



WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



@wo_fire

Statement by:

Trevor Abrahams,
Managing Director
- Working on Fire



Trevor Abrahams signs the condolence book

It was with great sadness that we learned of the loss of Nico Heyns, one of our most experienced firefighting pilots, during firefighting operations in the Garden Route on 23 October 2018. We in Working on Fire and Kishugu joined Nico's family, friends and colleagues during a special celebration of his life on Sunday, 28 October 2018, on Nico's farm in Gouna.

The function was attended by family members and stakeholder representatives, including Deputy Director-General Guy Preston of the Department of Environmental Affairs. Nico Heyns was a legendary pilot and much respected within the firefighting fraternity. He was not only one of the pilots who delivered heroic service during the Knysna fires of June 2017 but also made a telling contribution to suppressing the Cape St. Francis fires of January 2016. He was a hardworking and dedicated pilot who was totally committed to saving lives and protecting the environment and he will be sorely missed at Working on Fire. Hamba kakuhle Nico.

Firefighting operations in the Garden Route

As you are reading this newsletter, we have just over 300 firefighters and management as well as pilots who are actively involved in fire suppression activities at multiple fires that have engulfed parts of the Garden Route. We have also deployed firefighters from the Free State and the Eastern Cape to help in these efforts.



Huge firefighting effort under way in the Garden Route

The Working on Fire programme has assembled 300 firefighters and management to provide ongoing firefighting support to the local and district municipalities in the Garden Route.

At the same time, just over 200 firefighters in the Eastern Cape have also been battling fires in the Singisi Forest in Mhlahlane (OR Tambo District Municipality) and also in Tsitsikamma, where teams from Working on Fire are assisting SANParks at a fire at Witel's Peak, Witelsbos.

The Garden Route fires erupted towards the end of October near several towns, from the Hessaqua Municipality (Vermaaklikheid) down



to Herolds Bay outside George and at Karatara near Knysna. Cautionary evacuations were called for in the Herold fire in George and residents in Rheenendal in Knysna were also evacuated.

About 200 of the firefighters were deployed from the Free State and the Eastern Cape Working on Fire teams to provide much-needed support to their colleagues in the Western Cape.

Working on Fire aerial resources, consisting of two Huey helicopters, two fixed-wing Air Tractor 802 water bombers and two spotter planes, were deployed to attend to other fires in the region and focused on areas in need of aerial firefighting support.

Summary of Working on Fire resources that provided support to local and district municipalities in the Garden Route:

- WOF teams = 19
- WOF firefighters = 289
- WOF vehicles = 25
- WOF management = 14
- 2 Huey helicopters, 2 fixed-wing Air Tractor 802s and 2 spotter planes.



Regrettably, eight people died in the fires in the Karatara area and, on behalf of Working on Fire, we wish to extend our condolences to their families.

Sixteen of our very own firefighters from the Farleigh Team also lost everything in the fire in the Karatara area and we appeal to the broader Working on Fire family to support them during these

difficult times. More details will be made available on how to assist them.

I wish all our firefighters all the best and urge them to always practise safety first on the fire line.

Working on Fire celebrates 15-year milestone with new logo

Working on Fire (WOF) is proud to introduce our 15th-anniversary logo. This logo symbolises our 15 years of service and dedication to our WOF values. The logo will be prominently featured in many of our products and communication platforms.

A month ago, WOF turned 15 and announced it would be hosting 15th-anniversary events throughout the country. These celebrations are intended to recognise the achievements and contributions of particularly the firefighters (participants), the partners, government and implementing agents to the Working on Fire programme.

The celebrations have started in all provinces, at bases, regional and

provincial offices where firefighters, provincial managements, government representatives and partners have gathered to celebrate our achievements.

A government-funded, award-winning Expanded Public Works Programme, WOF has grown from its humble origin in September 2003 when the programme involved just 25 teams (850 beneficiaries), to its current strength of over 5 000 personnel spread across 200 bases in all the provinces of South Africa.

Over its 15-year existence, WOF has excelled beyond expectations in reaching its stated goals of saving lives, protecting the environment and restoring dignity and transforming the lives of its beneficiaries and their families.



