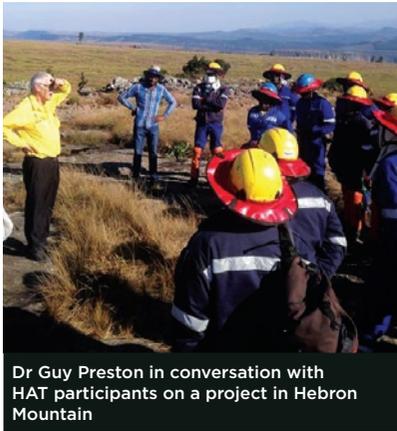
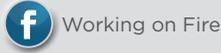




WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Dr Guy Preston in conversation with HAT participants on a project in Hebron Mountain

HAT - protecting our water resources

The Deputy Director-General of Environmental Programmes at the Department of Environmental Affairs, Dr Guy Preston, paid a surprise visit to High Altitude Teams (HAT) on site at the Hebron Mountain in Mpumalanga on 1 August 2018.

This came as HAT participants worked tirelessly on the mountain, clearing pine trees to secure strategic water source areas and conserve biodiversity, especially threatened grasslands and wetlands.

According to HAT Ground Operations Manager Hannes de Lange, Dr Preston was impressed with the quality of work and the production rate of the team. He emphasised the importance of high altitude work as well as the strategic

Working on Fire launches Women's Forum



Working on Fire celebrates 'Women of Fortitude'

In what is still perceived as a male-dominated industry, Working on Fire has the highest number of women fire-fighters, standing at 31%.

Working on Fire's progressive approach to inclusivity and diversity has provided a platform for women to grow, develop and lead in the

business, conservation and firefighting areas of the organisation.

Working on Fire launched the first Working on Fire Women's Forum to provide a provincial and national network in which women's challenges and achievements can be discussed. These forums will be spearheaded by the Working on Fire Social Development Practitioners.

Established Women's Forums will host provincial & national workshops with representatives from all provinces, including participants and provincial and national management, to foster meaningful dialogue to address women's challenges and empower women. These forums will be rolled out at base level throughout the year.

importance of the Blyde River Canyon, since it touches the lives of all the communities of the greater Bushbuckridge as well as the wildlife economy around the Kruger National Park.

Dr Preston also spoke to HAT participants about zero tolerance of sexual abuse and the vital role that women participants play in the 'Working For/On' programmes funded

by the national Department of Environmental Affairs. His comments coincided with the nationwide #TotalShutDown march against women abuse.



Dear Readers

As we wrap up celebrations of Women's Month in this issue, we share with you the journey of some of our women firefighters who have grown in the programme. You can also read about the countrywide launch of the Working on Fire Women's Forum which is aimed at empowering women and giving them a platform to discuss women's issues.

As reported in this issue, we welcomed a number of new recruits who will be attending the 25-day advanced firefighting training programme at our Nelspruit Academy. We wish all our participants, new and experienced, all the best and hope that the skills you gain in the programme help you to reach your dreams outside the programme in the long run.

Happy Reading!

MD Message:

Trevor Abrahams



I would like to extend warm greetings to all our firefighters and staff across the provinces and especially to all the women in Working on Fire who celebrated Women's Month in August.

The national theme for Women's Month this year was '100 Years of Albertina Sisulu, Women of Fortitude: United in Moving South Africa Forward'. This recognises the great role Albertina Sisulu played during the struggle against apartheid and how she helped to unite women against this unjust system.

We are extremely proud of the fact that Working on Fire, one of the government's most successful EPWP programmes, has created work opportunities for many women across the length and breadth of South Africa.

Thirty-one percent of our participants are women, which continues to be the highest ratio of women to men employed in this sector. Many of our women participants have evolved from being firefighters to becoming administrative and management personnel in the programme, while others have found employment in the formal sector.

Our women participants are proud of who they have become thanks to the continuous training and development which they receive at Working on Fire.

