



They were so excited and grateful: Zurich's Nick Cook at Lynedoch Primary School in South Africa

Packing for a vital purpose

Zurich and Ausure combine to help impoverished children

By Shelley Dempsey

IN SOUTH AFRICA, SAVING TO BUY supplies for a child starting school can be a punishing mountain to climb. The effort can take up to two years for poor parents, who only earn about \$US100 a month. That's why Zurich Australia and broker group Ausure decided to help.

When 100 Australians descended on a locale outside Cape Town in South Africa for Ausure's annual conference in September, their suitcases were bulging with more than 200kg of items for disadvantaged local children at two primary schools.

"There wasn't a dry eye in the house during our school visits to deliver the supplies," says South African Graeme Lilley, Executive Manager of Operations at Ausure.

"The reaction of the children to receiving these packs to enable them to start school was incredible. They were so excited and so grateful. It was a very humbling experience."

The Pack-for-a-Purpose joint initiative of Ausure and Zurich was clearly a winner. The 100 packs contained uniforms, socks, pencils, glue and other school items.

They were delivered by delegates during a visit to two schools – Lynedoch Primary School and Vlotenburg Primary, both outside Stellenbosch, near Cape Town.

"It was a small contribution for each of

us, but the packs really made a big difference to those kids," Mr Lilley says. "It would probably have taken these local parents a year to two years of saving to be able to afford a pack like that.

"The wages are incredibly low in some of these communities."

Also delivered were 50 soccer balls and 50 rugby balls, courtesy of Lumley Insurance.

"It was nice to see another underwriter getting involved to do something for the community," says Nick Cook, Head of Customer and Product Proposition at Zurich Australia and the relationship manager with Ausure.

Asure Chairman Wayne Brown and family members also contributed to the schools.

The reaction at one school was so positive that Ausure and Zurich decided to go one step further. They have launched a sports foundation, the David Paul Foundation, which will help Lynedoch School financially on an ongoing basis.

The school will use the money to buy jerseys and sporting supplies and pay for children to travel to nearby schools to play soccer, rugby and other sports.

"Australians and South Africans love their sport," Mr Lilley says. "I guess it's an ideal opportunity for kids, where they can



Delegates and teachers at the Lynedoch Primary School ceremony establishing the David Paul Foundation: from left, Jeff Hayden (Ausure), Assistant Principal Charmaine Abrahamse, Wayne Brown (Ausure), Principal Grantham Jensen, Amy Stead (Lumley), Geoff Henderson (Lumley) and Nick Cook (Zurich)

just be kids and have fun with each other.

“The headmaster at Lynedoch School told us that sometimes sport can be the only opportunity where kids get to enjoy themselves on a weekend and get away from the poverty and stressful situations they face at home.”

The foundation was named in honour of Moree broker David Paul, who helped to launch Ausure in 1996 and is an authorised representative. He was to attend the South African conference, but had to stay in Australia to receive medical treatment.

“David is really happy for the kids in South Africa that they are getting this foundation,” Mr Lilley says. “He’s really passionate about disadvantaged communities being able to play sport. He’s been involved with rugby union clubs in Australia and other countries for many years and helps out with sport in the big Aboriginal community in Moree.”

Mr Cook, who was the only Zurich representative to attend the Ausure conference in South Africa, came up with the idea of Pack-for-a-Purpose after contacting the Spiers Resort in Stellenbosch, which hosted the conference.

Pack-for-a-Purpose is a worldwide charity which encourages travellers to pack into their suitcase supplies for disadvantaged communities in emerging countries.

“One of the most humbling things was seeing the passion and love these teachers have for these students.”

Mr Cook was part of the small delegation which visited the two schools. “It was a very emotional thing,” he told *Insurance News*. “They have razor wire round the schools, and razor wire round the vegetable patches that they are learning about.

“Some 15-year-old children have a 30-year-old mother.

“But a big part of it – one of most impressive and humbling things – was seeing the passion and the love the teachers have for these students, knowing that they only have them for a small part of their lives, but devoting themselves to making the kids of that next generation better than the last.”

He says donating the packs was tremendously uplifting for all involved and made the trip very meaningful.

The strength of character of the teachers and the positive attitude of the children were particularly striking. “I constantly thought of it for days after.” □