



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

Gogo gets her new home



Working on Fire doesn't just make a difference by saving lives and protecting the environment. Sometimes we also get to improve the quality of life of individuals in our communities. Last month we featured the story of how our Manguzi Team in KwaZulu-Natal decided to build a house for an elderly resident known as Gogo Gumede.



Gogo Gumede lived alone in an unstable house and was surviving through planting various vegetables in her garden when the team discovered her plight. The team decided to build Gogo Gumede a proper home with materials financed through their monthly stipends and donations from the Working on Fire National Executive Management and the KZN Provincial Staff.

The completed house was officially handed over to Gogo Gumede on 1 December 2017. Gogo Gumede, smiling from ear to ear, could not contain her excitement in moving into her new home. "I pray that God blesses everyone who contributed in making my dream a reality. Thank you Working on Fire," said Gogo Gumede.



Western Cape geared up for a busy wildfire season



On 1 December 2017 Working on Fire, South African National Parks, CapeNature and the provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning launched the Western Cape wildfire season at Vergelegen Estate near Somerset West.

Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Anton Bredell, said in his opening address that the Western Cape Disaster Management Centre had allocated 24 aircraft through Working on Fire to key locations.

The National General Manager of Working on Fire, Shane Christian, reminded the gathering of the importance of partnerships

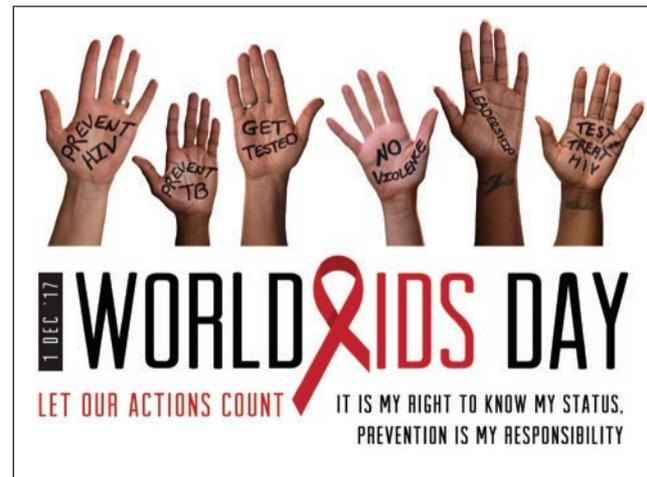


which enabled all resources to be properly allocated and used in firefighting operations.

Southern Cape also launches fire season

Convened under the theme, 'Integrated Fire Management through partnerships', Working on Fire, in partnership with the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association, SANParks, the George Local Municipality, Eden District Municipality and landowners, hosted the Southern Cape fire season launch at the newly established Denneoord Aerial Fire Base on 6 December 2017.

Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams says, "Aerial firefighting plays a very important part in assisting ground crew in suppressing fires. The new Denneoord Aerial Fighting Base allows flexibility in increasing our reach. This strip is about to multiply the support across the province."



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16 DAY CAMPAIGN



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JOINING SAPS



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Editorial

Dear Reader,

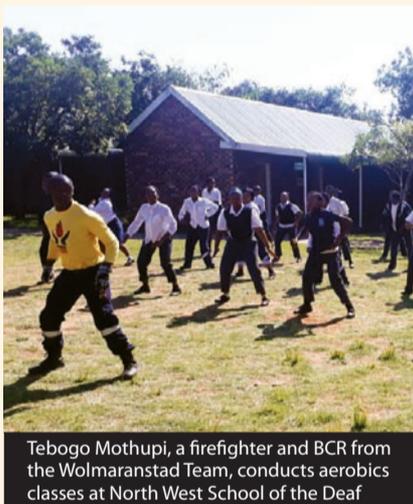
We are pleased to share with you our final edition for 2017 and would like to extend a big thank you to all the loyal readers who have read our newsletter throughout this past year.

A special feature of this newsletter has always been the wonderful stories of our participants who continue to grow and excel at Working on Fire. We want to thank each one of our participants for their continued contributions to helping to save lives and protect our environment.