This month, we launched our Women's Forum in all provinces to provide a national network through which women in Working on Fire can discuss issues that affect them directly and share ideas on how their contributions in the programme can make an even greater impact in our provinces.

The Working on Fire programme is celebrating its 15th year of service to our country this year. We will celebrate this milestone with provincial and national activities to highlight how we have con-

FPA thanks team with a braai

The chairperson of Doornhoek Fire Protection Association (FPA) in Hekpoort, Mark Aitcheson, says that they sincerely appreciate the work the Maropeng Team did for the landowners to prepare for this fire season.

He hailed the team, saying they had been marvelous to work with because of their professionalism and discipline.

"This is a poverty relief programme. As landowners we need to employ some of these firefighters as farm, lodge and security managers because they are such good people to work with," he says.

He says this would also be a way of fighting unemployment among young people.

"We have thoroughly prepared this winter fire season. Grazing land and environment will be safe from any detrimental fires. Landowners are having peace of mind at the moment," Aitcheson says.

The FPA threw a big braai at Askari Game Lodge to show appreciation for the good work the team had done.



The Maropeng Team with members of the Doornhoek Fire Protection Association (FPA) at the braai at Askari Game Lodge

Maropeng Base Manager Phineas Mphela says the team had a busy schedule of burning firebreaks. This would mean fewer fire call-outs during the windy, dry and hot

weather in the August to October months.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Top performing Western Cape Teams rewarded



The Craggs Team in the Southern Cape receives an incentive for being the best-performing team of the 2018/19 financial year

Western Cape Regional Managers Sherwin de Kella and Warun Geland awarded incentives to the various teams in the Southern Cape who were the top-performing teams of the first quarter of the 2018/19 financial year.

Over the past few years, incentives have been made available in accordance with the Annual Plan of Operations for, among others, excel-

lent performance, the most fire awareness and social awareness conducted, production targets achieved and most fires attended.

The Craggs Team took first place while second place went to the Goudveld Team and Farleigh and Concordia tied for third place.

The Craggs Crew Leader Brandon de Waal says, "I am very proud of my

team for the hard work they have put in throughout the year. Hard work really pays off. Let's continue to push forward and be the forerunner in the Western Cape. Well done Craggs and thank you Working on Fire for recognising us."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

tributed over this period to saving lives, protecting our environment and restoring the dignity of participants who have benefited from the programme.

We are deep in the winter fire season and our teams have been kept busy with some big fires in their respective provinces. We urge our firefighters to remain safe and vigilant during the month of September.

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Working on Fire is on YouTube (Working on Fire TV News) [YouTube](#)



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



Firefighters holding the line against wildfires

Working on Fire Limpopo started the 2018 winter fire season with a bang as more than 600 firefighters battled raging wildfires that were reported across the province.

WOF responded to 35 wildfires across the province from April until July 2018. With the grass being dry and the impact of late rains this year, this number is expected to increase significantly, especially in late August and early September.

Even though the number of fires has increased drastically, the damage

caused by these wildfires was minimal. In all 35 fires that the WOF teams responded to, only 445,3 hectares of grass and cultivated vegetation were burned and there were no lives or properties lost.

WOF firefighters have engaged in projects in the province assisting landowners, Fire Protection Associations, communities and other stakeholders in implementing integrated fire management systems (IFMS) to assist in preventing and reducing the current high rate of wildfires.



WOF firefighters in Limpopo are working very hard fighting wildfires across the province

Working very closely with our stakeholders has impacted positively on the fast response to the fires and also on protecting the environment and saving lives.

We urge all communities to be alert and vigilant.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



Ladysmith firefighters constructing firebreaks

Eskom firebreak project completed

The KwaZulu-Natal Ladysmith Team recently completed a three-week project at the Eskom Ingula Pump storage and Ingagane Power Station Project.

The project involved the team camping on site, burning around the Ingula Pump perimeter and constructing firebreaks around the power station buildings. The programme successfully completed the project, having burned a total of 3000 hectares.

