



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

ARBOR WEEK FORESTS AND WATER

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NORTH WEST TEAM OF THE YEAR

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HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATIONS

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Saving lives and protecting our environment

After a quiet first few months of the current fire season, firefighters throughout the country were kept busy in September with fires in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, the Western Cape and Eastern Cape.

Firefighters were kept on their toes in Limpopo, especially over the weekends, as they battled multiple fires across the province. "We are working very close with the landowners, Fire Protection Associations, government and all other affected stakeholders to ensure that we respond faster," says Sam Maepa, the General Manager for Working on Fire in Limpopo.

Our firefighters in Mpumalanga also experienced an increase in wildfires during the past six weeks, with some big fires in the Sabie / Graskop and White River areas. According to Martin Bolton, the General Manager of Working on Fire in Mpumalanga, the provincial partnership with the Fire Protection Associations and the Disaster Management Centre has ensured a much quicker and coordinated response to wildfires.

"Working on Fire is committed to saving lives and protecting the environment and the properties of landowners and we are urging communities to remain vigilant over the next few months and not to start unnecessary

fires," Bolton says. In the most recent fire, which threatened the school building at the Uplands Preparatory School in Mpumalanga, Working on Fire aerial and ground firefighters received high praise for their quick response in bringing this fire under control.

"We are grateful for the support from Working on Fire, which managed to douse the flames near all the buildings, and we only appear to have cable damage at this stage," says Dave Ernstzen, the headmaster at the school.

In the Western Cape, the Keurbooms fire which broke out on 29 August 2016 near Plettenberg Bay, and continued for several days into September, was the largest wildfire in the Southern Cape and destroyed 10 000 hectares. More than 200 firefighters from Working on Fire, the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association, CapeNature, Cape Pine and the Eden Municipality Fire and Rescue Services were instrumental in the suppression of this huge fire.

Eastern Cape firefighters also experienced a much busier period over the past six weeks and they suppressed more than 40 fires in August, which burnt an estimated 5315 hectares.

Written by Editorial Team



Image of the Hoekwil Fire in the Southern Cape. Photo Credit – Southern Cape FPA



Polokwane fire fighters during the suppression of one of the veld fires outside Polokwane during the 2016 Winter Fire Season



Aerial resources at work at White River fire in Mpumalanga



Limpopo participants with the Minister of Agriculture Senzeni Zokwana during the Arbor Week launch

National Arbor Week launch

People from various communities around the Greater Tzaneen Municipality flocked to the Nkowankowa Stadium on 1 September to celebrate the launch of National Arbor Week. The event was hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in partnership with the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Working on Fire and Total South Africa.

The Arbor Week launch was used to showcase an agro-forestry project, the NTL

Baraka Eco-Farming and Tourism Project, that the provincial department supports in the Letsitele area, located about 54km from Tzaneen. The project aims to show the importance of forests in addressing food security, multiple land use approaches and the potential of forests to stimulate rural economies.

National Arbor Week is celebrated annually in the first week of September and is a joint national and provincial effort to advocate

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Editorial

Dear Readers

Welcome to the September edition of WOFire News.

In this edition we report on our firefighters' participation in several events celebrating Arbor Day and Week, which was themed "Forests and Water" this year. The role played by Working on Fire firefighters in saving trees and preserving our forests was highlighted in these events, with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Senzeni Zokwana, thanking them for their work.

In this edition we also feature Heritage Day events where our firefighters wholeheartedly celebrated the day and their different cultures by wearing traditional outfits and preparing traditional food, while some teams appropriately visited old age homes to draw wisdom from the elderly.

Of course this edition would not be complete without reporting on the fires our firefighters have suppressed and the fire awareness workshops that have been conducted to educate community members, learners and teachers about fires and how to prevent fires.

We continuously feature stories about fire prevention and suppression activities throughout the country but the stories which often gives us the most joy is when we read about how the lives of these young men and women in the programme has been transformed and in many instances how they can hold their heads high with dignity in knowing that they have also made a contribution in saving lives and protecting our environment.

We dedicate this edition of WoFire News to these unsung heroes!!

Happy reading!

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Working on Fire is an Expanded Public Works Programme of 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.

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

MD Message

Llewellyn Pillay



Working smarter with safety as our number one priority!

Dear Colleagues

We recently concluded a national roadshow where I had the opportunity to engage with all our provincial management teams. I want to address some of the key points that I raised during these meetings.

1. SAFETY

Safety remains one of our biggest challenges and major concerns were picked up on issues such as driver behaviour and the disobeying of basic safety rules. Drastic disciplinary action needs to be taken to reinforce a zero tolerance to the flouting of safety rules.