On behalf of all the editorial contributors (our Provincial Communication Officers), we wish you a safe and happy festive season!

Happy reading.

Participant offers free fitness classes



Tebogo Mothupi, a firefighter and BCR from the Wolmaranstad Team, conducts aerobics classes at North West School of the Deaf

Wolmaranstad Team Base Communications Representative, Tebogo Mothupi, strives to live the Working on Fire values, even after hours. Mothupi, who joined WOF in 2014, is making a difference in his community by providing free aerobics classes to members of his community and local schools. He was recently honoured with a certificate by Grace Mwali, the Head of Department at North West School of the Deaf, for his contributions to the school.

Mothupi registered a fitness club called Fat Burn Fitness in 2014 which encourages a healthy lifestyle. This occurred after he noticed the increasing number of obese people in his community and how their obesity was affecting their health. Since then he has offered aerobics classes on an open field to members of his community and learners from two schools free of charge during his spare time.

"I also work with Gontse Primary School. I'm targeting schools because I would like to see youngsters value their health from a young age," he says.

Tebogo Mothupi, we are very proud of you and the difference you make in your community.



Participant puts her faith into owning business

Nomsa Manzini, a firefighter from the De Wildt Base who is a part-time hairdresser, says entrepreneurship can turn one's life into a more purposeful project.

Tired of being an aspirant entrepreneur, she says the time has come for her to register her salon business.

"I have saved good money to kickstart my business. I lacked confidence throughout the years but I have a talent in hairdressing. No doubt about it," says Manzini.

Manzini has acquired financial management skills at WOF as the programme offers training in these skills to its participants.

While she no longer has problems understanding financial management, she says fear of the unknown is the biggest obstacle for many young people like her.

Over the years Manzini has been running her salon on a part-time basis.

"Now that the fire season is over, I will start hairdressing part-time," says the determined entrepreneur, who has set her sights on formally registering her hair salon and growing it into a bigger business.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Nomsa Manzini from the De Wildt Base runs a salon on a part-time basis

WOF flag flies high at OR Tambo Marathon

The Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation hosted the annual OR Tambo Marathon in collaboration with the Free State Sport Confederation, Free State Athletics, Mangaung Athletics and Pamoja Athletics Club. The Free State OR Tambo Marathon took place in the city of Bloemfontein.

Participants competed in three categories – the 42.2km marathon, 21.1km half-marathon, and 10km race. Many Working on Fire participants

from across the province participated, including two who finished the 10km women's race in the top 10. Lerato Chaotsane from the Clocolan Base took 6th place with a time of 46 minutes and Nkadameng Sibeko from the Bethlehem Base finished in 8th position with a time of 48 minutes.

In the 21km race two female participants from the Heilbron Base finished the race in the top 15. Vangile Khambula ended in 10th place with a time of 1 hour and 37 minutes and Nthatheng

Tsotetsi took 15th place with a time of 1 hour and 59 minutes. Peipman Mofokeng from the Heilbron Base competed in the 42.2km race and finished 12th with a time of 2 hours and 35 minutes. The participation of Azola Banagani, an Assistant Regional Manager, ensured WOF management also had a representative.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



The team of participants who represented Working on Fire at the OR Tambo Marathon earned medals for their participation

Introduction of Editorial Team

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Working on Fire is an Expanded Public Works Programme which resides within the Department of Environmental Affairs.



Our premium news products, WOFire News and WOF TV, have the single objective of being informative!

They are there to keep our participants informed about what's happening in WOF across the country.

WOF TV News and WoFire News are dedicated to the hard work of our participants and aim to focus on their stories, not only in relation to their work in WOF but also how they have grown and developed in the Programme.

Furthermore we feature many stories of participants who took responsibility for their own lives and also extended their compassion to others.

Readers are welcome to send us their stories in their home language and we will assist with translation and editing.

Please e mail your story to news@wofire.co.za or submit them via your local Provincial Communication Officers, Regional Managers, Base Managers or Crew Leaders.

