remains committed to catalysing positive change and creating a lasting impact on the development and upliftment of, especially, disadvantaged individuals and communities. Its funds are distributed to help improve the health and development of deserving people and organisations, irrespective of race or religion.

The SAMCT's donation is regarded as timely, coming at a time when the college's strategy is being aimed at digital transformation in order to meet today's IT needs of students. Increasingly, the old machines were proving unable to run new educational software or access updated online platforms. Facilitators lacked the mobile devices necessary for more flexible and responsive teaching, data projectors were outdated and downtime caused by technical faults was becoming more frequent.

"In rural South Africa, access to reliable computer technology remains out of reach for many. This digital exclusion has far-reaching consequences; it limits educational progress, restricts employment opportunities and leaves communities unable to participate meaningfully in an increasingly digital world," said Mr Osman.

He added that the Midlands Community College reaches thousands of beneficiaries annually through its programmes in Early Childhood Development and Maths, Science and Technology education, stressing 'the College has a long-standing commitment to providing accessible, high-quality education and skills development opportunities to individuals and communities here in the Midlands and works to address educational inequality and equip learners with the skills required to participate meaningfully in further education, employment and community life.'

"Accordingly, with the provision of modern, reliable technology that supports current and emerging learning needs, our investment will strengthen the College's existing programmes, enhance teaching and learning outcomes, whilst ensuring that rural learners and educators are not excluded from the opportunities created by an increasingly digital world."

"Midlands Community College plays a pivotal role in bridging the digital divide at a time when technological skills are no longer optional, but essential. We simply could not allow outdated technology to block opportunity here in the Midlands and regard our donation as an investment in the future of the rural learners, educators and community members who rely on the Midlands Community College for access to opportunity. The upgraded laboratories serve as a springboard, immediately strengthening the College's high-impact programmes and assisting participants to build the skills needed to thrive in today's digital economy," Mr Osman concluded.

Commenting on the SAMCT's financial assistance package, Director of the Midlands Community College, Candy Goodlad, said: "This generous donation has done far more than upgrade computer laboratories; it has safeguarded access to opportunity for thousands of learners, educators, Early Childhood Development practitioners and community members who depend on the Midlands Community College as a gateway to birth-to-tertiary quality education, skills development and employment pathways."

"Without access to modern technology, many of those we serve would be excluded from full participation in today's digital world. We are deeply grateful to the SAMCT for recognising the importance of digital inclusion in rural communities and for partnering with us to strengthen this vital community resource."

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