WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER
Princess Charlene of Monaco talks about Prince Albert’s recovery from Covid-19, home-schooling the twins and her new campaign to help SA’s most vulnerable

Compiled by Nici de Wet

It’s a pandemic that spares no one. Kings and queens, princes and princesses, presidents and prime ministers – anyone and everyone has been affected in one way or another by a silent killer that’s ripped the rug out from under the world.

Just ask Her Serene Highness Princess Charlene of Monaco. Her life may be worlds away from how she grew up, with home now a pink palace perched on one of the most exclusive pieces of land on the planet.

But privilege doesn’t prevent disease and her family is proof of that: her husband, Prince Albert, was the first head of state to be struck down by the virus.

Yet what does someone like Charlene do when life hands her lemons? Make lemonade – for other people.

The 42-year-old former South African swimmer has launched an ambitious charity drive under the auspices of her Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation South Africa.

The #strongtogether campaign kicked off in SA recently, driven by celebrities who challenge each other to raise funds for a charity of their choice and the princess’ foundation:

“I have the chance to be in a privileged environment but I’ve never forgotten my roots and I’m committed to devoting myself to others through the actions of my foundation,” she tells YOU in an exclusive interview from the principality.

“Strong Together” is a message of unity and solidarity initiated by the Monaco government [after the outbreak of Covid-19]. It’s something both Albert and I support, and I wanted to take it on as a project for my foundation.

“We want to reach out to those affected by this pandemic, whether it’s as a result of medical needs, hunger or joblessness.”

Members of the public are encouraged to choose a celebrity to support and to buy a ticket for a lucky draw, which has a grand prize of an all-expenses paid trip for two to the F1 Grand Prix in Monaco next year.

The winners will be Charlene and Albert’s VIP guests and will also enjoy a four-night stay at a luxury game lodge in South Africa.

Many household names in SA – among them former Boks Victor Matfield, Bryan Habana and Percy Montgomery, 7de Laan actress Nobuhle Mahlasela, golfer Louis Oosthuizen and athlete Wayde van Niekerk – were quick to jump on board.

“Charlene still cares so much about her home country, so it’s great to support her and change lives,” says Victor, who threw his weight behind Éléos, a charity that helps underprivileged families in Pretoria West. “I’ve supported the organisation for a long time and they do great work.”

Nobuhle has pledged her allegiance to HeadStart Kids, an NGO devoted to feeding and educating children. “Donate, people,” she urged her followers on Instagram. “Together we can make a difference.”

Thanks to this campaign, more than

Princess Charlene of Monaco has started a new Covid-19 campaign in SA. RIGHT: She and husband Prince Albert, who recently contracted the virus and recovered, have also been helping the people of Monaco.
12,000 masks have been handed out in SA already, together with sanitisers, food parcels and other supplies.

CHARLENE and Albert never wanted to make much fuss of the prince’s diagnosis in March. But it didn’t come as a shock, especially as Albert fell in a high-risk category — 62 years old and somewhat compromised after contracting pneumonia a few years ago.

Charlene played down the situation though, saying it was “a very distressing time for everybody around the world” (YOU, 2 April).

Albert too didn’t want people worrying about him, “There are lots of cases of people younger than 60 contracting it. It can hit anybody of any age.”

His diagnosis came just nine days after he was pictured sitting opposite Prince Charles at a climate conference in London.

The 71-year-old was also struck by the virus in the same month and has also made a full recovery.

While Albert self-isolated at the Pink Palace, Charlene and their five-year-old twins, Prince Jacques and Princess Gabriella, went to the family’s country home at Roc Agel in neighbouring France.

They kept in touch with Albert every day. “We FaceTimed, usually in the evening,” he said.

“We told stories and talked about what we did in the day. I told the twins to be safe. They knew I was sick and had to stay away.”

By early April he’d recovered, although he said he “still had a bit of a cough, but that’s pretty normal.” “It goes on for a bit. Otherwise all lights are green.”

The family is now reunited at the palace where it’s been business as usual — or as usual as things can be in these strange times.

Albert says he’ll be taking things a little easier going forward. “The only meetings I’m going to have will be video conference calls.” He’s also scaled back on public appearances for now.

Despite her high profile life and humanitarian work, Charlene says she’s a wife and mother first and, like millions of parents around the world, has been juggling work duties with the challenges of home-schooling.

The twins are doing very well, she says. “They’re continuing with their lessons making use of technology, and I help as much as I can.”

The kids have also been enjoying spending time in the palaces sprawling gardens. “They’ve been playing outside, gardening and planting flowers,” Charlene tells us. “They love to do that.”

Meanwhile, she and Albert continue to pour their energy into Covid-19 initiatives. Shortly after the pandemic hit, Charlene organised the production of 5,000 cloth masks, emblazoned with the #strongtogether message, which were distributed to shopkeepers and their customers in Monaco.

“This international health crisis has touched us all deeply,” she says. “We’ve seen a great movement of solidarity and mutual aid and I hope that this spirit will continue.”

For more information on the #strongtogether campaign, go to pcmfsa.com.