The Knysna Municipality recently (13 March 2013) handed over cheques to the value of R630 000 to 40 charities, schools, sport clubs and non-profitable organisations that operate in its municipal area.

Knysna Executive Mayor Georlene Wolmarans and the municipality’s Grant in Aid Programme had been donating funds to worthy, registered organisations since the 2007/8 financial year. “One of the best things about being mayor is to be part of programmes such as these in which the community directly benefits from the processes of local government,” said Ms Wolmarans.

Ms Wolmarans said hundreds of local organisations applied for the funding, which was advertised in the local media last year. “When all this application and support for the GIA programme have been received, a committee comprising the Municipal Manager and the Directors of Community Services, Finance and Corporate Services, evaluated each application.”

“Funds are allocated based on criteria such as the size and nature of the organisation, the purpose of funds, and whether the organisation is legally registered with the correct and relevant department and/or association. The final list of beneficiaries is submitted to, and approved by Council.”

“In addition to these hand-overs, the municipality also assists organisations throughout the year on an ad hoc basis as more immediate needs arise. However, even emergency applications are first evaluated by the GIA committee according to the same criteria as annual applications,” said Wolmarans.

The municipality’s GIA programme budget for donations will total at R747 000 for the 2012/2013 financial year. Grants handed over on March 13 ranged in value from R5 000 to R40 000, depending on the above-mentioned criteria, and were mostly directed towards specific projects. Funds this year will go towards projects such as shrubs, soup kitchens, victim support programmes, care of the elderly and disabled, sports development, cancer awareness, music lessons, pre-school education, sea rescue equipment and training, youth development and more.

Beneficiaries are required to keep record of how they spend the funds, and may stand a chance to benefit again in future should they prove good management of previously allocated funds.

“The Knysna Municipality looks forward to seeing how funds translate into the support and development of our communities. I thank and commend every person working or volunteering for non-profit and charity organisations in the Knysna municipal area. Your selfless commitment is touching and inspiring. May your efforts be blessed and may you reap many benefits for yourselves and the people you serve,” said Wolmarans.

**Traffic officer Nonki becomes a TV star**

Knysna traffic officer Ernst ‘Nonki’ Npoko has always been popular with locals, but his wide smile and upbeat antics while doing point duty on the N2 at George Rex Drive, have recently earned him national recognition.

Knysna resident Ellen Cane nominated Nonki as a Dagbreaker in the national Afrikaans network television station KykNet’s breakfast programme, Dagbreaker (Day Break). The TV insert acknowledges individuals who make other people’s day in some way or another.

In her nomination Mr Cane wrote that Smiley, which is what the public calls him, or Papi (as the school kids call him), deserved the ‘Day breaker’ title because he put a smile on everybody’s day. “Every person who drives past him just wants to greet him and have a bit of his smile. This is difficult because he can’t return the greetings as his hand signals may then give the wrong traffic instruction...and that’s why he just keeps on smiling. He really makes a difference in many people’s lives.”

Ms Cane added that Smiley was especially popular with children who looked out for him every day, and were pretty disappointed on the days when he was not on duty. “Children (hopefully with their seatbelts on) literally hang out of the windows of their parents’ vehicles to greet him. He is very friendly with a genuine ear-to-ear smile. It is really a pleasure to drive past him. Everybody in Knysna knows him, if you speak of ‘Smiley’ everybody knows who you are talking about.”

The Dagbreaker insert screened on television on Wednesday 6 March, just after the 7am news broadcast and included photographs of Nonki taken in action at the George Rex intersection.

Kunya Municipal Manager Lauren Waring said the municipality was proud of Mr Npoko who had become a firm favorite with motorists. “We have received many positive comments about his friendly demeanour and upbeat attitude.”

Knysna traffic office Ernst Nonki Npoko, aka Smiley, directs traffic in his characteristic upbeat style. Picture: Desmond Schatz

His colleague, Mr Bromwell Hanne, who also does point duty at dangerous N2 intersections, is also very popular. Pointsmen in particular perform a very dangerous yet essential service to the community, and I thank local resident Ellen Cane for acknowledging our ‘Smiley’ in this way. Thank you also to every member of the local emergency and essential services your sacrifices do not go unnoticed. Well done Nonki, we are very proud of you,” said Waring.

**Main library moves as R5mil extensions begin**

The Knysna Main Library is temporarily moving to Woodmill WalkCentre in Long Street while R5-million worth of extensions and upgrades to the existing building begin.

Knysna Municipal Manager Lauren Waring said the library would be open for business at the new premises on 18 March 2013.

“We are very excited that extensions to this vital resource are finally getting underway. There are 15 schools that are served by this library and our children’s section in particular will benefit tremendously from the 460 square metre-additions to the existing building,” said Waring.

The extensions are funded by R4.4 million from the national Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) with the remainder paid for by the Knysna Municipality.

The Main Library will operate from the Woodmill Walk Centre (the old Edgars building) for an estimated ten months until work on the Main Street building has been completed.

“We apologise for any inconvenience caused during this period of relocation and upgrades, and appeal to residents and regular library users to bear with us during this time. The end result will be a beautifully refurbished and extended building that will serve our community and its children for many years to come,” said Waring.

The contact telephone numbers for the Main Library in Woodmill Walk will be 044 302 6300 and 044 302 3212.