

# Local municipal debt specialist makes history

*The story of Edenvale's David and the three Goliath's who couldn't silence him*

By Heather Djunga



**SUCCESSFUL:** Peter Livanos and his team from New Ventures Consulting.

**Fifteen years ago, Peter Livanos, manager of New Ventures Consulting, would never have imagined the turn his life would take or that he and his family firm would make legal history with a success in Constitutional Court destined to change the lives of countless South Africans.**

Last week Livanos and his team's success in Constitutional Court made national headlines when it was announced the court had ruled in favour of the New Ventures Consulting team, and that home and business owners would no longer be responsible for the debt incurred by previous property owners.

To secure this victory, New Ventures Consulting had to take on three giants: The City of Tshwane, the City of Ekurhuleni and the Minister of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional

Affairs.

But while South Africans are by now familiar with the case and its success, not enough has been said of the man behind the battle – a David in his own right, trained through his own battles to take on the battle against the three Goliaths.

Speaking to tame TIMES on Thursday last week, Livanos said he realised the ramifications of this legal success were huge in that the court victory would alleviate the burden on new property owners of having to deal with the historic debt left by previous owners.

He explained his success was the result of a 15-year uphill battle with the powers that be and had not been without personal cost. He said the court case had cost the family R13 million and that at one stage, he had had to be hospitalised because of the immense stress of the court ordeal.

“The stresses of the court battle took a huge toll on my personal life and health and my family members,” he said.

So what kept him on the battleground, fighting in the courts with his team? Livanos said he continued because he had a heart to help people and because he had dealt with so many people, even close to suicide, due to the stresses of unwarranted municipal debt upon their lives. He said in his investigations for the case he had discovered many things that had shocked him, such as how bylaws had been waived to justify this unlawful recovery of debt from innocent people.

The talented businessman has been successful in more than 12 000 cases concerning property debt and explained he did his work as a service to the community, believing that South Africans needed to stand up for what was right and use the gifts they had been given to serve others.

“I often even do my work for people pro bono, and normally collecting our fees from the savings with no upfront costs,” he said.

He met with tame TIMES in his offices in the Livanos Office Tower, in Van Riebeeck Ave, Edenvale. Motorists driving through the area might have noticed the large billboard as you enter the main Edenvale CBD area, driving down Van Riebeeck Ave from the Meadowdale area.

The billboard shows a spiderweb and asks the question “Trapped by municipal debt?”

“Living under the shadow of debt is like being trapped,” explained Livanos, who had an experience with ‘this ‘hidden

debt’ when purchasing property 15 years ago, one of the reasons he embarked on this journey to help others.

So now that the municipal debt case is done and dusted, what is in the future for Livanos?

“I believe there are many people in informal settlements, who have had to pay debt for home owners whom the municipality didn’t recover debt from, due to ineffective debt collection procedures. I would love to help them out. Don’t get me wrong, I am all for debt collection – but it should never mean an innocent person suffering and having to pay.”

He said he hoped he and his team’s case would leave its mark on South African legal history. “It shows that when we determine to stand by our rights and principles, and by the values in our Constitution and law, change can be affected. I am just one person, doing my part for the community and I want to continue to serve the community in this way.”

**For more information, or to speak to Peter Livanos and his team, contact**

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