A watershed year for Working on Fire



Trevor Abrahams,
Working on
Fire Managing
Director

It is that time of the year again when most of us are preparing to spend time with our loved ones during the upcoming festive season. This has been in many aspects a difficult but rewarding year for Working on Fire.

It started off with the big fires in the Somerset West area of the Western Cape where our participants played a significant role in bringing these fires under control.

And then of course we had the disastrous Knysna fires in June this year, the biggest single fire disaster a local municipality has ever faced in this country. When fires flared up in the Eastern Cape as well, we had at one point close to 800 firefighters from Working on Fire active at these fires.

The whole country, including President Zuma, Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, and the Minister of COGTA, Des van Rooyen, expressed their gratitude and thanks to our participants for having once again proven the success of one of government's most successful EPWP programmes.

However, amid these achievements we also lost some of our colleagues. The hearts and minds of everyone at Working on Fire continue to be with the families of our lost colleagues, particularly during this festive season.

Now in the fourth year of our seven-year contract to implement the Working on Fire programme, we have largely been able to deliver on the Department of Environmental Affairs' key deliverables in terms of this contract.

Upon my return to Working on Fire in May this year and with the appointment of a new Executive Committee during that period, we soon realised that the overall morale and discipline in the programme was no longer what it used to be.

Our biggest challenge at the time was to restore the morale and discipline within the Working on Fire programme. It became abundantly clear during my engagement with participants and management that the Working on Fire programme had to an extent lost its core value of putting people first.

I also observed that we had not been able to provide the kind of working environment for our participants as we had in the past, which put them at the heart of what this programme sought to achieve.

Working on Fire is about providing life-changing opportunities for the thousands of young men and women who are in the programme and the many thousands who have moved on to the formal job sector. The Working on Fire programme is also about providing an important service to the people of South Africa in saving lives and protecting the environment.

We need to understand these key points about what it is that we do in Working on Fire, but most importantly, reflect on what worked well for us in the past.

To ensure the programme is sustainable and continues to excel in delivering its objectives of creating work opportunities for South Africa's unemployed youth, we had to make some important changes in the leadership of the programme.

Together, the Executive Committee, the entire management team, our participants and I set off on a course to reaffirm Working on Fire's commitment to the 'Back to Basics' campaign based on respect and discipline and living the company values of Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability and Making a Difference.



Managing Director Trevor Abrahams helps with the firehose during the Knysna fires

Throughout the past seven months we all worked tirelessly to ensure that Working on Fire once again excels in restoring the dignity of its participants, but also continues to provide an important service to its stakeholders and partners in saving lives and protecting the environment.

To succeed, we needed to work as a team and every team member had to take responsibility and play their part, as we could not afford to have us fall short of our goals and fail in providing the much-needed relief this programme offers the unemployed youth in our country.

We implemented many important decisions, such as paying back pay for overtime where it was not paid in the past and being on standby on weekends in the fire season.

We also held a workshop on Industrial Relations and Disciplinary Procedures which was attended by all senior management members in Working on Fire. This was done after we realised that the proper disciplinary policies and procedures were never implemented in many instances, and this had resulted in many unhappy firefighters.

Without a doubt our biggest success story of 2017 remains our tireless contributions during the Knysna and Tsitsikamma fires of June 2017. Our close to 500 firefighters on the ground and in the air all played a significant role in helping to put these fires out and moreover to protect lives and properties.

On behalf of the Executive Committee I want to extend once again our gratitude and thanks to our firefighting heroes.

The summer fire season in the Western Cape is in full swing and I want to extend best wishes to our firefighters there. All we ask is that you continue to remain vigilant and safe on the fire line.

To our firefighters and management who are going on leave I want to extend best wishes to you also and hope that you will safely enjoy this time away from work with your loved ones.

Thank you and may you all have a wonderful and blessed festive season.



Destruction in Knysna fires



Firefighting heroes with the Knysna Mayor (left) and Minister of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs, Des van Rooyen

WOF fully ready for summer fire season

Working on Fire put a great deal of effort into preparing for the 2017/2018 summer fire season, which officially kicked off on 1 December. It is vitally important that all the roleplayers involved in the practical aspects of implementing Integrated Fire Management solutions are on top of their game this season, as the drought experienced in the Western Cape poses a great risk of unwanted wildfires.

