

Beauty from ashes



It was devastating to hear that the home of Aaron McIlroy and his wife, Lisa Bobbert, burnt down in Durban while the couple were at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in July, performing in the hilarious comedy shows Bloopers and ADHD. Their daughter and two-family friends were in the house when the incident happened and thankfully nobody was hurt.

Technicians in the industry know Aaron as the face of Rusty Woods presenter of the funny Tech Talk videos by DWR, and who can forget his portrayal of the dad in the South African film Spud! He is also a good friend to Michael Taylor-Broderick (DWR Durban), and as Michael says, "Aaron is the best guy to go have coffee with because you end up solving the world's problems."



Well, times are hard enough at the moment without having to deal with your house burning down. People are scrambling for money and work, but through all this, Aaron and Lisa have been surrounded by a huge amount of love.

There have been wonderful gestures. A man arrived at the remains of the couple's home with an envelope filled with cash. On a different occasion, Aaron received a phone call from someone else saying, "Listen, I know it's too early now but when you are ready, this is my name and here is my number. Come to my shop and choose

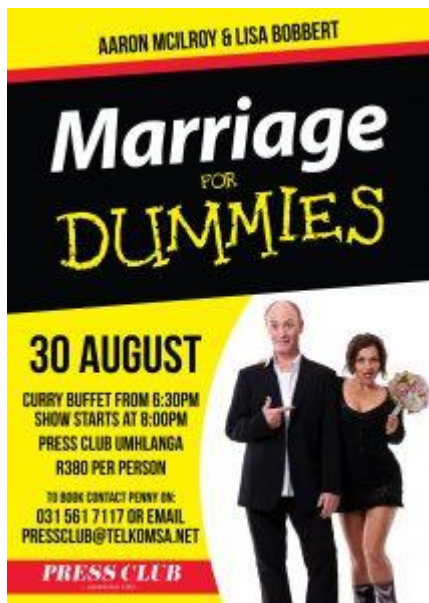
the appliances you need, no charge'. Aaron replied, 'I don't even know you.' To which the man replied, "Don't worry, I'm on the WhatsApp Group. Just come." The Durban community created a WhatsApp group and have been able to assist with meals, accommodation and many other gestures of goodwill to assist the McIlroys.



"It's humbling and difficult to be on the receiving end of charity as there have been so many people offering to help. You ask yourself, why are these people helping me when there is so many in need? It's a freak out", says Aaron.

"Aaron and Lisa have made so many people laugh over the years and audience members have probably experienced difficult times themselves and have felt a bit lighter having witnessed their comedy shows," said Michael. "And now, in the same way they want to help where they can."

Since the fire, the pair have remained upbeat and continued to work very hard, right through a spell of pneumonia for Aaron. Meanwhile, Lisa was the leading lady in Shirley Valentine, hosted from 8 to 10 August at The Playhouse Company.



It's the sentimental items like photographs that are difficult to replace, but the family have decided to see it as a 'fresh start'. They have seen that God, family and friends are what really matter. "The goodwill and support of the community has blown us away," says Aaron.

DWR Distribution's SOS were happy to give Aaron a dongle to assist him when he wanted to buy one and should there be anyone else who would want to assist the family in any way, a Back-A-Buddy community funding link has been added.

<https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/sos-helps-aaron>