Some key failures:

- drivers disregarding the National Road Traffic Act;
- speeding;
- driving without seatbelts;
- driving while using cellular telephones;
- reckless and negligent driving.

We cannot put people's lives at risk. Anyone who ignores these warnings will face disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

Safety will have to become our number one priority given the nature and environment of our work. Among others, our safety strategy must include:

- In-house training for participants and staff.
- Weekly safety talk discussions from provincial down to base level.
- Engaging the Training Academy on correct OHS training for all.
- Training will start with Base Managers / Crew Leaders then start working up to all.

- Top management must set an example and safety must be the first point on the agenda.

2. ETHICS – HOW WE WORK

We need to develop a Code of Good Practice on how we work at all levels in the company. When issues arise we need to fix them immediately. We cannot allow issues to grow and simmer into something bigger.

We need to strengthen communication between one another and people must comply when instructions are issued. When an instruction is given it must be followed through.

If we do not follow through on requests and instructions, consequences must subsequently follow so that people are held accountable.

3. CONSEQUENCES

If behaviour is of such a nature that there is no means of self-repair, disciplinary procedures must follow as the essential corrective instrument to change an offending person's behaviour.

4. CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS TOWARDS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT (PFMA) – COMPLIANCE

We need to strictly adhere to the PFMA when dealing with issues related to procurement and using third-party service providers. This is a serious matter and the Working on Fire programme needs to be strictly accountable to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in this regard.

5. RE-CONSTITUTED EXCO

In order to assist the Managing Director to meet our contractual obligations towards DEA, the WOF Executive Committee has been re-constituted as a smaller and leaner structure, which will ensure much more seamless decision making.

WOF Executive Committee:

Llewellyn Pillay
Managing Director

Winston Smit
Assistant Managing Director

Sandiso Ntsomi
Senior Financial Manager

Luthfia Cader
Communications Executive

Mbula Nemadzivhanani
HOD Human Resource Management

Tim Sidey
National Programme Manager

Work smarter, be safe!

Arbor Day puts spotlight on the importance of trees

Ngquza Hill Local Municipality, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Education, SAPPI and Working on Fire, celebrated Arbor Day at Mkankomo Junior Secondary School in Flagstaff on 21 September.

Mkankomo JSS was a fitting venue for Arbor Day celebrations as the school recently won an award as the cleanest school in a competition sponsored by the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency.

This celebration educated community members and learners from different schools about the importance of planting trees.

Loyiso Sheyi, an Environmental Officer from the Department of Environmental Affairs, said that Arbor Week served to promote awareness of the need to plant and maintain indigenous trees throughout the country.

"Trees are much needed in disadvantaged communities in order to protect the environment from being eroded," Sheyi explained.



He also explained that trees contributed to the environment by providing oxygen and improving air quality.

"Everyone should plant trees and maintain them as they play a key role in the battle against climate change," he said.

Working on Fire Regional Manager of the Wild Coast region, Mlungisi Ndamase, said that WOF supported Arbor Week. "All the teams in the province took part in planting trees in the schools and communities near their bases," he said.

Learners from Mkankomo JSS performed a drama skit that showcased the importance of planting trees in order to protect the environment.

After the event, firefighters from the Mkhambathi Team assisted in planting trees around the school.

 Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



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National Arbor Week launch

the importance of trees in communities and encourage awareness of the need to protect indigenous trees and forests. This year's theme is 'Forests and Water'.

Working on Fire participants formed a guard of honour when Minister Senzeni Zokwana and his entourage arrived at the stadium. The team also opened the event officially by singing the national anthem.

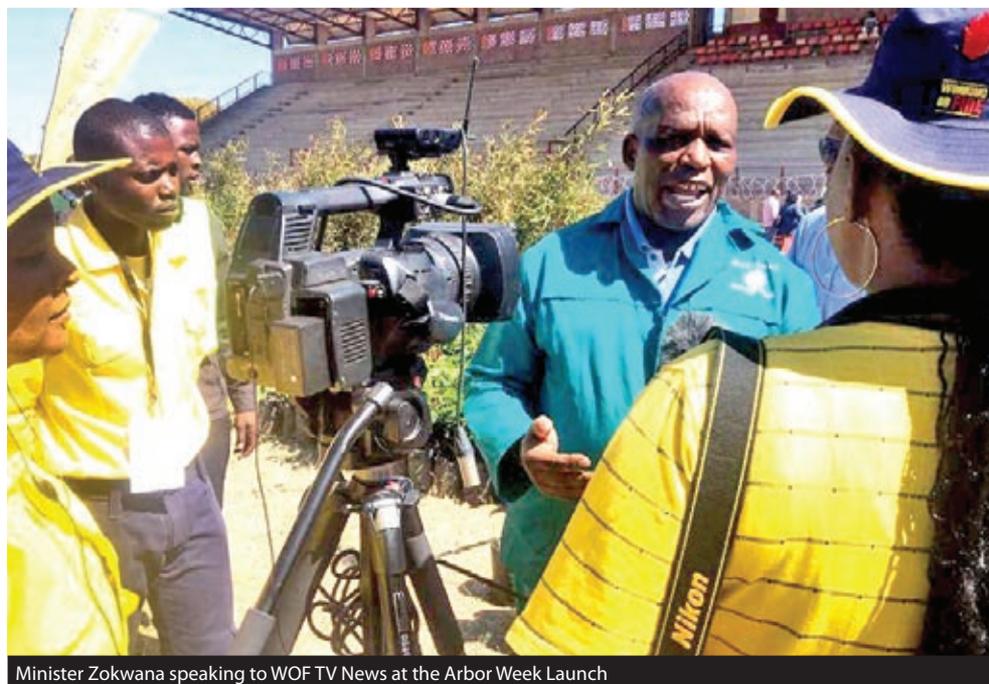
During his speech Minister Zokwana highlighted the importance of trees in our lives and particularly the important role the WOF participants play in protecting the environment and preserving forests. Minister Zokwana thanked and praised WOF participants for the vital role that they play in protecting our trees.