KZN Assistant General Manager Bongani Nhlathathi says, "As the KwaZulu-Natal province we have been working

closely with landowners to ensure we reduce the risk of fires in the community. I remain very proud of my teams as they were burning very dry fuel loads that hadn't been burnt in years."

The Ladysmith Team, which is stationed with the Alfred Duma Municipality, has returned to base and continues to implement Integrated Fire Management through fire awareness and fuel load reduction activities in the communities.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Controlled burns reduce fire damage risks



The Riversdale Team assisted the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA) with a controlled burn at the Teniqua Treetops resort

In preparation for the 2018/19 summer fire season, the Western Cape's Riversdale Team assisted the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA) in managing controlled burns along Maquini Beach in Stillbaai and at the Teniqua Treetops resort. Controlled burns are part of the Integrated Fire Management (IFM) strategies used by Working on Fire teams.

Controlled burns are carried out at local, provincial and national levels to create a sustainable and well-

balanced environment, reduce unwanted wildfire damage and promote the beneficial use of fire. Controlled burns are essential for biodiversity and agricultural practices and are a common use in fire risk reduction, reduction of dense vegetation, ecological rejuvenation of fynbos, land preparation for agriculture, rejuvenation of grazing fields and the reduction of alien vegetation.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Team reduces fuel load at school

Long dry grass is a common contributor to the causes and spread of wildfires. Which is why Working on Fire teams across the country conduct fuel load reduction activities targeting grass in fire-prone areas.

Since the start of the winter fire season in June, the North West teams have been conducting fuel load reduction activities such as controlled burns, firebreaks and manual fuel load reduction. These efforts are aimed at decreasing the number of fires the province experiences in the winter fire season.

The Mothibistad Team conducted a controlled burn to eliminate the fuel load at Tongwane Middle School. The school yard had long dry grass which posed a fire risk and the controlled burn will ensure that the school property and learners are not threatened by wildfires.



Mothibistad Team members conducting the control burn at the school



The WOF Warden Team with Jan de Villiers, Project Manager

N3 controlled burn completed

The Working on Fire Warden Team recently assisted the Free State Umbrella Fire Protection Association (FSUFPA) with a project that aimed to conduct a controlled burn of 60 km of unwanted veld vegetation along the N3 road in the Free State. The project began just outside of Warden, running from 11 June until the end of July 2018. Dr Christo Marais, who serves as the Chief Director of Natural Resource Management at the Department of Environmental Affairs, visited the site and

applauded the team for its outstanding work.

"It was challenging for us to complete the project because of the weather conditions as well as heavy traffic on the road. As a result of this, we could only burn 37 km until the fire ban came into effect. However, the team did outstanding work in assisting the Umbrella FPA with this project," says Jan de Villiers, who served as the project's manager.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

WOF exhibits at AgriWorks Expo



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, explains the services offered by Working on Fire

North West Working on Fire took part in the 2018 AgriWorks Expo show held at the Trimpark Grounds in Potchefstroom, on invitation by the Department of Rural Environment and Agriculture Development. The Expo, which took place late last month, offered service providers a cost-effective opportunity to showcase their products and to network with farmers and buyers.

The Highveld Team attended the Expo and conducted a fire awareness activity for the stakeholders in attendance who were mostly farmers. Community Fire Awareness Officer Sophy Dinko engaged stakeholders and community members that visited our exhibition stand on the tools used for fire suppression and the services Working on Fire offers.

The team urged stakeholders and community members to remain vigilant as the winter fire season continues.

WOF joins Vulindlela Environmental Expo

Working on Fire (WOF) in KwaZulu-Natal was part of the Environmental Expo in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg, joining with the Department of Environmental

Affairs, KZN Provincial Legislature and the Virtual State Programme. WOF had an exhibition stand, with the Shongweni Team contributing a guard of honour for

delegates and their exciting drill which the community enjoyed.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer Khulani Zulu says, "We had a lot of positive reception from community members, who are also interested in inviting us to their schools and communities. Community members were encouraged to protect their environment and local schools also showcased their various environmental projects."

