



Press Release – Tsogo Sun – 16/02/2017

Tsogo Sun Hotels sustain Deaf Chef programme in KwaZulu Natal

Oyena Mzamane is one of the many young chefs across Tsogo Sun's hotels that simply love what they do. Oyena is no different to other chefs except the fact that he is Deaf. In March 2010, Tsogo Sun introduced a Deaf Chef project that would change the lives of many aspiring Deaf/hard of hearing chefs in KwaZulu Natal.

In partnership with KwaZulu Natal Deaf Association (KZNDA) and the National Institute for the Deaf (NID), Tsogo Sun developed a programme that would create employment opportunities to empower persons with disabilities in the hospitality industry. The programme assists deaf chefs to attain their full potential through education, life skills and training in some of the [biggest hotel kitchens in the Province](#).

“The Deaf Chef programme is a special initiative for Tsogo Sun as we see it growing from strength to strength each year. The organisation wanted to use the programme to authentically embrace persons with disabilities in our areas of business. This has been a great journey for everyone involved with incredible learnings each year that helps us and our partners to re-evaluate and refresh the programme.” says Mike Jackson, Tsogo Sun KwaZulu Natal Operations Director.

Since its inception, [Garden Court Umhlanga](#) hotel has been at the forefront of the project with KZNDA as a partner and has spent many hours sensitising all teams and adapting the standard hotel ways of working. The Association was welcomed into the hotel to configure the kitchen layout, introduce flashing warning lights, provide relevant signage and bringing in the first group of candidates. Following the first group selection, KZNDA ran a Deaf Sensitisation workshop and introduced basic and sector specific Sign Language to the hearing staff that would be working closely with the Deaf trainee chefs.

“It has been wonderful experience working alongside Tsogo Sun, as it was a first of its kind in the province and for the Association. As with any pilot project, there were challenges along the way

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which have been a learning curve for us all. No one is as Deaf as the man who will not listen - Tsogo Sun listened and saw the value that Deaf chefs could add to the group and provided them with the opportunity to make their dreams come true.” shares Dale Schonewolf, Director of KwaZulu Natal Deaf Association.

“The Deaf Chef programme has grown phenomenally across many of our hotels in the Province. We are proud to be associated with such talented individuals in the business and also congratulate the management teams that have believed and supported the programme to date.

The next key milestone for the programme is for the hotels to work closely with NID on skills improvement to upskill the chefs to allow them the same opportunities to develop further into senior roles in the organisation.” shares Jackson.

For more information on KZNDA and NID, visit their respective websites on www.kznda.co.za (dale@kznda.org.za) and <http://www.nid.org.za/>