"Promoting tree planting is essential, especially trees that save water," the Minister said.

He announced the "One tree, One child" project, which focuses on the greening of schools through the planting of more trees.

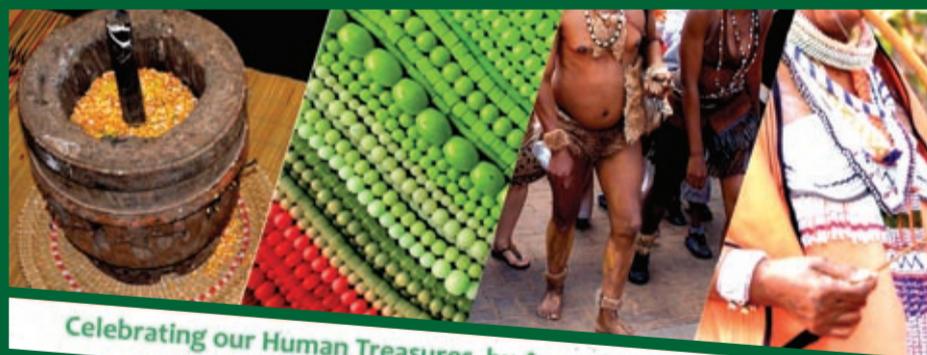
The Sekororo and Mogalakwena Teams have taken the minister's message to heart and adopted the schools in their areas. Aside from educating the learners about the importance of trees, they have also to date planted a total of 12 trees in schools.

 Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Minister Zokwana speaking to WOF TV News at the Arbor Week Launch

Heritage Day 2016



Celebrating our Human Treasures by Asserting our African Identity



Heritage Month is celebrated annually from 1 to 30 September. It recognises aspects of South African culture which are both tangible and intangible: creative expression such as music and performances, our history, language, the food we eat as well as popular memory.

A rich heritage of cultural diversity at Working on Fire

On 24 September, Heritage Day, we once again celebrated our magnificent natural and cultural resources, our folklore, our cuisine and our shared historical journey.

Working on Fire, a national resource that helps to save lives and protect our environment, is a proudly South African programme that spans the length and breadth of this country.

Working on Fire often represents participants' first entry into the world of work, and we strive to make this a positive experience. We are proud to be in a programme which has made an enormous contribution for more than a decade, providing opportunities for young men and women to grow and excel in a nurturing, supportive working environment that respects cultural and ethnic diversity.

This Heritage Month we salute our participants and our management structures throughout the country for having shown remarkable resilience and capacity for change in making Working on Fire one of the flagship Expanded Public Works Programmes.

On page 8 you can see how Heritage Day was celebrated.

Forest Sector Charter Council empowered after FireSafe presentation

Eastern Cape Community Fire Awareness Officer Wongama Copiso conducted a FireSafe presentation at a workshop held in Tsitsikamma Khoisan on 7 September.

Working on Fire collaborated with the Forest Sectors Charter Council in this workshop as one of the main challenges faced by the forestry industries was veld and forest fires.

This was done to assist the forestry stakeholder with a fire management plan and risk identification. In his presentation Copiso advised everyone to take responsibility in preventing fires.

"Many fires are started by people. That is why it is important that we teach as many people as we can about being fire safe. That will

have a positive impact in communities and can save the forest industries," explained Copiso.

Some of the stakeholders that attended this workshop included the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), MTO Forestry and SANparks.

A representative of MTO Forestry, Nthuthuzelo Ponoyi, said forestry was prone to wildfires and had to be protected.

