

Mayor joins big Soweto clean-up project

ILANIT CHERNICK

THE CITY of Joburg celebrated World Environment Day yesterday with a clean-up campaign in Soweto.

The clean-up, which was part of the #WasteStopsWithMe campaign, was in collaboration with city waste collection agency Pikitup, the Canadian High Commission to South Africa and Miss Earth SA.

The clean-up took place at Mshenguville park, where Joburg mayor Herman Mashaba, Member of the Mayoral Committee for Environment and Infrastructure Services Nico de Jager, Canadian high commissioner to South Africa Sandra McCardell, and climate and human rights activist Catherine Constantinides joined forces with residents and Pikitup personnel to clean up the park.

The park is a known hot spot for illegal dumping and littering.

"As the City of Joburg, we have the responsibility to look after the environment. We need cleanliness but we also need to ensure we are looking at the big picture," Mashaba said.

He noted that illegal dumping costs the city R80 million a year. "To look after our resources, we need to have a clean environment. Let us take our environment seriously and stop illegal dumping," he said.

Mashaba said R2.4 billion had been allocated to Pikitup to clear illegal dumping and meet waste collection needs during the 2017/18 financial year, while



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HANDS ON: Activist Catherine Constantinides and Joburg mayor Herman Mashaba help to clean up Mshenguville park in Soweto. The event was part of the #WasteStopsWithMe campaign on World Environment Day for the Miss Earth South Africa leadership programme, in partnership with the City of Joburg and Pikitup.

PICTURE: MATTHEWS BALOYI

R150m had been set aside for the cleaning of informal settlements during 2017/18 and R50m had been allocated for Pikitup to continue its third cleaning shift within the inner city.

"It is also good news to communicate that 264 889 households across the city are taking part in the city's Separation-At-Source project, led by Pikitup," he added.

Constantinides, who is also the national director of Miss Earth SA, explained that the #WasteStopsWithMe campaign

strives to encourage people across South Africa to understand the role they play in conserving the environment.

"A dirty environment is an unsafe environment. Educating people about the environment starts at a grassroots level.

"This is our 100th clean-up since June 1 and it's great to see the community coming out and being so driven. We have to take ownership of our cities, spaces and parks. It's small steps of action like recycling that can make a big difference," Con-

stantinides said.

Asked what small thing households could do to make a difference to the environment, she emphasised that stopping using straws, which land up in the oceans and damage their ecosystems, would make a big difference.

As the day progressed, bags, gloves and tools were handed out and the large crew set to work cleaning dumped items like cardboard, wood and plastic bottles.

Local residents George

Mathe and Mabo Sehuba, who also took part in the clean-up, said they were relieved this was taking place so close to their homes.

"We live right here and our children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren come here to play and it's always so dirty. How can they play in such an environment?" Mathe asked.

"In the summer all the dumping and mess here brings flies to my home, which is right there," she said, pointing towards a home across the road.

"It makes it an unclean and unsafe environment for all of us, and we hope this will carry on and encourage the community to get involved in keeping the area clean as well," she said.

Mathe added it was great to see so many people and residents coming together to clean up the park and make it better for everyone.

By the end of the day, bags upon bags of rubbish and litter lay in a pile while the group looked on proudly at their hard work.