

Tidying up their act for International Coastal Clean-Up

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Fact: there are more than 51 trillion pieces of microplastic in our oceans - that's more than 500 times more than the number of stars in our galaxy. With around 8 million tonnes ending up in our oceans every year, three Port Shepstone accounting firms banded together on International Coastal Clean-Up Day (21 September) to demonstrate their commitment to the United Nation's 14th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by cleaning up and removing plastic litter from their local beachfronts.



Plastic debris is one of the most pressing concerns facing our environment. From entanglement to ingestion, our oceans and the marine life it supports is choking.

In fact, Erik Solheim, Head of United Nations Environment, points out that “at the rate at which we are dumping items such as plastic bottles, bags, cups and straws after a single use, by 2050 we will have more plastics in the oceans than fish.”

According to SDG 14: Life below water: Marine pollution, an overwhelming majority of which comes from land-based sources, is reaching alarming levels, with an average of 13,000 pieces of plastic litter to be found on every square kilometre of ocean.

It was with these alarming facts in mind that personnel from Lockhat Incorporated, Chantel Elliott & Co and Hugh Strickland & Co met on the beaches of Ramsgate, Margate and Umtentweni to do their part for conservation.

Speaking during the day, Imraan Lockhat, Managing Partner and Chairman of Southern District Association of SAICA, says that “there’s a tendency world-wide for CAs(SA) to be focused on numbers and profits but what numbers and profits tend to ignore is sustainability. Thankfully, this is changing. Sustainability is a key part of what the profession should become more aware of and I’m hoping that the profession can get together someday to create a sustainability statement that is auditable, that has international standards recognition criteria that will enable all firms to trade on an equal platform for all generations to come.”



Wayne Hartogh, from Lockhat Incorporated, adds that the company initiated the clean-up with other firms in the area because “the planet needs people to care! By rallying together to support initiatives that address plastic waste, we show that we care. We can’t live in a bubble anymore and plead ignorance. We can’t leave it to future generations to pick up the mess that we have created now. Change starts in your own back yard literally and figuratively. So, ask yourself how you can better serve the environment by consuming less, recycling more and by taking responsibility for the plastic you throw away.”

Collectively, the teams managed to accumulate 64 of bags of rubbish in just two hours, with the team from Lockhat Incorporated amassing 25 bags of those bags and winning the friendly wager between the firms. In addition to cleaning up their beaches, participating teams donated R3 000 to the winning team’s Social responsibility initiative Rainbow Warriors Animal Shelter. This non-profit rescue shelter provides sanctuary for stray and feral dogs and cats as well as education and training on animal welfare to the local community.

Speaking about the importance of the rubbish collected, Fiona Kohrmann, Honorary Officer at Umzimkhulu KZN Wildlife, reveals that the clean-up is so much more than just a one-day event: “The annual Coastal Clean-Up is used to gather information about what’s polluting our oceans. The data sheets volunteers fill in record what gets collected on the day and that information is sent to an international database so that organisations can lobby industry and government to make changes that benefit our seas. In South Africa, plastic packets used to be a big problem in our ocean and the data sheets collected over several years actually helped current legislation and plastic packet levies come into existence.”

This initiative is just another way chartered accountants and their firms are working in the public’s best interest through projects that directly influence the UN’s SDGs.

You can view the highlights video from the CA(SA) Coastal Clean-Up Day here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbsWlnetyiw>.

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