"Forestry is a long-term investment business that employs hundreds of rural people who would be without jobs if a fire could sweep through the plantation," Ponoyi said.

People who attended the workshop said they were relieved to know that Working on Fire was preventing fires through educational awareness in schools and in communities and putting in preventative measures such as firebreaks, prescribed burning and fuel load reduction.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal

The Mpumalanga Community Fire Awareness Officer, Mbuso Siwela, and Kwazulu-Natal Community Fire Awareness Officer, Makhosi Dladla did presentations on how Working on Fire empowers local communities, the forestry and agriculture sector and landowners to identify and mitigate against fire risks.



KwaZulu-Natal presentation at Forest Sector Council



Mpumalanga attendees at Forest Sector Council meeting



Firesafe presentation at Forest Sector Charter Council Workshop

Teachers now FireSafe

KwaZulu-Natal Working on Fire, the Department of Education, WESSA and the Department of Rural Development hosted a Fire Awareness Workshop for over 40 Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers. The workshop was held at Vryheid Comprehensive School on 20 September.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu, says the objective of the workshop was to create fire safe communities and schools and maintain a safe environment for learners and teachers.

"We taught the teachers to understand fires, fire safety at school and safety in the home. This will help them minimise fire risks at home and at school," says Zulu.

According to Hlengiwe Princess Jiyane, the Department of Education's Cluster Coordinator for Multi-Grade Teaching in rural areas, the idea

for the workshop was sparked when she saw the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) was coming up in October.

"About 90% of the people in rural areas use fire as a source of energy to cook because they can't afford electricity, thus making those areas a fire risk. I decided to invite Working on Fire to educate our teachers about fires and what to do in the event of a fire.

"When we made the call to WOF they were keen to help. They arrived neatly dressed and on time. The facilitators knew their story when it came to fires. We were all impressed and hope to roll out these workshops with the help of WOF in other schools in my district," she says.

Jiyane adds that she is now taking all precautions to prevent fires and has decided to install a fire alarm at her own home.

Written by Editorial Team



Participants dedicate their time to learners living with disability

Working on Fire participants from Blouberg Base in Limpopo visited the Helen Frans Special School on 2 September 2016 to celebrate Casual Day with learners living with disability.

Helen Frans is one of the centres that has been adopted by the participants from the Blouberg Team. Every year the team dedicates time to this centre. This year they started their campaign by assisting the centre to raise funds through the selling of casual day stickers and T-shirts.

The day started well with the team cleaning at the centre before entertaining the learners with songs, dance and drama for the day. It was a special day and the learners had a fantastic time.

"We wanted to show these learners that they are still part of our society and to show them the love that we have for them. We also wanted them not to feel different from us just because they are disabled. They might be disabled but they still remain our brothers and sisters," says Thelma Matlou, a Base Communications Representative at the Blouberg Base.



Blouberg participants celebrate Casual Day with learners living with disability at Helen Frans Special School in Bochum (Pic by Thelma Matlou - BCR at Blouberg Base)



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

FireSafe workshop inspires launch of forum

Community members and volunteers from Stellenbosch who previously attended FireSafe workshops and presentations hosted by Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, have formed a Fire Awareness Forum for the Stellenbosch area.

Ten members of the forum, together with Rhoda, conducted their first door-to-door fire awareness campaign in the Raithby community. The forum members aim to reach as many residents as possible, to ensure that the community of Stellenbosch remains fire free during the 2016/17 summer fire season.

"I encouraged community members to form a forum and continue to run with what they have learnt during the FireSafe workshops. It is important that we get our fire safe message out there as it will assist in saving lives and protecting the environment. I am proud of the team and I know that together we can make a difference within our communities," says Rhoda.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Forum members conducted a door-to-door campaign in the Raithby Community

Hard work pays, says newly appointed Regional Manager

“Hard work, dedication and passion for what you do pays,” says Bheki Mhlabane, the newly appointed Regional Manager in the Winterhoek region in the Eastern Cape.

Mhlabane joined Working on Fire as a firefighter in Mpumalanga in 2008 after matriculating in 2007.

“It was not easy to be a firefighter but I loved it so much. I got to help save lives and protect the environment. The fitness tests we did as firefighters enabled me to perform the tough duties of being a firefighter,” says Mhlabane.

His hard work soon opened opportunities for him as he was promoted to stock controller in 2010.

“That overwhelmed me and I decided to do a stock controller course so that I could do my new job better. Toward the end of 2010 I got the opportunity to become the national warehouse controller and during that time I got

a chance to do the Type 2 crew leader course,” adds Mhlabane.

In March this year, Bheki was promoted to be the Eastern Cape Training Officer. He worked for the next few months to assist all the departments, monitor the teams’ fitness and check the training needs for the province.