Other organisations also exhibited on the day, such as SANBI, WESSA, Msini, Umngeni Water and the Msunduzi Municipality. The aim of the event is to provide information, promote environmental education and empower community members to be environmentally aware.



KwaZulu-Natal Communications Cluster at the exhibition stand



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Ndakana community taught to be fire safe

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme in the Eastern Cape, in partnership with the Amathole Forestry Company (AFC) and Amathole Disaster Management, continues to educate communities about the dangers and causes of fires.

A community awareness activity took place in Ndakana Village near Stutterheim where community members were taught about the causes of veld fires and structural fires and ways of preventing such fires.

According to Community Fire Awareness Officer Thulani Mkhosi, most fires are caused by human negligence. "People must make sure that they don't throw away burning cigarettes as that can start runaway fires," explained Mkhosi.

He advised drivers to always have a bottle of water in the car so that anyone smoking in the car can put the cigarette out in the bottle before throwing it away. Mkhosi also said that burning stoves should not be left unattended and candles should not be left near curtains as that can also cause fires.



Working on Fire, in partnership with other stakeholders, spread the fire safety message among community members

"People should also make sure that they make fire belts around their land to prevent runaway fires," added Mkhosi.

Stakeholder Relations Manager for the AFC, Harold Mratshula, advised people to inform the rangers or foresters to be on standby during bee

hunting as that was said to be one of the causes of forest fires. More than 30 community members attended this awareness event and promised to put these measures into practice.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Team marches against the abuse of women and children



The Kroonstad Team stakeholders say no to child and woman abuse

The Working on Fire Kroonstad Team took part in the 100 Men March as part of the centenary celebrations of former president Nelson Mandela and struggle stalwart Albertina Sisulu. They were joined by stakeholders such as the Mqohaka Municipality, SAPS, Correctional Services, Mqohaka Fire and Rescue, SANDF and community members, who came together in the spirit of Thuma Mina to heed the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa to take a stand to stop violence against women and children.

“As men we should respect women and treat them with dignity and not abuse them, as well as recognise the contributions that women bring to society at large,” says Isaac Peterson, a Kroonstad Team driver.

“It’s great to see men taking a stand against women and children abuse in South Africa. By standing together we can have a safer environment for all, including women and children,” says Selaelo Mathokwane.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighting hero is using WOF’s opportunities



Hildegard Primo of the Craggs Base is passionate about the environment

Hildegard Primo, a 27-year-old single mother from the Craggs Base in the Southern Cape, is one of the heroes who fought the devastating Knysna fires back in June 2017.

Primo lived in Kurland Village in Plettenberg Bay, growing up with one sister and eight brothers. She matriculated in 2008 at Plettenberg Bay Secondary School and thereafter worked at the Bramon Wine Estate Restaurant as a waiter.

Primo joined Working on Fire in October 2012 as a firefighter and was promoted to Type 2 Crew Leader in August 2015. She says, “Thinking back to the recruitment day in 2012, I was eager to get a position as a firefighter as I wanted a change in my career, and even though the recruitment process was difficult, I made it through. My life changed the day I started at Working on Fire.

“I am a Type 2 Crew Leader at the Craggs Base and also assisted in

the development of firefighters and crew leaders at the Cordoria base in Knysna. I am very happy within the WOF programme as it has helped me support my two sons, Taylor (4) and Wayne (7), and my family. The programme is full of opportunities and you just have to grab them with both hands and enjoy the journey. I would like to thank WOF for developing my skills and for motivating me to accomplish my goal of becoming a Type 1 Crew Leader very soon.”