KZN launches 15-year celebration



Provincial staff singing the national anthem

WOF KwaZulu-Natal officially launched its celebration of 15 years of Working on Fire service. Provincial management and firefighters at their bases sang the national anthem and read the WOF values with pride to kick-start the celebration with the external partners in the province.

During October and November, the province will invite base partners and managers to the bases to honour the firefighters for their dedication and hard work over the years.

KZN Assistant General Manager, Bongani Hlabathi, says, "The programme has been working in this province for 15 years so we also plan to celebrate our long-service employees, including Ground Operations Managers, the Assistant Regional Manager and participants."

KZN will also host a 15-year celebration event to which various stakeholders across the province will be invited.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

North West 15-year celebration



North West provincial staff and central teams were in high spirits as they looked at the progress of the programme over the last 15 years

Working on Fire North West provincial staff and the central Castello, Boskop and Highveld teams were joined by the North West Parks Board at the official launch of the WOF North West 15th anniversary celebrations at the Highveld Nature Reserve in Potchefstroom. Led by General Manager, Noluvuyo Mashologu, the provincial staff

members and participants reaffirmed their commitment to the WOF values and to providing integrated fire management services to the province.

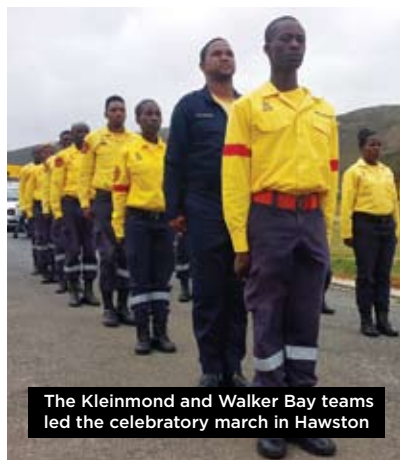
Speaking at the event, Mashologu said WOF had grown over the years and would continue to excel at saving lives, protecting the environment and restoring dignity.

The ceremony began on a high note with the singing of the national anthem

and hoisting of the WOF flag. The Highveld Team also performed a drama which demonstrated the Working on Fire values.

Gift Ramoitheki, the Base Manager from North West Parks Board, who joined WOF in 2010, thanked the programme for the great work it has been doing to save lives and protect the environment.

Western Cape celebrate 15 years of service in Hawston



The Kleinmond and Walker Bay teams led the celebratory march in Hawston

Firefighters from the Kleinmond and Walker Bay teams marched through Hawston in celebration of Working on Fire's 15th anniversary. Community members from Hawston enthusiastically welcomed the firefighters and thanked

them for ensuring the safety of their children and families during the fire season.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

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



Eastern Cape celebrates 15 years



Working on Fire teams raise the WOF flag high while celebrating the anniversary

In celebrating 15 years of existence, the Working on Fire programme in the Eastern Cape hosted its provincial celebration event in Keiskammahoek on 5 October in partnership with stakeholders.

The main objective of this event was to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of the WOF programme with participants, partners and implementing agents.

All the speakers commended the participants for their dedication, discipline and hard work. The CPA speaker, Nosipho Mbuso, said they appreciated the participants in their community, as they are safeguarding the community-owned forest.

The Amathole District Municipality congratulated WOF on setting a high

standard of service and encouraged participants to live up to this standard.

Ayabulela Rantjie from the AFC applauded the work done by WOF in educating communities. He said the community workshops had made a difference in the prevention of fires.

The Working on Fire Ongeluksnek and Matatiele teams also marched in Matatiele yesterday and distributed leaflets informing the community of what Working on Fire was doing to prevent and fight fires and how residents could be fire safe.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Gauteng on 15 years of selfless service



Krugersdorp team displays the WOF and SA national flags during the launch of the anniversary celebrations

Working on Fire Gauteng celebrated the 15th anniversary of the existence of the Working on Fire programme at the base of the Krugersdorp team, one of the first teams to be established in the province.

The event started with a minute of silence for the late Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, followed by the singing of the national anthem. The participants also pledged their support for the WOF values.

Firefighter Puleng Maja said the launch of the Gauteng celebration was a reminder of the remarkable record and history of the programme.

"We are able to reflect and realise how the programme has grown exponentially and also how it has touched and changed many young lives," he said.