“I learnt so much from both management and firefighters while I was still the Training Officer,” he says.

Mhlabane was recently promoted to Regional Manager in the west district of the Eastern Cape and took on his new role at the beginning of September.

Encouraging other participants he says, “Work hard to reach your goals because the sky is the limit.”



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Richard Mofokeng heads to farming

Land is my heritage

Richard Mofokeng, a 26-year-old who started his career at WOF as a firefighter and driver, is taking on the challenge of commercial farming in the new year.

This is after his family managed to acquire an 800-hectare farm through the land restitution programme.

“It is my responsibility to ensure that I use this land to create jobs and I wish to employ some of my colleagues to work with me on the farm,” says Mofokeng.

He says the idea of farming has fired up his entrepreneurial spirit and his wish to help his community. “I live in the squatter camp and

many people where I stay are unemployed. That hurts me,” he says pensively. He will implement practices he learnt from Working on Fire in the farming operation. “Occupational Health and Safety, fire management and record-keeping are some of the practices I learnt at WOF that will help on the farm.

“As a firefighter I used to do manual fuel load reduction and prescribed burning at other farms. I cannot wait to do that on my farm,” he adds. Richard says the land is his heritage and will bring positive change in his life. “I know that it is not easy to get quick results in the agricultural sector and there are no quick financial returns.

Perseverance, expertise and hard work are the main drivers of farmers’ success,” he says.

He has received a positive response after approaching the Land Bank to assist with funding. “I have sourced counsel on the business plan and I have the support of agricultural technicians from the National Department of Agriculture to advise on the best farming practices,” he says, adding that he wanted to use the land effectively as a viable commercial venture.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Type 1 Crew Leader promoted

Thulani Mkhosi’s journey of success at Working on Fire is a typical one, and shows once again that the model programme is achieving its developmental objectives.

The 24-year-old father of one says that, were it not for WOF, he would probably still be struggling to find a job. Thulani says he passed his matric in 2009 and a year later, enrolled at Boston College to do a computer course which he could not finish due to financial challenges.

“Life became tough. I dropped out of school as I had to look for a job to assist my family,” he recalls.

In February 2013 he heard that recruitment was going to take place in Hogsback and he joined the young people who went there to try his luck.

“It was not easy. We had to do fitness tests but I made it and was recruited as a firefighter,” Mkhosi says.

He worked very hard and was selected within a year to do the Type 2 crew leader course.



“I was so happy and I promised myself that I would pass the course whatever the challenges,” he explains.

Not only did he pass the course and the probation, but his dedication opened doors for him and, in 2015, he was allowed to take the Type 1 crew leader course.

“I never stopped working hard, even after that, as I always remember that I have a family to look after and a daughter to support,” he says, explaining what keeps him motivated.

After a year as a Type 1 crew leader, Mkhosi was again promoted. Now a Fire Awareness Facilitator, Mkhosi says he is happy for this opportunity.

“I always enjoyed conducting fire awareness in schools even when I was still a firefighter. I thank WOF for providing me with the opportunities and skills that have led to my success,” he says with a smile.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

WOF: poverty alleviation that truly works

Type 1 Crew Leader for the Dr JS Moroka Team, David Seefane, says that he and other participants who are making their lives and that of their families better are living proof that the Working on Fire programme truly alleviates poverty.

“Working on Fire helped me open a bank account which I never thought I would have. Little did I know that the account was going to help me keep and save my cash which I have used to build a dream house for my family,” he says.

Recounting his own experience, he says he was unemployed after matriculating. As his mother didn’t earn much and his father – who is wheelchair bound – subsisted off a disability grant, there was no chance of a tertiary education.

Seefane believes that were it not for Working on Fire, he might have got into drugs like other youth in his community.



But luckily WOF recruited and trained him to be a firefighter in 2010 at the Dinokeng Base. “WOF gave me my first job, I had my first pay slip here,” he says.

Seefane used to live in a two-roomed shack with his family but, with the support of a stipend from the WOF programme, was able to build a decent nine-room house in Tambo Village in Hammanskraal. “During winter the shack became cold and in summer it was

very hot, but now we have a home that is properly furnished,” he says proudly.

“I am grateful that finally we have a house. I am able to buy clothes, groceries, pay bills and get my driver’s licence. I can brag with these achievements, thanks to this programme,” says an enthusiastic Seefane.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

WOF provides hope and dignity through formal employment

Mamelong is an informal settlement situated next to the Vaal Dam, about 40 kilometres from Vereeniging. It is surrounded by farms and most of the community members who work are employed on the farms on a seasonal basis.

