



ARCHWAY FOUNDATION EQUALITY & FREEDOM

One cannot just bestow freedom and equality; one has to create a climate in which they can thrive. Until they are put into practice, freedom and equality are just concepts.

That is the principle on which John Matthews, CEO of Cape housing developer Garden Cities started the gigantic task of reducing a shortfall of more than 700 school halls in the Western Cape, a fact he uncovered in 2003, shortly after taking over the reins of the now 83-year-old company.

Why he chose school halls as his mission, and that of his creation, the Archway Foundation, could be ascribed to personal experience. Matthews, whose tertiary education qualifications are impressive, didn't have it easy. His schooling took place in conditions that were by no means privileged, and by no means equal.

Searing summer days, and icy wet winters - conditions under which more than a million Cape schoolchildren still today gather in the open for their school assemblies, with nowhere to express their creativity, or gather for cultural expression, Matthews knows about first hand.

On his appointment as CEO of Garden Cities, a housing developer with its roots in the aspirations of the middle class, the directors of Garden Cities allocated 30% of the Section 21 company's annual after tax earnings to be utilised in support of the Archway Foundation's work to alleviate the shortfall in the region's school halls.

Now, only five years later, the Archway Foundation has contributed over R24 million. Either alone or with contributions from other companies, and in joint funding ventures with the Western Cape Department of Education, 24 halls have been completed at a total cost of R45 million. The schools too, have collected money that has been put to use for infrastructural elements, seats, and other necessities.

The project has the full co-operation of the MEC for Education in the Western Cape, Cameron Dugmore, and private joint ventures have been undertaken with funds from Petro SA, the Mossel Bay Casino, and the Caledon Casino.

But Matthews says the struggle is just beginning. At this rate, it will take nearly one and a half centuries to get the job done.

He recognizes that most companies cannot allocate the sort of funding that his has, to community projects, but he believes that many could provide the money to put towards one or more of the school halls in the project. The Archway Foundation provides plans and all professional assistance in the building of the halls free.

By participating in the project, Matthews believes that South African companies will be walking the talk. "So many of the ills in our society today result from unrealistic expectations," he says. "But if we don't start to practice real equality and put our money where our mouths are, all of South Africa's 14 years of freedom and equality will remain just so much hot air."

For more information on the Archway Foundation please call John Matthews on (021) 558 7181 or email john@gcinc.co.za

