



**30 March 2020**

## **UCT student starts group to help the elderly during lockdown**

University of Cape Town (UCT) Business Science student Kate Charter has started a volunteer group, [Cape Town Against Corona](#), to assist elderly people in the city as they are at a significantly higher risk of complications should they contract the disease.

Since starting the initiative in mid-March over 150 people have signed up and this number continues to grow. She has also received numerous offers of help from companies around the city. Amid the pandemic, Charter's work, and the work of the volunteers who have joined her, is a shining example of solidarity and humanity in action.

Charter shared that she "was motivated by a wish to use my time away from university to do something productive that would bring about a positive from a very troublesome situation. I came across a similar organisation (now partnering with us) called Shopping Angels in the United States and found nothing had been set up in South Africa. I just took the initiative and set up Cape Town Against Corona."

While it is difficult to say how many people have been assisted by the group, they have been instrumental in assisting other organisations. For example, they helped [Meals on Wheels](#) to deliver 500 meals to the elderly around Cape Town [on Thursday, 26 March]. Some volunteers have also developed relationships with the elderly and therefore take responsibility to deliver to them without even going through the initiative.

"This is exactly what I wanted though, for the Cape Town community to come together and look out for each other; the organisation just being a platform to help this connection happen," Charter shared.

When asked if any other UCT staff and students had volunteered their services, a special mention was Dr Leon Geffen, an honorary senior lecturer in the Division of Geriatric Medicine with the [Albertina & Walter Sisulu Institute of Ageing in Africa](#) and the executive director of the [Samson Institute For Ageing Research \(SIFAR\)](#).

"He has offered me so much help and support, from having the team at SIFAR develop online databases for my pairing of volunteers and elderly, to putting me in contact with those in the Cape Town community who could help spread the word of the organisation and offer me the best advice going forward," said Charter.

She added that there have been UCT students who have signed up, but she is not able to provide their names yet.

Charter is determined to continue operating through the lockdown and she is currently in the process of having an identity card developed for volunteers, which they can show to authorities if questioned. However, in the meantime, volunteers will only be paired with the elderly within their area to avoid complications.

If you would like to get involved, contact Charter on [capetownagainstcovid19@gmail.com](mailto:capetownagainstcovid19@gmail.com) and follow the group on [Facebook](#).

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