Various WOF departments conducted refresher training courses over the past few weeks to ensure that they were all 100% ready to assist when WOF is called on to help. These refresher training courses included Yellow Card training for WOF participants, Driver Training, Dispatch Training, Flying Crewmen (previously known as HPA), Helitack Crew Leader (previously known as HSL) Training and Pilot Training.

 Zania Viljoen, Communications Officer



All Working on Fire teams from aerial crew, dispatch to ground crews are ready for this Summer Fire Season



Aviation was attended by 38 aerial firefighting pilots

WOF Aviation's pilots are ready to tackle this season

Kishugu Aviation held its seasonal pilot refresher training camp in Stellenbosch from 28 to 30 November. The camp was attended by 38 bomber, spotter and helicopter pilots and crews.

The programme for this season's camp covered aspects such as the differences between the summer and winter fire seasons, pilot fatigue, briefings on the various runways, dispatch and coordination protocols, social media and media relations, and emergency response plan procedures.

Eleven Flying Crewmen (previously known as Helicopter Personal Assistants) attended Day 1 which was very successful. "This camp gave us the opportunity to talk about matters which concern

us and will help us work together even better this season," says participant Akhona Mbayazwa.

Trevor Wilson, the Kishugu Aviation Safety Officer and Training Camp Manager, says that training camps are an essential part of the fire season preparation. "These camps give us the opportunity to highlight safety aspects and procedural changes and re-embed procedures. They also strengthen work relationships and build camaraderie among the pilots and other aviation personnel, which is important for effective teamwork."

 Zania Viljoen, Communications Officer

WOF Dispatch is ready to tackle this fire season



Dispatch is fully ready to deal with the unexpected

Working on Fire's Dispatch and Coordination Department has trained one new seasonal Type 2 dispatcher and conducted refresher dispatch training for the remaining 11 experienced dispatchers. These training sessions were held in Paarl, Western Cape, from 2 to 14 November 2017.

During the refresher training camps, dispatchers had to write an Essential Embedded Knowledge (EEK) test, revise all operational procedures pertaining to dispatch and undergo practical evaluations. All tests and evaluations require an 80% mark to pass.

The training was presented by Alwyn Kruger, Departmental Training Officer, with the Head of Department, Lizette Heine, sharing valuable insights from her more than 31 years' experience in the field. The training camp achieved what it set out to do, but was not without its share of unexpected 'flare-ups'.

The northern regions seem to be experiencing a lengthened fire season and with the recent Knysna, Oudekraal and Gordons Bay fires, it is as if the previous Cape fire season never ended.

In the midst of training, the WOF Dispatch and Coordination Department had to assist with dispatching resources to the fire in Gordon's Bay.

"We train our dispatchers to expect the unexpected and calmly deal with any challenges that might pop up," says Heine. "So these 'disruptions' during training only added more value to their training experience."

The dispatchers are ready to tackle whatever challenges this season might bring with skill, professionalism and safety as a first priority.

 Zania Viljoen, Communications Officer

WOF drivers ready for summer fire season

The Working on Fire Transport Department has started its seasonal driver Yellow Card refresher training, with the first camp held at the Newlands Base from 30 October to 3 November. It was attended by 41 drivers, of which 24 were WOF drivers and the remaining 17 drivers for the High Altitude Teams (HAT).

This was followed by a camp held in Witfontein near George from 13 to 17 November.

"We will also be conducting refresher driver training with teams in the Eastern Cape in December and January to ensure that those drivers are ready to be dispatched to the Western Cape should their assistance be required there," says Amor Adlem, WOF Transport Coordinator.

WOF drivers are responsible for transporting crews to and from the fire line and

often have to drive on rough dirt roads, or even off-road, under very stressful circumstances. "While en route the whole team's lives are in the driver's hands and it is very important that these drivers' knowledge and skills are reviewed and updated so that they can continue doing their work well," says Adlem.