“Working on Fire is the only formal employer in the area of Mamelong which employs young people,” says Alfred Mpinga, a crew leader for the Vaal Marina Team. Mpinga says that people from the area wish to join

Working on Fire because it is more formal in its operations and well structured. “We have pay slips, uniforms, equipment, transport and comply with safety standards. That draws more attention from young people in the squatter camp to the programme.”

All the firefighters in his team are from Mamelong, which has a high poverty rate and no electricity. “Working on Fire brought hope for us, the young people of Mamelong squatter camp,” he says.

“Many of us used to work on the farms but today we are able to service the same farmers who used to hire us, protecting the farms from fires as they still provide jobs for the community. Community members envy us because we are also protecting the environment and saving lives,” Mpinga says proudly.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Climbing with confidence thanks to HAT

Gcobisa Ngubombi, a 23-year-old Newlands High Altitude Team (HAT) member, joined the HAT programme in February 2015. The High Altitude programme specialises in clearing alien plants on steep mountain slopes and ravines. It plays a vital role in water conservation.

Ngubombi grew up living with her grandmother in Khayelitsha before moving to Mfuleni to live with her mother and two siblings.

"Before I moved back in with my mother, it was challenging living in Khayelitsha. There was a lot of gansterism and drugs and I did not want to be a part of it. I kept myself busy by playing soccer and seeking better job opportunities so that I could support my family. My mom is a single parent, and like any mother she tries to provide for us. Ever since I joined the HAT programme I have had the opportunity to help her with the household and see that my siblings have what they need," says Ngubombi.

Ngubombi says she enjoys the HAT programme because the areas they attend to are not always the same. Even though some days might be challenging, she is happy she gets to play a role in protecting the environment.

Ngubombi was recently promoted to Base Communications Representative. "The HAT and Working on Fire (WOF) programme has been really helpful as I was a shy person. But now I have the confidence to speak up and climb to higher heights. I enjoy working with people and my aim is to become either a crew leader or an assistant to the Western Cape Communications Cluster. Thank you WOF and HAT for allowing me to gain confidence and make a difference in my life," she says.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Gcobisa Ngubombi at the Newlands High Altitude Base

Madikwe takes Team of the Year



Madikwe Team with the NW General Manager, Base Manager and Regional Manager

An outstanding feature of the WOF programme has been its ability to make a significant impact on the lives of the more than 5 000 beneficiaries employed in the programme. After the 2013/2014 Yellow Card Training Camp it was decided to introduce a Team of the Year competition in the North West.

A set of 10 criteria was drawn up so that the teams could be measured on their year-round performance and not just the Yellow Card. The criteria, which cover all spheres of general day-to-day activities and requirements at the bases are: safety, attendance, fitness, stock loss control, discipline, production, base filing and noticeboards, call adherence, base status and fire awareness/communication/social development. A floating trophy in the form of a shield is awarded to the best performing team.

After each department scored the teams on their requirements and the scores were tallied, Madikwe in Zeerust came out tops for 2015/2016. The NW General Manager, Nolvuyyo Mashologu, said, "I am very proud of this team. It has proven its abilities and passion for the work." In second place was Molopo and third place was taken by the Wolmaranstad Team.

Thuso Dikganyane from Madikwe said, "I am very happy that my team won this award of the best team of the year. It's an encouragement for us as a team to work even harder. From now on we want to put more effort into our work to achieve the vision and mission of the company. We would also like to thank God for the unity that this team and our crew leaders, RM, GOM, and GM have."



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Passionate about helping others

Zibele Bala, who joined the WOF programme in September 2015, was recently promoted to Base Communications Representative (BCR) of the Newlands Team.

The 27-year-old, who is originally from the Eastern Cape, goes beyond the call of a firefighter and is passionate about helping his fellow colleagues. Bala has been helping his fellow colleagues compile resumés and cover letters for job applications. He has also taught the team members how to conduct themselves during interviews, at work and while doing fire awareness.

Before joining the WOF programme, Bala matriculated at the Goniwe High School in Khayelitsha, and thereafter worked as an administration intern at the Department of Transport and Public Works for two and a half years.

"I consider myself a soft-spoken individual. Since joining the programme I have gained confidence and can now speak in front of my colleagues and teach them what I have been taught during the BCR training," he says.

Bala says that, when he first read about the programme on Facebook he immediately followed up to see when the next recruitment would take place, as he was then unemployed and thought a career as a firefighter would help him to build his confidence and support his family. Having realised this hope, Bala says he's grateful to Working on Fire and its management for allowing him "the opportunity to grow within the programme, and to gain so much experience."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Zibele Bala assisting colleagues at the Newlands Base

Discipline and assisting others unlocks success for Lebogang



Lebogang Mahlaela is living her dream as a firefighter with the Municipality

Lebogang Mahlaela joined WOF as a firefighter in June 2010 at Lepelle-Nkumpi Base after hearing the base manager's announcement at a Youth Day presentation that WOF would be recruiting youth to be trained as firefighters.

