

The ins and outs of unity

At the time of going to print with this issue of *CHIPS*, we still did not know how the widely discussed government of national unity or GNU would look. The only certainty is that it will differ from what we have grown accustomed to over the past few decades. We hope that things will be different and better, and that our country can finally start repairing the damage done over a long period. History teaches more stories of damage than of reparation, both here and elsewhere in the world. Hence, we can only hope for the best.

All this GNU speak got me wondering about unity – what it truly signifies and what it should look like in practice. Unity, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is:

1 [uncountable, singular] the state of being in agreement and working together; the state of being joined together to form one unit;

2 [uncountable] (in art, etc.) the state of looking or being complete in a natural and pleasing way;

4 [singular] (formal) a single thing that may consist of a number of different parts (If society is to exist as a unity, its members must have shared values.)

Unity in action

I recently had the 'privilege' of landing in our new local hospital's emergency ward after falling down a flight of stairs at my home. I had quite a few injuries that needed quick attention and I dreaded what was to come. Yet my experience of this small hospital and its staff was nothing but wonderful from the get-go.

I was struck not only by the friendliness and helpful nature of every single person there, but also the pride each team member took in their work and the respect they have for each other. All of the staff wore smiles on

their faces and happy socks on their feet in support of children's health. The receptionist was helpful, friendly, and sympathetic. The porter was dressed to the nines and looked like a businessman on his way to a meeting. He took great pride and care in wheeling patients to and from their tests and scans, and the practitioners all thanked him for this at every station.

The doctors spoke to the nursing staff respectfully while patiently explaining what steps needed to be taken and how. The atmosphere was one of calmness. An assistant nurse was walking up and down the ward, checking with doctors and nurses where he could be of help while greeting patients and asking if they were okay.

Doctors and nurses were laughing and chatting with each other and with patients, explaining treatment and giving assurances where needed. There wasn't a slouched shoulder (except for my injured one) or sour pout anywhere to be seen. I remember thinking: "Oh, just give me some pain medication and leave me here. Here, I will get better."

Don't overthink it

And that is the simplicity of unity in action – working as a team, having a can-do attitude, walking and working with a purpose, communicating all the time, finding solutions to problems, being respectful, and smiling because it is therapeutic for the self and those around you.

The potato industry serves as an excellent example of an industry operating in unity. You only have to read *CHIPS* to see this. Let's hope that our politicians realise what they are preaching right now and that they will find it in their hearts to do the right thing, in true unity.

Lynette Louw, editor
lynette@plaasmedia.co.za

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Executive editor

Hanrie Greebe
076 116 7206
hanrie@potatoes.co.za

Editor

Lynette Louw
084 580 5120
lynette@plaasmedia.co.za

Publisher

Plaas Media (Pty) Ltd
217 Clifton Ave, Lyttelton, Centurion
Private Bag X2010, Lyttelton, 0140
Tel: 012 664 4793
www.plaasmedia.com

Deputy editor

Jayne du Plooy
jayne@plaasmedia.co.za

Sub-editor

Nanette Botha
nanette@plaasmedia.co.za

Layout & design

Annemie Visser
annemie@plaasmedia.co.za

Sales manager & accounts

Marné Anderson
072 639 1805
marn@plaasmedia.co.za

Advertising

Karin Changuion-Duffy
082 376 6396
karin@plaasmedia.co.za

Susan Steyn
082 657 1262
susan@plaasmedia.co.za

Subscriptions

Beauty Mthombeni
064 890 6941
beauty@plaasmedia.co.za

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