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Former firefighter strives to empower participants

Phenny Phukubye has proved that it’s not about where you come from but about where you want to go. Originally from the rural village of Ga-Kibi in Bochum, she joined WOF in 2011 as a firefighter at Mapungubwe Base and was promoted to Type 2 Crew Leader in 2013.

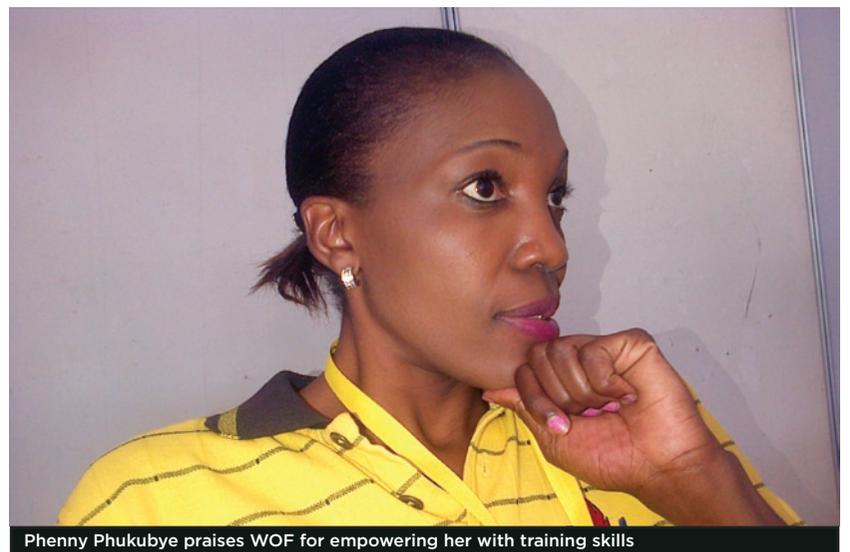
“My journey hasn’t been easy from the start,” says Phukubye, who was a cleaner at Bid Aircraft Grooming at OR Tambo International Airport prior to joining WOF. “After completing my Public Management Certificate at technikon and other short courses I was unemployed for more than three years due to lack of experience. But that didn’t demoralise me. Instead it made me look at other opportunities.”

Phukubye always had a passion for training and when WOF advertised a Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) position, she applied and was appointed as the WOF Limpopo FATO in 2013. She has since been excelling in her career.

Since she became the FATO, Phukubye has completed several more courses, gaining certificates in Project Management, Risk Assessment and SAMTRAC.

“I was disadvantaged by the financial challenges to further my educational goals, hence I’m now empowering myself because WOF gave me the opportunity to make a difference in my life,” says Phukubye.

“What I enjoy most about my position is that I am able to change the lives of



Phenny Phukubye praises WOF for empowering her with training skills

the participants with knowledge that will benefit them even beyond WOF,” she says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



Working on Fire celebrated Women’s Month in many ways

WOF Addo gives back to young women

Working on Fire (WOF) teams in the Eastern Cape took part in different activities around the province in celebrating Women’s Day on 9 August.

According to Eastern Cape Social Development Practitioner Siphokazi Jack, the Addo Team and Addo High Altitude Team donated sanitary pads to female learners at Vusumzi School in Addo.

Jack says the two teams used their own money to buy these pads and then donated them to these learners as part of Women’s Month. Addo Base Communications Representative Zolani Pullen says

this was done to show how much they care for women.

“These young women are our future and we have to make sure that we also play our role in caring for and supporting them,” says Pullen.

Pullen says the learners were very happy and appreciated the good work that was done by the Working on Fire firefighters.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Zanele Sedibe participating in the Total ShutDown March

Former firefighter joins Total ShutDown March

To mark Women's Month, 30-year-old former WOF firefighter Zanele Sedibe joined scores of women on 1 August 2018 as part of the nationwide Total Shutdown March aimed at raising awareness of gender-based violence.

The women met at the Grove and marched to Government Boulevard in Mbombela. Sedibe, who is now an Occupational Health and Safety Administrator in Mpumalanga, raised her concerns about the increased number of killings of females across the country.