Mahlaela matriculated in 2005 at Makgwading High School. She did a computer literacy course at Avuxeni in Mokopane in 2006 and then started volunteering as a cleaner at Zebediela from 2006 until 2010 when she joined WOF.

"I resigned from WOF in 2013 and used the stipend that I had earned while at WOF to enrol for a Fire and Rescue Course at Karnbridge FET College in Pretoria. My father assisted me financially in following my dream of becoming a structural firefighter," says Mahlaela.

After completing her course she returned to WOF in 2014. Due to her experience she sailed through the selection process and was re-recruited as a firefighter. In May 2016 Mahlaela resigned from WOF to join Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality as a firefighter.

"I can't forget the day I received my appointment letter, I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions. I thank WOF for building me to be the person that I am today. It was tough at WOF but that contributed to me being the strong woman I am," says Mahlaela.

During her time at WOF, Lebogang demonstrated a high level of discipline and was always ready to assist others, which helped her to become known to the municipality personnel.

"Lebogang has all the qualities of a firefighter which include discipline, passion, dedication, fitness and a good sense of humour. She is a team player and has a bright future ahead of her," says Koena Moabelo, the Divisional Officer for Emergency Management Services at Capricorn Municipality.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Use stipend wisely to gain full-time employment

Former Heidelberg crew members, Innocent Zwane, Patrick Hlalele and Sarah Ngcongwe, are now full-time stock dispatchers at Game Stores.

Talking to WoFire News, Ngcongwe says she is proud to have been part of the Working on Fire programme. "We are lucky to have got jobs in the formal and full labour market. As we exit the programme, other young people will also grab the job opportunities in the programme. That is important. It is quite an exciting opportunity," says the jubilant Ngcongwe.

Stressing the importance of stipends, Ngcongwe says, "Before coming to the programme I struggled to find money to apply for jobs, travel to interviews, update my

curriculum vitae, certify qualifications and make photocopies of documents."

She says she used the stipend she got from the programme to attend the interviews and pay for travelling to her new job. "If I did not have money saved, I would have been forced to lend money from loan sharks at high interest," she explains.

She encourages her ex-colleagues to utilise their stipends at Working on Fire wisely, and to upskill themselves. Innocent and Patrick are based in Carnival Mall, while Sarah is at the newly opened Heidelberg Mall.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Sara Ngcongwe is one the three participants who exits the programme

North West participates in Heritage Walk

North West Working on Fire was invited on the Heritage Walk that took place from 8 to 12 September 2016. The North West Parks Board's Highveld Nature Reserve and Boskop Dam Nature Reserve collaborated with Tlokwe Local Municipality to present the annual Tlokwe Treasure Route Heritage Walk, which started at Highveld Nature Reserve and ended in Boskop Dam Nature Reserve.

The Highveld and Boskop Team attended the walk, with some of the participants assisting emergency services as first aiders. The stakeholders, learners and community members who joined the walk stopped for a rest and a presentation at TSE Lifestyle and Letlametswe B&B in Potchefstroom where they were taught about their heritage, tourism and the community benefits of taking care of the environment.

During the presentations at Potch Dam the North West Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, did a presentation on how the



The Team, school children and stakeholders at TSE Lifestyle learning about their heritage

community and stakeholders could conserve nature and protect animals against unwanted fires.

"As the WOF Programme it is our responsibility to make people aware of the dangers of fires so our children and future generations to come will enjoy our heritage and see the Big Five and not cause unwanted fires," said Dinko.

The North West Fire Awareness Facilitator, Teko Mooki, also did a presentation which focused mainly on personal safety and protecting ourselves from fires around our homes.

Other stakeholders in attendance were officials from the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, ORDLRD, READ, Aganang Community Radio Station, North West FM, the Tourism Association of Potchefstroom, the Business Association of Potchefstroom and Motswedding FM.



The Team, school children and stakeholders walking around Potchefstroom as part of the heritage celebrations



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Thapelo continues to serve the community

Thapelo Ramashobane started from humble beginnings as a firefighter and is now making his career at Tlokwe Local Municipality, where he is employed as a traffic warden in the Department of Public Safety. His job includes the normal traffic warden duties, as well as compiling reports, issuing traffic fines and managing traffic wardens.

Always passionate about saving lives, Ramashobane joined the Working on Fire programme in 2013 as a firefighter at the Boskop Base. "I joined WOF because of unemployment but ended up in love with the job because of the purpose we serve within the community," he says.

Ramashobane found himself at home without work or income after Matric. He says life was difficult but he never gave up on his dreams and future plans. "I enrolled at Tshwane University of Technology in a Road Safety Management course as I always wanted to enforce the law and loved saving people's lives.