The main regional celebration is to be held in Heidelberg where the Suikerbosrand and Heidelberg teams will join the activities. Some of the firefighters expressed eagerness to compete in the Azishe Games, which will be the climax of the anniversary celebrations.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Limpopo firefighters launching the 15-year celebration at Sondela Nature Reserve

Limpopo launches anniversary celebrations

Since the implementation of WOF in Limpopo, the lives of more than 600 young men and women from previously disadvantaged communities have been changed for the better.

Working on Fire Limpopo used the Kyknet outdoor exhibition in the Waterberg District to launch the celebration of 15 years of WOF success with the Sondela, Vingerkraal and Modimolle teams. As part of the celebration, the firefighters sang

their slogan and demonstrated their famous drill to the appreciative audience.

"As we celebrate the success of WOF since 2003, I wish it to grow even further and would like to say thank you to WOF for being a parent to many," said Monica Letsoalo, Sondela's Base Communications Representative.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Free State celebrates 15 years

Working on Fire Free State celebrated the programme's 15th anniversary at the provincial and regional offices and at every base across the province by singing the national anthem, raising the WOF flags and reading the WOF values. There are many more activities still to take place with various partners to celebrate the many WOF achievements and especially to celebrate the young men and women whose participation in the programme has taken the programme from strength to strength.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



The Memel Team during their celebrations

IDDR launched in Limpopo



Limpopo Fire Awareness Facilitator, Kgoadi Kgamaane, doing a presentation to the community during the launch of the IDHR

International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDHR) is marked on 13 October to promote a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

WOF joined the Capricorn District Municipality and local municipalities at Soekmekaar on the day to launch the IDHR 2018 awareness campaign.

The campaign is meant to strengthen disaster management through increased capacity or disaster preparedness, risk management, early warning systems and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

“Our presentation was more focused on the disasters that the wildfires cause in our society and also sharing the safety measures that should be put in place to avoid such disasters or their recurrence in our communities,” says Kgoadi Kgamaane, WOF Limpopo’s Fire Awareness Facilitator.

“Fire is a land management tool, but if not used wisely or properly it

Firefighters equipped and ready for fire season

More than 100 firefighters from the Tsitsikamma, Witelsbos, Longmore, Sarah Baartman, Addo, Baviaanskloof, Lottering, Kromsriver and Jansenville teams completed their annual three-day Yellow Card Training camp in Lottering, from 22 to 26 September.

The training activities included a 10 km route march, line construction, firewall (passing through fire), PPC inspections, a tool inspection, lectures and the standard WOF fitness test that included a 2.4 km run, 40 push-ups, 8 pull-ups and 40 sit-ups.

Firefighters were assessed on their knowledge of fire behaviour and watch outs, fire line safety principles and fire line equipment and uses.

Ground Operations Manager (GOM) Antoinette Jini congratulated all the firefighters who passed the training assessment. Jini said that those firefighters who passed this yellow card training camp would



be ready to tackle the upcoming summer fire season in the western part of the Eastern Cape, which starts in December.

The Mayor of Koukamma Municipality, Mr Samuel Vuso, thanked the firefighters for their hard work in saving and protecting the properties and communities from unwanted fires.

He encouraged them to continue to work hard and protect the Tsitsikamma plantation which plays a major role in the livelihoods of many people.

The eastern and western parts of the Eastern Cape have different fire seasons,

a winter fire season and summer fire season respectively. About 160 firefighters are deployed in the western part of the province and about 380 in the eastern part of the province.

These young men and women work tirelessly to assist partners such as the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA), Eastern Cape Umbrella FPA, Amathole Forestry Company (AFC) and local fire authorities to suppress fires.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

can impact negatively on our lives and end up destroying our environment,” says Kgamaane. WOF and the Capricorn District Municipality aimed to use the IDHR to help make the district resilient and people were encouraged to do more to lessen the risk of disasters impacting on vulnerable communities.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

#Wildfire Ready Convention

The Western Cape Umbrella Fire Protection Association (WCUFPA), in collaboration with partners such as Western Cape Disaster Management, National Disaster Management, CapeNature, SANParks, Working on Fire, Kishugu, NCC Environmental Services and Landworks, will be hosting the #Wildfire Ready Convention which will take place from 26 to 30 November 2018.