Driver refresher training includes an endurance test (a 3km walk/run with equipment), sit-ups, pull-ups and push-ups, lectures on resource administration, fire line safety, defensive driving and rules of the road, theoretical exams as well as various practical assessments, which include water delivery, pump operations and components management.

 Zania Viljoen, Communications Officer



The training included vehicle equipment capabilities, vehicle water delivery and pumps practical demonstrations

Mpumalanga teams intensify fire awareness activities



The Graskop Team conducting fire awareness activities in the field

Through the management and implementation of Integrated Fire Management (IFM) services, Working on Fire strives to save and protect lives, properties and the environment against the horrendous effects that often result from veld and forest fires. These services include fire management planning, fire protection and detection, as well as community fire awareness activities.

As part of the implementation process, several teams in Mpumalanga conducted fire awareness activities in schools and communities to intensify measures to reduce the impact of wildland fires.

The focus was on providing fire safety tips to members of the community to prepare them to prevent unwanted fires in their homes.

"Between April and October 2017, we reached 90 schools, 9157 learners and 8310 community members," says Fire Awareness Training Officer Elliot Nyathi. The winter fire season officially concluded on 31 October 2017.

Nyathi says, "WOF teams are committed more than ever to intensify measures to reduce the impact of wildland fires."



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Team focuses on festive season fire safety



Highveld Team Base Communications Representative, Meshack Roman, helps one of the children to identify fire causes

While the winter fire season is behind us, fire can still happen at any time. The North West Highveld Team therefore continues to raise fire awareness in fire-prone areas.

The team conducted a fire awareness activity for children from Thuto Boswa and Rise and Shine Daycare, focusing on the causes of fire and fire prevention. The children were given exercises, such as drawing items that can cause fires, to ensure they understand and can identify these risks in their homes or schools.

The team's Base Communications Representative, Meshack Roman says, "We

taught the children about the causes of fire and fire prevention. Our objective was to ensure that children understand what causes fires so they can take part in preventing them."

Roman says the fire awareness activities were part of their strategy to ensure that everyone in the province is fire safe this festive season.

While the province's fire season has passed, some teams will be on standby to assist with fires during the festive season.

Written by Editorial Team

Equipping learners with fire safe tips this festive season



Alma participants conducting a fire awareness presentation for Grade 5 and 6 learners at Waterberg Academy

The WOF AlmaTeam has been working around the clock since the declaration of the end of the winter fire season in Limpopo.

Along with conducting manual fuel load reduction for the landowners in their area, the Alma participants are busying themselves with the pre-festive season fire awareness campaign. The team launched the campaign at Waterberg Academy and plan to reach most of the schools in the area before they close for the holidays.

"Our fire awareness training officer played a major role in preparing the team by conducting a biodiversity workshop for us, where we worked in small groups doing the research and brainstorming," says Alpheus

Chabalala, the Alma Base Communications Representative.

The aim of the pre-festive season awareness campaign is to educate the communities and make them aware of the impact of fires. Through this campaign, the team hopes to have a festive season where everyone is safe.

"During the festive season most people undertake holiday trips and have a braai in the open space. It's easy for people to start wildfires without even noticing. So we are pleading with our community to be cautious when using fire," says Chabalala.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Working on Fire conducts FireSafe workshop for care givers



Simphiwe addresses the CCGs at the workshop

WOF KwaZulu-Natal Community Fire Awareness Officer, Simphiwe Dlamini, is conducting FireSafe Workshops for Community Care Givers (CCGs) at Untunjambili Hospital, in partnership with KwaMaphumulo Disaster Management.

The aim for the workshop is to enable community workers to assist in reducing the risk of fires by educating community members on the importance of firebreaks, fuel load reduction, candle safety and the fire danger index.

"As the closest fire and rescue services to the KwaMaphumulo Local Municipality is 45 kilometres away, it is imperative for community members to know what preventive measures must be taken to reduce the risk of fires in their community," says Dlamini.

KwaMaphumulo Municipal Manager Phakama Mhlongo, who attended the workshop, says the municipality is grateful for the hard work that CCGs performed in assisting communities. "I would really appreciate this type of workshop being conducted throughout the KwaMaphumulo Municipality, as it is heartbreaking to see your neighbour's house and belongings destroyed due to lack of knowledge."