"I started in January 2016 and my journey as a traffic warden has been rewarding so far as I have graduated to being a junior supervisor within two months at the Traffic Department," says Ramashobane.

He hopes to grow within the department and one day be a Superintendent. "I believe in



Thapelo Ramashobane posing next to the WOF bakkie

myself and that always motivates me to push harder," says the former firefighter.

When asked to advise his former WOF colleagues and new participants he said, "I would like to encourage former colleagues and everyone to go to school and further their studies and also get a driver's licence."



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

WOF opens doors



Thabo Lephala using the skills that he gained at WOF to perform his daily duties as a SHE representative

Thabo Lephala joined WOF in September 2012 and was one of the participants to open the Lephala Base that year. Before joining WOF he was unemployed. More than grateful for a job, Lephala believes this was the best move he ever made.

"I saw an opportunity to change my life and create a future for myself. I knew that WOF was a stepping stone for me and it lived up to my goals as a skills development programme that suited me," says Lephala of his time as a firefighter at the Lephala Base.

In January 2013 Lephala was appointed as the safety, health & environment (SHE) representative for his base and, for the next two years, performed that role with commitment, passion and respect. His personality and hard work saw him rapidly gain knowledge and skills to be acknowledged as the best at his job.

"In WOF I learnt discipline, gained skills and learned how I can contribute in the society. I am now a respectable person and I thank WOF for that," says Lephala.

In June 2015 the SHE representative competence that he acquired at WOF secured him a SHE rep position with the HWA Engineering Company in Lephala, a large company that is responsible for the construction and refurbishment of Lephala Municipality's sewers.

Thanks to WOF and hard work the future looks bright for Thabo and we wish him all the best.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Our heritage, our wealth

Heritage Month is celebrated annually from 1 to 30 September. Heritage Month recognises aspects of South African culture which are both tangible and intangible: creative expression such as music and performances, our historical inheritance, language, the food we eat as well as the popular memory. This year's theme is: "Celebrating our Human Treasures by Asserting our African Identity".



Eastern Cape - Mkhambathi Team dancing their cultural dance



Eastern Cape - Matatiele Team cooked different cultural dishes and shared information about the importance of their cultures while eating



Free State - Harrismith Team celebrated the day by wearing their traditional wear



Free State - Theunissen Team celebrated their Heritage Day by wearing their various traditional attire



Eastern Cape - Matatiele Team dressed in traditional attire



Gauteng - Provincial management staff and firefighters in their traditional attire to celebrate Heritage month in Mamelodi Children Centre



Limpopo - In celebrating the day team members wore their respective traditional wear



Mpumalanga - Wilgeboom Team celebrated their Heritage Day by modelling various traditional and enjoyed traditional food



Western Cape - Eden, Witfontein and George High Altitude Team hosted a cultural dance and cooking competition at the Witfontein Base



Newlands HAT visited an old age home in Hanover Park to spend time with the residents, learning more about their cultures



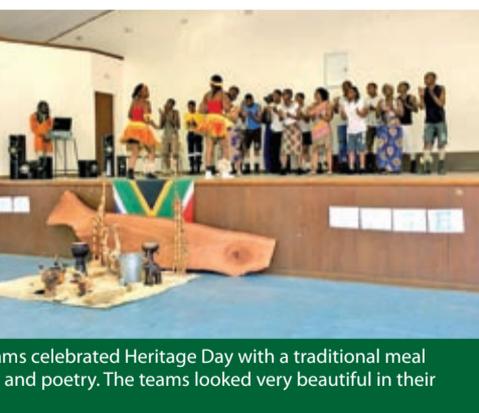
KZN - Normandien Team celebrated their different cultures together. They demonstrated how a traditional Zulu cultural wedding (umgcagco)



KZN - Normandien Team also demonstrated how in ancient times a Zulu wedding was celebrated by dancing, singing and the cooking of traditional foods such inhloko, affal and amahewu



North West - The Mamusa, Christiana and Jankempdorps Teams celebrated Heritage Day with a traditional meal and by performing traditional and gumboot dances, drama and poetry. The teams looked very beautiful in their traditional attire



North West - The Bloemhof Team celebrated Heritage Day by having traditional food cooked at the base



North West - The Molopo Team celebrated Heritage Day by sharing traditional food with North West Parks and Tourism Board members, SAPS and schoolchildren from around the nature reserve



North West - The Molopo Team celebrated Heritage Day by sharing traditional food with North West Parks and Tourism Board members, SAPS and schoolchildren from around the nature reserve



Eastern Cape - Ugjie Team



Eastern Cape - Stutterheim office



KZN - Mkhambathi Team



KZN - Mkhambathi Team