The Convention will focus on the requirements for preventing and suppressing wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which is the transition zone between the built and the unoccupied natural environment that has seen devastating fires in many countries in recent years, such as the Knysna fire of June 2017.

The Convention is the first of its kind to be held in the Western Cape and will be hosted on the world-renowned, historic Lourensford Wine Estate,



one of the oldest farms in South Africa. The convention will proudly welcome international (Canada, USA and Europe) and local fire specialists who will discuss strategies, training and community awareness activities appropriate to dealing with the disastrous wildfires that have been taking place within the WUI.

Registration for the convention has opened and the cost of attendance is R2 500 per delegate. See website for details: <http://wildfirereadyconvention.co.za/>



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

New WOF Flying Crewmen ready to tackle the challenge

Five former Working on Fire crew leaders recently graduated from being helitack team members to qualifying as flying crewmen (FCs). They are now ready to help improve operational safety by offering aerial firefighting assistance to helicopter pilots.

The WOF Flying Crewmen training programme was implemented in 2014 to help mitigate risks during aerial firefighting operations, while also granting participants access to future careers in the aviation industry. “We believe that the skills and experience firefighters gain while training to become and working as helitack crew members and later flying crewmen, will enable them to someday become either aviation engineers or even pilots,” says Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams.

WOF Aviation supports the WOF ground operations by dropping water and fire suppressants on the fire line, to cool it down enough for the ground teams to move in and extinguish the flames. During wildfire operations, pilots are often required to fly in challenging conditions that pose a huge risk to the pilot and possible damage to the aircraft. Flying crewmen help mitigate some of these risks.

“These five men were selected based on leadership skills, job per-



Left to right: Eugene Valoyi from Sondela Base, Brandon de Waal (The Crags), David Fransies (Riversdale), Mzibanzi Mtshawulana (Hogsburg) and Sonwabo Songelwa (Ugie)

formance and passion for aviation,” explains Carel van der Merwe, Head of the Kishugu Aviation Training Organisation (ATO), which conducts this specialised training. “They went through seven weeks of in-depth training to ensure that they are equipped and can competently perform their duties.”

The training included theory, practical activities and also a final examination. “This training was an opportunity of a lifetime,” says Eugene Valoyi from Sondela. “We learned a lot about the Huey helicopters, all its different parts and how to help ensure that it operates safely. I am looking forward to implementing the knowledge I gained.”

Written by Zania Viljoen

KwaZulu-Natal crew leader engagement

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal hosted Type One crew leaders in the province in a leadership engagement at Wessa in Howick in October. The objective of the workshop was to realign the management at all levels towards one goal, to discuss challenges and find solutions. The Human Resources, Social Development and Occupational Health and Safety Departments all presented inputs to assist crew leaders in managing their teams.

KZN Assistant General Manager, Bongani Nhlabathi, says, “This was a great opportunity to reinforce our values as leadership. It was also the perfect platform for crew leaders and regional managers and their Ground Operations Managers to hear about some of the



KZN AGM Bongani Nhlabathi addressing the KZN Type 1 crew leaders

underlining issues faced by the crew leaders.”

It is considered vital that supervisors such as crew leaders be kept updated on how to deal with issues that occur in the communities such as suicide, substance abuse, domestic and child abuse, crime and unstable family structures, which some of our participants also experience.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Empowering the community with skills



Sello Matlhare does the fire suppression practical with the staff of Matsila Community Development Trust

Sello Matlhare, the Working on Fire Community Fire Awareness Officer, has conducted a Firesafe workshop for the Matsila Community Development Trust (MCDT) in Limpopo North.

The MCDT was established by the Matsila royal family under the leadership of Chief Livhuwani Matsila. The trust was established to bring funding and investment into the Ha-Matsila community. The village was steeped in poverty, unemployment and the lack of basic services.

After attending the biodiversity conference where the Matsila Nature Reserve was handed over by President Cyril Ramaphosa, Matlhare approached Chief Matsila to offer assistance to his community by educating residents about the impacts of fire.