She said she was deeply concerned about the killing of young girl children who are often found raped.

"I joined the march to help raise awareness and urge women in abusive relationships to walk out. Their lives and those of their children are far more important that a man who claims to love you," a fired-up Sedibe said.

"If you can't do it for yourself, do it for your children," advised Sedibe.



Lebogang Maseko, Mpumalanga Communication Officer

Free State ladies dominate women's soccer tournaments



The Zastron ladies' team won silver medals in the Women's Day Ladies' Soccer tournament hosted in Rouxville

Female participants from the Bethlehem and Zastron teams participated in Women's Day women's soccer tournaments in Rouxville and Bethlehem. The Zastron Ladies made it to the finals but unfortunately lost the finals 2-1.

"The tournament was very tough. However, we managed to finish in second place and the fitness training that we do at base level assisted us to win most of our matches. We'd like to thank WOF for the opportunity and moving forward we would like to participate in more tournaments and leagues as this in turn will help us keep fit," says Olga Mbobo from the Zastron Team.

The WOF Bethlehem ladies' team commemorated Women's Day by par-

ticipating in and winning the Women's Day soccer tournament at Bohlokong Stadium in Bethlehem in the Free State.

Sylvia Ntema from the Bethlehem Team says, "As the captain of the ladies' team I would like to thank WOF for allowing us to participate in the tournament as well as recognising the importance of women. I would also like to thank our male team members from the Bethlehem Team for supporting us on the day. This support helped us clinch the gold medals."



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

KZN WOF Kids visit Greytown Museum

It was an interesting and educational day for the Monks Cowl High Altitude Rope Technicians and their children, during the WOF Kids initiative organised by the Social Development Practitioner with the help of Regional Manager Henry Nene.

The day started off with a tour of the Greytown Museum, where the group learnt much about the history of the Zulu nation and all the battles and wars they faced.

KZN SDP Hloniphile Ndlovu says, "Our tour was so educational. We learnt so much, things even I didn't know about the history of our land and culture and all the various inventions that were created."



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

High Altitude Rope Technician Sthembiso Nene says, "We learnt so much, even though we have been staying in Greytown we were unaware of such a place and all the information it holds. I also enjoyed the session we had with Hloniphile and our kids about sexuality and financial intelligence. There is a lot we as parents can also learn about being responsible with our money. All in all it was a great day. Thank you so much for the opportunity," says Nene.

WOF nurtures the future of participants' children



Soekmekaar participants and their children celebrating the launch of the WOF Kids campaign

WOF Kids is an initiative started by Working on Fire Social Development which focuses on the children of WOF participants. As the saying goes, 'the tree is well pruned at a tender age in order for it to produce good fruits'.

WOF Limpopo launched the WOF Kids campaign at Itieleng village with an event attended by the children of the Soekmekaar participants. The main purpose of the session was to stress the importance of education and knowing what they want to do as they pursue their studies.

"Charity begins at home, so we saw it as beneficial to bring the focus back to home by addressing the social ill affecting our communities, which is the abuse of children. There is no day that goes by that we do not hear of the child who has been abused, and

the abuse ranges from sexual, physical and emotional abuse to bullying each other at schools," says Michael Ramatsea, WOF Social Development Practitioner.

Home is where children should be nurtured and feel protected but when the abuse comes from home and from those who should protect them it confuses the child and he/she is more likely to be more vulnerable.

"They were also informed of where to go and what to do if the abuse is coming from home or done by strangers or outsiders. The children showed a lot of gratitude and requested that another session should be held when schools close in September," says Ramatsea.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



High Altitude Team participants and their children at the Museum

Working on Fire helped firefighter turn her life around



Female firefighter thanks WOF for helping her turn her life around

"Failing matric might be a crushing blow but many people over the years have overcome that 'failure' and gone on to lead successful lives," says Nonzuzo Mgqunywa.

