



Press Release – Tsogo Sun – 23/10/2017

Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist for 2017: Devina Dawkinun

Devina Dawkinun

Gemkids

KwaZulu-Natal

Vital Statistics	
Year Business Registered	2016
Enrolled in Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs	January 2017
Number of Employees	4 (and 7 casual)
Business Classification	Exempt Micro Enterprise (EME)
BBBEE ownership	100% black woman owned
Nature of business	Education, Early Childhood Development
Website	None
Twitter	@dawkinund #tsogoentrepreneurs
Facebook	Facebook.com /gemkids.geec

Gemkids, for the joy of children

Gemkids is a day care centre that represents the fulfilment of a vision, and special place where children are cared for, taught, inspired, encouraged, and entertained.

Gemkids' founder and director, Devina Dawkinun, started her career as a lecturer and researcher in Economics at the then University of Durban-Westville and worked as a researcher in the Department of Community Health. Funding for her post ran out in 2005 and finding herself jobless, Dawkinun decided to pursue her dream of working with children. She studied Early Childhood Development, focusing on the Montessori method, and in 2007 opened her first Montessori pre-school in Chatsworth in Durban. Later, she transformed this into a school of tuition for grades 1 to 7 learners.

About two years ago, Gemkids entered into a partnership agreement with Tsogo Sun's Suncoast property on the Durban beachfront and is now located at the entertainment destination as the hub where children are checked in by parents or guardians visiting Suncoast. "It's a day care with a difference," says Dawkinun, "During school terms we incorporate learning programmes according to the school curriculum into our activities with the children, and during the holidays we provide fun, theme-based learning and life skill development activities."

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Dawkinun's love for children is her overriding motivation. "Young children are like sponges, absorbing anything that adults in their worlds expose them to. I believe that if we want to change the troubles we see in the world today, it starts with our children. I love the fact that I have the humble opportunity to influence the way children see situations, and I can help to remove negative impressions or biases in their minds.

"I love the fact that young children are innocent, natural, and ego-free. They become my teachers, keeping me in the present moment and reminding me to tread lightly on this planet."

Gemkids has eleven staff members, six of whom are child-minders on the Suncoast Promenade, taking care of children at the Suncoast complex, and five are child-minders in the day care centre itself. The centre can accommodate up to 20 children at a time.

Staff training is essentially on-the-job, but also entails certification in first-aid for children, employee health and safety and fire-fighting, arranged through the Suncoast partnership.

Future plans for Gemkids include "branding it as a place of unique fun and learning", says Dawkinun, "growing in the number of centres around the country and becoming known for the sincere love and care, and the quality education we provide to children." She adds that growth will entail more structured ECD training for staff members.

In terms of community upliftment, Gemkids is involved in some of Suncoast's community upliftment activities, but is also running a Gemkids Donate a Handful Drive, which encourages staff to contribute "a handful" of whatever they are using to prepare a meal (particularly non-perishable food items) towards hampers that will be distributed to needy families during the Christmas holidays. "Apart from the real need in our poorer communities, this is also helping our staff to change their mindsets from one of lack to one of abundance. It helps them escape a victim mentality."

Dawkinun was encouraged by Suncoast management to apply to the Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs programme, and was thrilled when she was accepted. "Words cannot express what Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs has given me. For years I had been told that my vision was unrealistic. When an organisation of the stature and calibre of Tsogo Sun acknowledged the success and recognised the potential of my business, it affirmed the 11 years of hard work that I have put into the Gemkids name."

She enjoyed and gained a lot from the programme's coaching sessions. "It has given me a level of confidence that I didn't know I was capable of. I have learned to become more professional in my approach, and I gained real skills in the financial and operational aspects of my business."