"It was easy organising the Firesafe workshop because Chief Matsila was very open-minded and also eager to welcome what we wanted to offer his community," says Matlhare. During the workshop, the MCDT staff were asked to identify the fire hazards in their workplace, which assisted them in coming up with solutions and precautionary measures. "I'm so thankful to WOF for approaching us, especially after we'd just experienced our first wildfire in our community that destroyed our lodge.

With the knowledge that was imparted to our staff we surely will know what to do and how to respond next time," says Chief Matsila.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Experimental burn conducted



The burn carried out by Working on Fire firefighters in Helderstroom

Forty Working on Fire (WOF) firefighters in the Western Cape assisted the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) to manage a controlled burn along the Helderstroom Road, near the Helderstroom Maximum Prison. The team cleared close to 19 hectares of veld in preparation for the 2018/19 summer fire season.

According to Dr Christo Maria, Chief Director of Natural Resource Management Programmes (DEA), "This experimental burn was conducted to test the veld to see how it would burn and compare the costs of stack burning and manual alien clearing." Controlled burns are carried out at local, provincial and national levels as part of integrated fire management, 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 commonly used to promote fire risk reduction, reduction of dense and alien vegetation, ecological rejuvenation of fynbos, land preparation for agriculture and the rejuvenation of grazing fields.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Teamwork to reduce fuel load

When the North West teams are not battling raging fires they implement fire prevention measures, which include teaching people about fire and removing fuel that might spread fires. This month, the teams in the province spent time focusing on these two components of integrated fire management.

The Vaalharts Team conducted a block burn at the Jan Kempdorp SAPS station to reduce the accumulated fuel load which had put the station at risk of unwanted fire. The team also conducted a fire awareness activity at the Retswelele Day Care where they taught the children about fire causes and prevention.

The Naledi Team also conducted fire awareness at the Stella Primary and Secondary Schools. They taught learners about the impacts of wildfire and the do's and don't's when it comes to fires.

Both teams believe that the more people understand the impacts



The Vaalharts Team conducted a block burn to reduce the fuel load while the Naledi Team taught learners about fire safety. Picture supplied by Vaalharts Team BCR, Refilwe Lekepe

of wildfire, the more they will be encouraged to prevent fires and help preserve our environment. The

teams have urged communities to be vigilant as the winter fire season is ongoing.

ECD assessment workshop a great success

More than 30 educators from around Pienaar attended the Working on Fire's Early Childhood Development (ECD) assessment workshop that was held at the Faith Church in Kamsogwaba, Mpumalanga, on 28 October.

The main aim of this workshop was to assess ECD educators' knowledge retention of fire safety messages that they were taught during a workshop held in 2015 in the area. The facilitators wanted to determine what impact these



Educators from the Pienaar area attended the ECD assessment workshop

workshops had in the communities, what the shortcomings were and how future workshops may be improved.

One of the educators, Delisile Lukhele, says, "I really enjoyed the workshop. We appreciate the work Working on Fire does and are looking forward to inviting them to do further

awareness activities at our crèche and in our community."

Fire Awareness Training Officer, Elliot Nyathi, says the event was a great success. "It was very productive and helpful to see how the educators have implemented the knowledge they were taught in 2015."

Written by Zania Viljoen

Phiphidi Team reaches out to community



Phiphidi firefighters entertained community members with their famous drill at Tshaulu Primary School during the community fire awareness event

The Phiphidi participants in Limpopo took it upon themselves to equip and empower their communities with fire safety knowledge.

The young members of Phiphidi Base in the far north of Limpopo visited Tshaulu Primary School where the community members had gathered at the invitation of the firefighters.

“With the number of wildfires escalating in our community, we realised that it was about time we intervened and saved our environment and our community,” says Justice Mudau, Base

Communications Representative at Phiphidi base.

Communities were educated about the importance of preserving the environment and refraining from practising deforestation.

“Most of the wildfires that we respond to are caused by human negligence, so empowering them will assist in reducing the risk of these fires occurring,” says Mudau.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

WOF conducts ECD assessment



Educators displaying previously learned fire awareness messages

The Working on Fire Fire Awareness Department recently held assessments with 26 Early Childhood Development (ECD) educators from various ECD centres in the central Free State region.

These educators were assessed on their retention of the fire safety messages they had received in the previous year and how they had implemented the information they received in their places of learning. They were also assessed on the practical implementation of these fire safety messages and whether these ECD workshops had impacted on the communities.