Dlamini says, "CCGs were very eager to start educating their community. This made me happy as it meant they appreciated the information shared with them."



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

WOF men take lead against abuse of women and children

The 2017 national campaign to raise awareness of the abuse of women and children began on 25 November.

WOF Lepelle-Nkumpi participants took the lead under the guidance of the provincial social development office in launching the '16 Days' campaign. Three WOF teams participated in the "Count me in" soccer tournament which was held at Lebowakgomo stadium.

"Abuse affects us all because the women and children who are abused are our mothers, sisters, wives and children. So we as WOF men are taking the lead and believe that real men should protect

and not abuse them," says Benneth Sewetsi, a Crew Leader Type 1 at Lepelle-Nkumpi Base.

The event started with WOF participants marching towards the stadium chanting songs and holding placards to raise awareness about the campaign. The march was followed by a soccer tournament between the Lepelle-Nkumpi, Nebo, Mamabolo and Aganang teams, which was won by Lepelle-Nkumpi.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



WOF participants marched in Lebowakgomo to launch the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign

Loskop team urged to act against gender-based violence



The Loskop Team with staff from Thuthuzela Care Centre and the Department of Health, and the Social Development Practitioner in Mpumalanga

Following the nationwide launch in Port Elizabeth by Minister of Women in the Presidency, Susan Shabangu, of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign, the Working on Fire Loskop Team was urged to act against gender-based violence.

This came as the provincial Social Development Practitioner in Mpumalanga, Condrick Mukhudwani, facilitated a workshop on 30 November 2017, to raise awareness of the abuse of women and children and highlight the effects of HIV&AIDS in disadvantaged communities.

Addressing the team, Mabirimisa Vhutshilo, the Site Manager at the Thuthuzela Care Centre

in Goblersdal, called for male participants to take a stand against abuse, saying it was important that they change the mentality of viewing women as sex objects.

"It is wrong to see women as sex toys and we should change this barbaric perception because it is abuse and it can land you in jail," said Vhutshilo.

Mukhudwani expressed his appreciation of the workshop, adding: "It is time that as men we stop being monsters to our children and women and become their protectors."



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

WOF says no to women and children abuse



Working on Fire participants marched with placards held high with messages condemning the abuse of women and children

Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape collaborated with Kusile Women Empowerment (KWE) to host a fun run to draw attention to the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign. The fun run began with a march from the Stutterheim provincial office to Mlungisi Location.

According to the manager of KWE, Mrs Salaza, the aim was to raise awareness about abuse of children and women in our areas. KWE sees many cases of abused children and women abuse at their centre.

"We wanted to play our part in educating people to stop being silent about such things. Children are more affected by the abuse that happens in their homes, while affected women blame themselves for the abuse," she says.

During the event, firefighters, community members and other participants carried placards with messages condemning children and women abuse.

Social Development Officer Yvonne Nte says some of the participants suffer from abuse in relationships and this affects their productivity at work. She said the workshops they conduct at bases encourage participants to be independent and not to keep quiet about abuse.

"Asking for help is often difficult, but it is important to report such incidents," Nte says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Residents urged to speak up against abuse

The Highveld, Castello and Boskop Teams went door to door in the community of Welverdiend Section 12 to highlight the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign.

The activity was led by Social Development Practitioner Makoloi Tele and was joined by the area's ward councillor.

She says, "Our aim was to encourage community members to break the silence, speak up and act on abuse of women and children abuse. Because the areas have had incidents of women abuse, we wanted to encourage community members to speak and condemn such acts against women and children."

Highveld BCR, Meshack Roman, who also joined the door-to-door awareness campaign, says they wanted to encourage community members to take action against abuse by reporting it to the relevant authorities.

Written by Editorial Team



North West teams, together with community members of Welverdiend Section 12, discuss interventions to fight women and children abuse during the awareness campaign

WOF helps participant to keep dreams alive

Nhlakanipho Nhlapo has a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from Sedibeng College which qualifies him to do fitting and turning.

