

A celebration of triumph as women graduate from the Edgars UNiTE Orange Day Campaign in Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, 25 October 2018: Edgars, a division of Edcon, South Africa's largest non-food retailer, hosted a celebratory event in Claremont Cape Town, as 26 women graduated from the year-long programme as part of the Edgars UNiTE Orange Day Campaign. The campaign is a partnership between Edgars, the United Nations (UN) Women's SA Multi-country Office, the Departments of Social Development and Community Safety, SEW Africa College, and some of South Africa's well-established designers and fashion industry experts.

First launched in Gauteng at Edcon's Head Office in 2015, the Edgars UNiTE Orange Day Campaign, aims at empowering women who have suffered gender-based violence and abuse, has already seen women from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal receive accredited training in sewing. The 26 graduates in Cape Town will bring the total number beneficiaries of the specialised training programme to 122 women.

This flagship Edgars campaign seeks to support women survivors of gender-based violence by developing their skills in the world of fashion design and sewing through workshops and accredited training courses.

Edgars Chief Executive Mike Elliott said: "This initiative will result in tangible opportunities for job creation in the local manufacturing market and boost financial independence and enterprise development. Our strategy is to ensure that the women we train are skilled enough to produce garments that can help them generate an income for themselves. Edgars intends to implement the programme in all nine provinces".

Elelwane Pahlana, General Manager of Edcon Transformation said: "The Edgars UNiTE Orange Day Campaign is not a remedy to most of the problems women encounter, but it's our contribution as an organisation that strives for fairness, inclusivity and equality. We, as Edcon, along with our partners, are steadfast in our commitment and quest, to play our role in the advancement of gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls. This is in line with Edcon's role as signatory, to the United Nations Global Compact, its principles, and the commitment we have made to the Sustainable Development Goals."

Pahlana added: "We are delighted with the progress these inspiring women have made in the past year. We are pleased that most of them have embraced this programme and made it their own. We observed how some of them were reserved when they started out, but their confidence has grown in leaps and bounds and the quality of their work is truly remarkable."

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Over the past few years the Edgars UNiTE Campaign has been able to help women set up either co-operatives or SMMEs and to register these as part of the retailer's supply chain database. The retailer has built a strong partnership with Proudly South African and, through this relationship, has commitment itself to help drive the buy-local initiative in a bid to create jobs through supporting local manufacturers.

Edgars' initiative in empowering its stakeholders is closely aligned with the Edcon Group activities, such as the Edcon Design Innovation Challenge, a programme aimed at supporting and empowering young post-graduate designers to find their feet in the retail sector.

The women who graduated today were mentored by some of Cape Town's leading designers, lecturers and fashion experts, such as Tey and Didier of MaGents, Isabel de Villiers (Isabel De Villiers Clothing), Tamburai Chirume (Oneofeach), Meagan Duckitt (Calista Clothing), Thabo Makhetha (Thabo Maketha), Charis Dawson, Pierre (Cape Town Fashion College), Talita Weideman, Walter Buchholz, Annadine Vlok (Cape Town University of Technology - CPUT).

Elliott said the training enabled the women to acquire valuable skills, which would empower them to produce an extensive range of garments and homeware products such as skirts, shirts, trousers, evening dresses and dining décor such as table cloths, seat covers and bags. They would also receive training on commercial aspects of the industry, such as how to cost their merchandise to make a profit.

Edcon has made a bold move through its Proudly Growing Local programme, to not only help revive the retail and textile sector but to also make a difference to the communities and individuals it serves, through its multitude of enterprise development programmes.

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Contact details:

Edcon

Vannie Pillay

Divisional Executive: Corporate Affairs and Communication

CandCommunication@edcon.co.za

Aprio

Communications Advisor to Edcon

South Africa: Rio Matlhaku

rio@aprio.co.za

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About Edcon

Edcon is southern Africa's largest non-food retailer. We have been in operation for 89 years and have expanded our footprint to 1213 stores as at April 2018, including 187 stores in eight countries outside of South Africa. We operate our business under four principal divisions as well as mono-branded stores throughout southern Africa:

- Edgars is the department store of choice for men's, ladies', kids, footwear and accessories for every occasion. Showcasing the widest range of the latest fashion trends from top international brands to Edgars' own private label brands, Edgars offers something for everyone. Edgars operates with 307 stores, with an average retail space of 717 thousand square meters
- Jet addresses the lifestyle needs of the value conscious customer in clothing, home and beauty without compromising aspirations. - Jet operates with 730 stores and an average retail space of 639 thousand square meters.
- CNA, the favourite stationery store offers a premium range of stationery, arts and craft lines, gifting solutions and so much more. CNA operates with 176 stores and an average retail space of 66 000 square meters.
- Our Thank U division is a newly formed Operating Division focused on enhancing the customer journey through convenient, personalised, access to goods, services, credit and financial services through a variety of physical and digital sales channels. It includes our loyalty programme, *Thank U*, which is one of the largest rewards programs in sub-Saharan Africa.