

ArcelorMittal South Africa Solidarity Holidays 2012

Day 4: Thursday, 29 March 2012

Milan and Velika humbled and inspired by locals. Glad to be making a difference for the needy.

Rio Matlhaku

For Velika Desoska from Macedonia, this has been a remarkable week. Velika made her first trip to South Africa as part of the ArcelorMittal Foundation's Solidarity Holiday with 10 colleagues from various countries around the world. She was hard at work, joined by local volunteers to build a house for a needy family in Orange Farm this week.



Velika Desoska with some of the children at Orange Farm

Her abiding memory will be the politeness of both her ArcelorMittal South Africa colleagues and the family whose house she and her team are building. She says she was touched by how the beneficiary kept asking whether they needed anything. 'For someone who barely has anything, to be worried about us is a sign of magnanimity beyond words' she says. 'The housekeeper's daughter would run to her after school and hug her as a sign of appreciation'. She says

Velika is full of praise for the Foundation's Solidarity Holiday. "It has opened my eyes in ways I cannot describe", she says. Her wish is that more volunteers would get involved so that more houses can be built. "It should be 20 houses and not 10. There is so much more that can be done", she adds.

Velika says she never imagined she would visit Africa in her lifetime. She is thankful that the Solidarity Holiday has made this possible. Her other wish is that ArcelorMittal staff around the world should be made aware of the Solidarity Holiday and how life changing it is for both volunteers and beneficiaries. "Spread the word and transform tomorrow", she insists.

The Pavarotti of the South African Solidarity Holiday, Milan Sirina from the Czech Republic speaks very little English but breaks into an aria with ease.

Father of one, Milan says he was happy to work with local ArcelorMittal South Africa volunteers who he found helpful, friendly and patient. He was taken aback by how positive South Africans were. He is used to people complaining about all sorts of things, but found the attitude of locals refreshing as they appreciate and treasure whatever they have. This he says is the biggest lesson for him this week.

Milan says he was humbled by residents of Orange Farm who treated everyone as family. He was further touched when the international volunteers visited an ArcelorMittal Foundation funded home for mentally disturbed children in Meyerton yesterday. "It was heart breaking, but as I said earlier, everyone there seemed to be in good spirits. They are angels to be doing such an amazing job. Some members of the party could not hold back the tears as they picked up the children and hugged them."



Milan Sirina from the Czech Republic

Milan believes more should be communicated about the Solidarity Holiday and the projects being supported by the Foundation around the world. "It has been a perfect week for me", he concludes.