Nhlapo says after completing the course, he struggled to secure employment and training opportunities. In the hope of a better future he joined the Working on Fire programme, where he works at the Heidelberg Base.

Nhlapo says this opportunity is keeping his dreams and wishes alive and is helping to make him a responsible person.

He says the financial management skills he has learned at WOF have been an eye-opener for him on how to succeed in life.

"I am able to use my stipend too to apply for jobs and internship training. No need to rely on my parents anymore," says Nhlapo, who is currently pursuing his driver's licence.

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Female driver breaking stereotypes



In a society where one hears negative stereotypes in everyday conversations around female drivers such as 'females cannot drive properly' or 'females can't park', Masechaba Moleleki is challenging the gender stereotype in a job dominated by men, proving that women are able to match and exceed the driving abilities of men.

Moleleki was recently named the best Working on Fire driver in the province for the year. This award is measured by drive cam behaviour, the quality of paperwork submitted to the Transport Officer as well as the driver's ability to meet deadlines.

Victoria Mollo, Free State's Transport Officer says, "Masechaba is a good driver. She is constantly on green on our system and, in close to a year and a half of her driving the FTs and the TBs, no bad driving behaviour was identified. I'm very proud that she takes pride in her job and that she takes good care of Working on Fire vehicles."

 Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Stipend supports participants family



Twenty-year-old Betty Molale, of the Cradle of Humankind Team, says the programme has saved her family from poverty and hunger because the stipend she earns is the only source of income of her family of six.

Molale matriculated in 2016. She says she was induced to look for a job instead of seeking a place at a tertiary institution. There was no one working at home at the time and the family was suffering.

While she had to put her tertiary study ambitions on hold she managed to complete security courses before joining the WOF programme.

She says it had hurt to see her family starving and suffering and that, without the WOF programme, her socio-economic woes would have been worse.

"I am grateful for the work opportunity because six people rely on these stipends for their survival," says Molale.

Molale plans to use the stipend to fund getting her driver's licence and later enter the labour market.

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Kokstad strive to empower themselves



The KwaZulu-Natal Kokstad team leadership has initiated a skills development project. Type 1 Crew leader Ayanda Tshangase says, "The aim of this project was to empower our crew to have additional skills to add to their CVs besides firefighting."

The first five firefighters have successfully completed a three-week computer course. More firefighters will be going in small groups until everyone in the team has obtained the certificate.

Firefighting is a highly demanding job that does not allow participants to take long periods off to study. This was why the Kokstad Team had to find creative ways to develop other qualifications.

"Upon finding the institution, our provincial management assisted us to set up a system to enable all our firefighters to attend the course," says Tshangase.

"Through our team talks, we identified other skills gaps of crew members. We are currently assisting some of our firefighters to obtain their learner's and driver's licences."

Tshangase encourages other firefighters and crew leaders to support one another in developing new skills, and also to speak to their provincial management for guidance and support. They should never think it is impossible to fulfil dreams of studying further.

 Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Team shows driving ambition



Eleven firefighters from the Abie Bailey team are simultaneously doing driver's licence training because they say it is their responsibility to upskill themselves where the programme can't intervene.

Dinah Masetloa, a Type 1 Crew Leader, says no one will come to fix their shortcomings if they don't tackle challenges themselves. Masetloa says the team had decided to do something positive for themselves and had collectively chosen to undertake driver's training.

"We are not buying these driver's licences. Every evening we have a two-hour session with a driving instructor to teach us the traffic rules

as a team," she says, adding that some were also taking driving lessons after hours.

The participants saved money during the winter fire season to pay for the training and have booked to write the learner's licence test in December.

Masetloa, who is pursuing a code 14 licence, says participants should stop complaining and initiate things that would help increase their chances of exiting the programme positively. The work opportunity was a stepping stone for all the participants in the programme, she says.

 Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Driver starts a new journey



Former transport officer, Thabo Modimoeng, has exited the programme to pursue a career in driver training. Modimoeng joined the Working on Fire programme in 2010 at Pilanesberg when he was hired as a driver.