“The assessments went well with all the educators showing that they had retained all the knowledge they had previously learned. Some of the education centres did not have a fire escape plan. However, through the training we provided them, they now have fire escape plans, which make these places of learning much safer for the educators and the young learners,” says Moipone Motaung, the Fire Awareness Training Officer.



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Day care educators assessed on fire safety



Eastern Cape Working on Fire conducted an Early Childhood Development (ECD) safety assessment for more than 30 day care educators in Butterworth on 28 September this year.

This assessment was conducted by the EC Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans, and the Community Fire Awareness Officer, Thulani Mkhosi, to assess the knowledge retention of fire safety messages by educators who had been taught in the previous years.

Hans says that WOF has been doing the ECD workshops for day care educators in different areas for several years with the aim of educating them to be fire safe and so that they could go back and implement what they learned and practice with the learners at their centres.

“During those workshops, we made sure that the educators practised the

fire drill and understood fire escape plans and ensured that they would relay the message to the learners and make them understand this as well,” says Hans.

He said that this year they wanted to assess whether the information that was relayed to educators in the past was still known and also to check their understanding of how practicals are done.

“This will enable educators to retain the knowledge by refreshing lessons learned and get deeper and more insight into how they carry the lessons to the learners,” says Hans.

As part of the assessment, educators also had to make escape plans for and identify fire risks at the centres.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Grade 9 learners pass the environmental message through debate

Eastern Cape Working on Fire hosted their second provincial school debate competition at Phandulwazi Agricultural High School on 22 September 2018. Learners from Phandulwazi Agricultural High School, Amabhele High School, Elukhanyisweni Senior Secondary School and Gcato Senior Secondary School debated topics such as fire prevention, how climate change impacts on fires and how fire causes land degradation.

According to the Fire Awareness Training Officer in the Eastern Cape, Zola Hans, all learners were assessed on good communications skills, presentation skills and also on content.

Hans says that the main objective was to create an opportunity for Grade 9 learners to debate environmental issues that have a negative impact on their social lives and the natural environment.

“It also covered the key fire messages and core focus areas of the WOF Department of Fire Awareness,” Hans says.

Working on Fire fights veld and forest fires through Integrated Fire Management Services (IFMS) that include fire detection, prevention and suppression and fire awareness in schools and in communities. The WOF programme works with schools in fire-prone areas to mitigate fire hazards



EC hosts second school debate

by empowering the learners with fire awareness messages.

Hans says the debate enables them to see if the learners have understood the fire messages they received when WOF teams conducted fire awareness campaigns in their schools. The first prize

was awarded to Phandulwazi Agricultural School, second prize went to Amabhele High School and Gcato High School won the third prize.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire help me pursue my dream

Simangele Mazibuko, an Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Assistant in Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal, is finding her true career calling through the programme.

"As a young girl, I knew I wanted to take care of people. It was always a dream of mine to become a nurse one day," she says.

After matriculating, Mazibuko became a firefighter after joining the Working on Fire programme at the Mbazwana Base in April 2012.

"Being a SHE representative in my team got me the opportunity to be shortlisted for OHS Assistant interviews. In 2014, I was promoted to OHS administrator. This was very intimidating for me, with zero experience.

"At first it wasn't easy adjusting, because I'd never lived away from my family and my daughter. But with the support I received from my supervisor, I manage better now.

"I have fallen in love with health and safety. My new motto is prevention is better than cure and that's what OHS is all about - trying to prevent injuries and harmful infections of employees and in some cases, the public."

Mazibuko started a savings account when she was first employed, hoping to study one day and fulfil her dreams. She has received her SAMTRAC certificate to facilitate the development, implementation and maintenance of health, safety and environment management systems.



Simangele Mazibuko

"In encouraging other firefighters or fellow women, I'd say to not look at the stipend they are getting paid but to save and research where they can get assistance to pursue their career or dreams," says Mazibuko.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Clocolan participant receives sponsored mountain bike



Molefi Salemane with his new mountain bike

Molefi Salemane, a participant from the Working on Fire Clocolan Team, regularly participates in various sporting codes, including cycling.