Thirty-one-year-old Mgqunywa is a female firefighter at Matatiele Base in the Eastern Cape. This dedicated young woman failed her matric in 2008.

"After that year life was not easy as I did not have matric and getting a job was a struggle," Mgqunywa says.

In 2010 she got a job as a firefighter at the Working on Fire Manzamnyama Team and from that day her life changed for the better.

"I worked very hard every day and a year later I was sent to the Type 2 Crew Leader course which I passed very well and became a leader," says Mgqunywa, who adds that she is now a Type 1 Crew Leader.

She says that the programme has turned her life around so much as she now has her own car and can afford to assist her family.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Twelve firefighters from the Wedela Team underwent a four-day advanced First Aid course offered by West District Municipality as part of their skills development initiative to empower Working on Fire teams. The course facilitators were veteran firemen from the West Rand fire department.

Lawrance Motsepe, a Type 1 Crew Leader says, "The course had more advanced material and content. It is on level 3 on the NQF. We can use it to apply for positions somewhere as well."

He said his team enjoyed a lot of the exercises because they were more relevant to the daily activities they were likely to encounter.

Some of the exercises included dealing with a heart attack, fracture treatment and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Motsepe stressed that course content was precise and practical and that made crew members not want to miss even a single moment of it.

Motsepe says such skills are helpful even in personal situations.

Firefighters bag advanced First Aid skills



Wedela Team members display their certificates after completing a First Aid course recently

He said the course will be extended to other teams across the West Rand area.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Single mom determined to climb the corporate ladder

Martha Tepo is one of the many women who have climbed the cooperate ladder within the programme. She joined the programme in 2011 as a firefighter and worked hard to work her way up.

From being a firefighter, she moved to being a Crew Leader, leading a group of 25 participants. Later she was appointed a Type 3 Dispatcher before moving to her current position as a Fire Awareness Training Officer. She is responsible for conducting workshops to equip firefighters with skills such as communication and presentation skills and the knowledge to deliver fire awareness campaigns.

"What I love about my job is the growth and development I gain every day. I also get to educate communities through the fire awareness that the teams conduct. My life has changed a lot since I joined WOF seven years ago," says Tepo.

What keeps Tepo going is her love for her daughter and her strong need to provide only the best for her daughter and her mother. "Make sure you take good care of your children and ensure they get everything you ever wanted," she advises other working moms and single mothers.



Fire Awareness Training Officer Martha Tepo enjoys facilitating workshops where she teaches firefighters how to conduct fire awareness at schools and in communities

The Working on Fire (WOF) programme in Mpumalanga joined the global community in commemoration of World Ranger Day, observed worldwide on 31 July 2018.

On this day dedicated to honour rangers who lost their lives or were injured in the line of duty, Working on Fire commended those who took over the baton and are making great strides in the field.

One such ranger is 30-year-old Thulani Mkhabela from Nhlazatje outside Mbombela. Once a firefighter, he is now formally employed as an anti-rhino poaching field ranger at the Nkomazi Nature Reserve.

After joining WOF in 2012, Mkhabela saved money from his stipend to gain his driver's licence. Four years later, he was employed as a driver at the Nkomazi Nature Reserve.

Mkhabela says he worked as a driver for only a year, "because my heart was always set on being an agent of nature conservation. This I got from my time with WOF. We were always encouraged to become environmental

Former firefighter employed as an anti-poaching field ranger



Thirty-year-old anti-poaching field ranger, Thulani Mkhabela

change agents, through working as wildland firefighters."

As much as his line of work is life-threatening, it brings joy to his heart

knowing he is protecting the most endangered animals in South Africa.



Lebogang Maseko, Mpumalanga Communication Officer



Thato Kalamore, a former Kroonstad firefighter

Kroonstad alumna motivates former colleagues

Thato Kalamore is a young former Working on Fire firefighter who exited the programme approximately two years ago to join Transnet as a yard official. Her daily duties entail the receiving and dispatching of trains entering and exiting the yard. During her five years at WOF, Kalamore was equipped with skills that enabled her to succeed in the new position.