"I had a code 14 driver's licence. I was asked to train other drivers in Nelspruit during the safety induction driver's course," says Modimoeng.

Thereafter, he moved to the Cradle of Humankind Base in Gauteng, where he often drove teams to Western Cape fire calls in December and January.

Modimoeng says it was a very good experience. "It was in 2014 when I became a transport officer. My responsibilities were now huge because I had to manage the fleet of vehicles and people," says Modimoeng.

As part of his duties, he received and monitored drive cam videos and later coached and mentored drivers in the province.

"I applied for a position as a drive cam online/driver's awareness trainer at Drive Risk," says Modimoeng.

The new employer was impressed by the fact that he had acquired experience in drive cam monitoring while in the Working on Fire programme.

His duties will include coaching drivers from different companies to improve driving behaviour. The job will require travelling the length and breadth of the country.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

New Type 2 Crew Leaders complete probation



The Working on Fire programme in the Eastern Cape has been strengthened by the addition of 21 Type 2 Crew leaders, who have completed their probation period.

These young men and women attended the Type 2 Crew Leader course from 24 May until 24 July 2017.

Ground Operations Manager Vuyo Poponi says it was the first time the province had sent such a large number of crew members on the crew leader course.

Poponi says that when they all passed the course, the province had been very happy and welcomed them with a special celebration.

"As part of that welcoming celebration, we also conducted a Back to Basics standard-

isation workshop for these new leaders, so that they could understand the programme and the day-to-day running of the business, as well as to ensure that the same message was relayed from their level down to participants," Poponi says.

One of the crew leaders who passed the probation, Mzukisi Qulana, says that it had not been easy but with passion, dedication and hard work he had been able to pass.

He says the support he received from other crew leaders and team members assisted him to pass his probation.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Participant joins the South African Police Service

Twenty-five-year-old former firefighter and driver, Siyabonga Vilakazi, has exited the Working on Fire programme to fulfil his childhood dream of being a policeman.

Growing up, Vilakazi says he had always dreamed of working for the South African Police Service (SAPS), but joined Working on Fire in 2012. He was trained as a firefighter and was appointed a driver for the Nkomazi Team two years later.

The Working on Fire programme is designed to enhance the employability of young people by providing skills training and work experience. Like Vilakazi, the programme has seen many participants exit the programme and secure formal employment.

But, says Vilakazi, "This is not just a job. It is a step upward to serve my country, in the same way as I did within the programme."

Vilakazi is presently undergoing training with SAPS and is expected to complete the training in December.



Siyabonga Vilakazi undergoing training at the SAPS Academy in Hammanskraal, Gauteng



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

WOF represented in the Soweto Marathon



Nthateng Tsoetsi, from the Heilbron Base

About 26 000 athletes took part in the 24th Old Mutual Soweto Marathon, which started in 1991. The race, on 5 November, was organised by the Soweto Marathon Trust and is sponsored by Old Mutual.

The athletes took part in three different races over 42.2 km, 22km and 10km respectively. The marathon route passes eight heritage sites of deep significance in South Africa's political history. Starting at the FNB stadium, the runners pass the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, Walter Sisulu Square, Regina Mundi Catholic Church, Credo Mutwa Cultural Village, Morris Isaacson High School, the June 16 Memorial Acre, Vilakazi Street and the Hector Pieterse Memorial.

Vangile Khambule, Peipman Mofokeng and Nthateng Tsoetsi from the Heilbron Base represented Working on Fire in the event. The

three are seasoned long-distance athletes and prepared months in advance for the race.

Mofokeng says, "It was a tough race but I prepared for it thoroughly by practising doing uphill running. I knew that this marathon was mostly uphill so I prepared for it and hoped it would give me an advantage over my competitors."

Tsoetsi ran the 21 km race, ending in 69th position with a time of 1 hour and 57 minutes, while Vangile took tenth place in the 10km race.

The male marathon race was won by Tsepo Mathibele of Lesotho and, for the first time in nine years, the women's race was won by a South African, Irvette van Zyl.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State