Collect-A-Can celebrates 20 years of cleaning up South Africa

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Collect-a-Can has been leading the way in the recycling of used packaging materials since 1993, and working towards keeping used packaging, predominantly cans, from ending up in landfill sites. This year sees the organisation celebrate 20 years since its inception by the company's shareholders, ArcelorMittal SA and Nampak.

Collect-a-Can has been involved in many initiatives across the country, finding different ways of educating the youth about the importance of not littering, as well as supporting informal collectors. Currently, between 100 000 and 160 000 people are able to put bread on the table from the living that they make daily from collecting used cans.

Last year was a very exciting year for Collect-a-Can. Zimasa Velaphi, Collect-a-Can's Public Relations and Marketing Manager explains, "We've had a tremendously productive and successful year. Firstly, we are ecstatic that our recovery rate is currently at 72%, which means that fewer cans are making their way to landfill sites.

"We have also been involved in a host of activities this year to educate and reach out, especially to learners. We hosted our first ever National Library Week event in conjunction with Jozi FM which took place in Dlamini Hall, Soweto. We also participated in Cleanup SA Week and Recycling Day in September, as well as the Green Expo, which is held annually in Cape Town and this year, for the first time, in Gauteng too. Collect-a-Can was again integrally involved in this year's Canvironment Week, an international awareness campaign launched in South Africa by Nampak Bevcan that revolves around educating people about the value of cans and how recyclable they are.

"In conjunction with Nampak Bevcan and Nampak Divfood, Collect-a-Can is one of the key sponsors of the CAN DO! Trekking for Trash initiative, involving two social change adventurers, Michael Baretta and Camilla Howard, who are walking 3 000kms along the South African coastline whilst collecting and recycling litter and educating communities along the way. They also intend to raise funds for informal waste collectors through the CAN DO! Fund that has been created," added Velaphi.
"When it comes to our schools’ competitions, as always the schools have worked very hard to bring in cans for our National Schools Competition and have amazed us with their creativity in the CAN Craze Competition. Our ‘Art Can Win’ Competition, which was traditionally a schools competition, was opened to learners at tertiary level to create an advert for Collect-a-Can's 2013 ad campaign; this competition will run until March 2013.

Having sufficient infrastructure to support all the schools that would like to participate in Collect-a-Can's schools competitions, as well as prizes to entice the schools and learners, is an on-going challenge. "One of the ways we are trying to address this is through corporate sponsorship; we are urging corporate organisations to consider investing their Corporate Social Investment funding in Collect-a-Can so that we can reach out even further. However if this is not possible, corporates can get involved by supporting schools in their areas, either by donating recycling infrastructure such as bins, or by donating their used cans towards the school's collection numbers. We have also urged schools in more affluent areas to donate their collection numbers to disadvantaged schools who would benefit so much more from the collection and prize money.

"Looking forward to 2013 we expect an even more exciting year ahead, especially with our very special birthday! While we’re not letting any cats out of the bag yet, we have very exciting initiatives that we will be sharing throughout the year to celebrate Collect-a-Can's birthday," concludes Velaphi.

To find out more about Collect-a-Can and their activities visit Collect-a-Can's website www.collectacan.co.za or contact the Collect-a-Can head office on on 466 2939. Collect-a-Can is also on Facebook/collectacan and Twitter (@collectacan).