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## Clean out your closet for Mandela Day, urges SHAWCO

### UCT project helps township entrepreneurs make a living – and uses proceeds to put learners through university

The Student Health and Welfare Centres Organisation (SHAWCO) at the University of Cape Town invites businesses and community organisations to collect unwanted clothing, belts and shoes, for Rags 2 Riches – a social entrepreneurial project that helps unemployed people make a living and develop business skills by selling quality donated goods in needy communities.

“Rags 2 Riches helps township residents set up their own retail business by allowing them to buy donated items from us in bulk at a low cost, and then sell those items in their communities,” said Varkey George, the Director of SHAWCO. “SHAWCO staff and volunteers provide business training and experience to these new entrepreneurs – most of whom are unemployed women with no previous business experience.”

SHAWCO uses the proceeds from Rags 2 Riches to fund its Saturday School. “Every Saturday, we bus high school learners from needy communities to the UCT campus, where they can use the lab facilities and lecture rooms to learn from Model C teachers,” George said. “Rags 2 Riches helps pay for this. We also use proceeds to help send learners to university.”

George said that while single-household donations were welcome, the most efficient way to support Rags 2 Riches was when businesses or other organisations set up a

drive or placed collection boxes for donations. "SHAWCO can help you organise a successful drive that will help put a learner get through varsity."

He said UCT residences put out collection boxes at the end of every semester for students to donate items they no longer need. "SHAWCO relies on UCT students in other ways as well. They volunteer their services in township school tutoring programmes, in community health outreaches, training Rags 2 Riches entrepreneurs, raising funds through RAG, selling the *SAX Appeal* magazine and other initiatives."

SHAWCO's other initiatives can also use volunteers in the health professions, teaching professions and business development. If you are interested in donating items, organising a collection point, or helping in another way, please telephone SHAWCO on (021) 404-7680 or visit [www.shawco.org](http://www.shawco.org).

***ENDS***

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