She decided to visit her former colleagues to motivate and encourage them not to lose hope in their quest for

permanent employment outside of the programme.

Kalamore says, "I wanted to inspire and motivate my former colleagues in the hope that when they see someone from their own team who has managed to secure permanent employment, they will see that it is possible for them also to do it, so that they can keep applying for vacancies outside of the programme."

She feels that she learned many lessons from WOF, such as how to work as a team, how to faithfully complete duties and discipline.

"I would like to thank WOF for all the lessons I have learned and the experience I have gained."

Selaelo Mathokwane says, "The team was very motivated and asked many questions and I liked the fact that they knew her struggles and understood where she comes from. I could see the eagerness in the eyes of the participants while Thato was speaking. We hope that they will be encouraged to seek employment."



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

WOF Kids tour world heritage site



Reneilwe Mosadi, a firefighter of the Maropeng Team, carries her child during the WOF Kids tour of the world heritage site

WOF Kids from the Maropeng and Krugersdorp teams toured the Sterkfontein caves and Maropeng Museum at the Cradle of Humankind world heritage site. The tour was part of a series of WOF Kids projects held across the country.

The visit was made possible by the Gauteng Department of Economic Development which offered the WOF Kids programme complimentary tickets to the renowned heritage site.

After seeing the remains of homo naledi at Maropeng Museum and the preserved footprints of 'Mrs Ples' at the Sterkfontein caves, Lilly Moruntshi said, "I

was scared to go into the caves because it was my first time visiting. We now have background knowledge on human evolution. We enjoyed the food plus the new soccer gear. It was the best tour for us kids."

Reneilwe Mosadi, a firefighter at Maropeng team whose three children went on the tour, says it had been a fantastic outing. "We never had an opportunity to take our kids to tour like this. Credit to WOF for the great initiative."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighter exits to join nature reserve

An erstwhile firefighter at Dinokeng Team, John Mabotja, has joined Dinokeng Game Reserve as a cashier at one of their main entrance gates in Hammanskraal north of Pretoria.

Mabotja is a former SHE representative at Dinokeng Base and took a wealth of safety knowledge and skills from WOF into his new employment. The general manager of the reserve has encouraged him to pursue safety training because there are opportunities internally as well.

He says many firefighters from his team were invited to the interviews but failed to honour invitations.

"Fear to take up opportunities causes many young people to fail," he says, challenging his former colleagues to apply for positions and attend interviews when invited to do so.

Mabotja says the new opportunity meant a lot to him because jobs were scarce. "I intend to proceed to study an occupational health and safety course with NOSA as soon as possible. I have passion for it. This is the opportunity one has waited for far too long," he says.



John Mabotja of the Dinokeng Team has joined the Dinokeng Nature Reserve as a cashier



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

New firefighters join WOF in Mpumalanga

Working on Fire in Mpumalanga embarked on a recruitment drive in July to beef up firefighting teams during the 2018 winter fire season.

Twenty previously unemployed youth made the cut to join the WOF programme and will soon undergo specialised veld and forest firefighting training at the Nelspruit Training Academy.

According to Mpumalanga General Manager Martin Bolton, the recruitment drive was within the mandate of the Department of Environmental Affairs to create job opportunities and skills development for the youth in disadvantaged communities.

"Our core business is the implementation of Integrated Fire Manage-

ment (IFM) services such as fire management planning, fire prevention and suppression and fire awareness education. However, we thrive in creating employment opportunities for young people, especially with the present unkind economic climate," says Bolton.

"The new crew members will also be trained in fire awareness and education, prevention and fire suppression skills. In addition, skills such as First Aid, carpentry, cooking, health and safety and communications will be facilitated," he says.



Lebogang Maseko, Mpumalanga Communication Officer



New recruits undergo extensive physical fitness tests