Salemane is an ardent mountain biker and has taken part in most of the mountain biking races in the Free State, including some of the toughest trail mountain courses that the province has to offer. Mountain biking takes place off-road, often over rough terrain, and racing requires using specially designed mountain bikes.

So far in 2018, Salemane has won four races, racing distances of between 40 and 60 km. His impressive statistics were rewarded when the 3 Mountains Race organisers decided to sponsor him a professional mountain bike to help him win more races.

Salemane says, "I would like to encourage everybody who wants to participate in mountain biking not to shy away from the sport because of a lack of resources and equipment. When you join the sport, there are many individuals and organisations that will assist if they spot potential. I would like to thank 3 Mountains for their generous sponsorship which is enabling me to excel in the sport that I love."



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

eastern part of the province as well as other teams in the western part of the province as the summer fire season is approaching and the teams in the western part should be at full strength to suppress fires."

Nonjiji says that this opportunity will help alleviate poverty in the homes of the new firefighters and contribute to the purpose of the WOF programme, which is to provide skills development for the youth.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

First aider encourages community to get active



Lehlohonolo Pherah from Theunissen Base

Lehlohonolo Pherah is a First Aider from the Working on Fire Theunissen Team. He goes above and beyond duty in ensuring that his team stays safe and healthy. Pherah joined Working on Fire in 2014 as a firefighter and became a First Aider because of his interest in the health and wellness industry.

Pherah uplifts his community on a weekly basis by conducting aerobics classes with members of his community and his team which commence at 05:30 before he goes to work and are repeated at 17:00 after work.

Pherah says, "I started training by myself in 2016 and some members of the community noticed and asked if they could join in. Since then, the community members are very pleased with what I'm doing for them."

Pherah aspires to start selling sports apparel one day as a way of supporting himself and his family.

Regional Manager Tello Shibane says, "It is always inspiring to see participants contribute positively in society and I hope he continues to shine a positive light on the programme and its participants."



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Inspired to study

Sindi Masimula of the Mdala Team was inspired and motivated to study harder by stories of other firefighters who furthered their education at WOF. She is pursuing her higher certificate in public administration.

"I am using my stipend to fund my tuition fees for my studies. I am studying through correspondence with IQ academy," says Masimula, who regards education as one of the weapons to use to fight poverty.

She says she struggles to strike a balance between work, social life and studies. She is also a breadwinner at home.

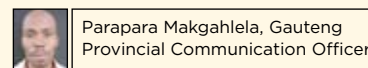
"I can't just sit home and not fight my economic battles as young as I am," she says.



Sindi Masimula

Masimula believes her efforts and dedication will pay off well one day. She recently finished writing her final modules and awaits her results.

"The stipend is my only stepping stone at the moment. Concurrently, I am doing my driver's licence and am ready to book my driving test," says Masimula.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

WOF provides more work opportunities

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme recently provided work opportunities to 80 unemployed young people in the Eastern Cape. These young men and women were recruited in Addo, Lottering, Baviaanskloof, Langeni, Mhlahlane and Nqadu.

The lucky 80 all had to pass the WOF fitness test which included the 2.4 km run (in a maximum time of 14 minutes for women and 12 minutes for men), 40 sit-ups in 1 minute, 40 push-ups in 1 minute and 8 pull-ups.

They will now be taken to the training academy in Nelspruit where they will undergo training courses that include advanced firefighting, fire safety and other specialised skills. They will also be taught extensively about integrated fire management.



Youth in the Eastern Cape recently got work opportunities at WOF

Explaining the need for recruits, one of the Regional Managers at the recruitment, Ongezwa Nonjiji, said, "We are topping up some of the teams in the



Working on Fire prepared Unathi for her new job

Former firefighter gets a better job

Unathi Mantile, a former firefighter from the Addo Base in the Eastern Cape, thanks the Working on Fire programme for empowering her with many skills that assisted her to be where she is today.

Mantile was recently employed at SANParks as an environmental monitor. She joined the WOF programme in 2016 at the Addo Base.

"I did not matriculate but that did not stop me from dreaming. After joining Working on Fire, I used the stipend I got from WOF to further my studies through the ABET school," says 29-year-old Mantile.

She says she now has her matric certificate and that was all thanks to Working on Fire.

"The programme became my stepping stone to better places," says Mantile.

Being a female firefighter was not easy but, with the support of her team members and motivation from her children, she managed to do all the activities required of firefighters.

"Doing the fitness test was not an easy task but with determination and hard work, I always managed," Mantile says, adding that she was a hard worker and was always willing to learn.

"I will use all the skills that I acquired as a firefighter in my new job. WOF gave me communications skills, firefighting skills, leadership skills, financial management skills, presentations skills and many more and I am very happy to have been part of the family," says Mantile.

She advised every firefighter to use the little they have to better their education and to always have a goal in their lives.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

WOF paved the road for former participant

Matome Ronal Semanya is a young man who feels that WOF has paved his way to a brighter future through skills development. He joined WOF in 2011 at the Blouberg Base situated at the Blouberg Municipality Fire Station in Limpopo.

"Working very closely with the structural firefighters and also looking at the fact that there was not much difference in what we are doing, prompted me to work harder and to have a goal of joining the municipality as a firefighter," says Semanya.

After completing his firefighting course at Sekhukhune EMS Agency, he was not employed immediately but, upon hearing that WOF Blouberg was recruiting, he decided to give it a go.

"Because I was fit and had the passion to be a firefighter, it was easy for me to be recruited. When I heard that I would be taken for training in veld and forest firefighting I was over the moon as that meant more skills and more opportunities for me," Semanya says.

In 2012, he resigned from WOF and volunteered at Sekhukhune District Municipality as a structural firefighter until May 2016. He then joined Capricorn District Municipality as a firefighter based at Blouberg Fire Station.



Matome Semanya is flying the WOF flag high at Blouberg Municipality

"I was over the moon to be placed at the base where I got my career break. It's through WOF that my career doors were opened. I feel like I was appointed here for a purpose to motivate the firefighters that I was recruited with," says Semanya.

Semanya would like to further his education in firefighting and his career goal is to become a station officer in Capricorn District Municipality.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Still saving lives

Mthobisi Nkosi is taking his First Aid skills to the next level as a basic life support officer at Emergency Med Paramedic.

"My First Aid skills learned in the programme are beginning to yield more positive results. It's paying off after serving as a First Aider for the team," he says.

Nkosi says his current duties entail detecting and responding as quickly as possible to incidents. His company supports employees of SANRAL and the Johannesburg Road Agency working on the highways in Gauteng.

"It has been a pleasure and remarkable to have been part of the WOF programme. I encourage my former colleagues not to despair but to keep their heads high despite hurdles and challenges," says Nkosi.



Mthobisi Nkosi



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Embracing coal city

Daniel Kekana, a former firefighter at the JS Moroka Team, is currently employed at the South 32 mine in Witbank as a coal drill operator.

Kekana says being a firefighter gave him a good start because his current job requires a high level of fitness and vigilance. The WOF programme has indoctrinated occupational health and safety knowledge in him, he says, and it his toolbox for his daily activities at work.

"We have daily safety talks before commencing with our work. I know the vital need of safety in a work environment," says Kekana.

He says he is more than ready to come and address his ex-colleagues.

"The programme prepared me well for this opportunity. It was not a waste of time to be a firefighter.



Daniel Kekana

Finally, there is light at the end of the tunnel," he says.

Daniel urged his ex-colleagues to try out opportunities and said eventually others would come their way.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

New recruits eager to be rope technicians



The new Umgeni Team

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal recently recruited 11 unemployed youth to create the new Umgeni High Altitude Team that will be based in Wartburg.

This will be a drought relief team that will be removing alien invasive vegetation along the Umgeni River from Wartburg to the Nagle Dam, to protect the water supply for the community members using the river.

The team is currently attending training in Mpumalanga comprising induction, herbicide application, plant identification, SHE representative, First Aider and chainsaw operations.

According to HAT Regional Manager, Henry Nene, the recruitment was

within the mandate of the Department of Environmental Affairs to create job opportunities and skills development for unemployed youth.

"We work closely with community leadership in targeting unemployed youth in a particular area where we will be incorporating new recruits. This ensures we clearly identify youth from disadvantaged backgrounds," says Nene.

The team will travel to Cape Town for their Rope Access Training after returning from Mpumalanga.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer