

Working on Fire congratulates President Cyril Ramaphosa

Working on Fire congratulates President Cyril Ramaphosa on his inauguration as President of South Africa's sixth democratically elected government on 25 May 2019 at Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria.

During his inauguration speech, President Ramaphosa took the oath to be faithful to the Republic of South Africa and promised to always promote all that would advance the republic.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has on several occasions spoken very highly of the success of Working on Fire and the work the programme does with young people. Working on Fire will continue to support President Ramaphosa's vision to advance South Africa by continuing its



President Cyril Ramaphosa commended the discipline and work of the Working on Fire firefighters

efforts to upskill and create career opportunities for the

young people of South Africa.



President Cyril Ramaphosa with Working on Fire firefighters during his visit to the Newlands Base

We welcome the appointment by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 29 May 2019 of Barbara Creecy as the new Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries and her Deputy Minister, Maggie Sotyu.

In appointing his new cabinet following the May 2019 elections, President Ramaphosa also announced the merger of some ministries, including the merger of Environment Affairs with Forestry and Fisheries.

Creecy previously served as the Member of the Executive Council for Finance in the Gauteng Provincial Government.

Creecy grew up in Johannesburg and her political career started when

New Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Minister and Deputy Minister appointed

she joined the anti-apartheid movement and later the underground structures of the ANC while a student at the University of the Witwatersrand in the late 1970s.

She holds an honours degree in Political Science from Wits and a master's degree in Public Policy and Management from the University of London.

Creecy was one of the longest-serving Members of the Provincial

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Barbara Creecy



Maggie Sotyu

New Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Minister and Deputy Minister appointed

Legislature. She served the legislature from 1994 to 2004 in different portfolios, including Deputy Chief Whip as well as chairing the Social Development and Education Committees.

Newly appointed Deputy Minister Makhotso Magdeline Soty was the Deputy Minister of Police from November 2010 to March 2017 and thereafter served as Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture.

She started her political career while working as a factory worker in Bloemfontein and was secretary of the Bloemfontein SANCO Regional Structure in the 1980s. She was deployed to the National Assembly of Parliament in 1999.

We look forward to working with our new Minister and Deputy Minister and continuing to ensure that Working on Fire plays a critical role in protecting our environment from the threat of wildland fires in South Africa and saving lives.

Written by: Editorial Team

Working on Fire supports government's Good Green Deeds Programme



The Department of Environmental Affairs Director-General with some of the KwaZulu-Natal management at the Blue Lagoon Beach clean-up

Since the official launch of the Good Green Deeds Programme in March, Working on Fire, true to its call and passion to protect the environment, has shown its support by joining several clean-up campaigns across the country. WOF teams from KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, North West and Limpopo also joined several pre-launch activities in communities to promote and encourage communities to take responsibility for their surroundings and ensure that public spaces are clean and tidy.

Following the recent heavy floods that hit eThekweni in KwaZulu-Natal, the Shongweni, Albert Falls and Richmond WOF teams and various stakeholders took part in the Good Green Deeds clean-up campaign at Addington Beach on 17 May in support of the Department of Environmental Affairs. The next day, they joined the Department of Environmental Affairs Director-General, Nosipho Ngcaba, at the Blue Lagoon Beach to continue with a similar clean-up operation there.

The objective of the Good Green Deeds Programme, in the spirit of the President's Thuma Mina ('send me') campaign, is to strive towards a clean South Africa which is free of litter and illegal dumping. This will not only benefit South Africans and restore and maintain our environment, but will also provide opportunities in the waste management sector where people or organisations can profit from recycling.

Written by Editorial team

Province ready for anticipated busy fire season



WOF firefighters, stakeholders and community members march through the streets of Phuthaditjhaba

Working on Fire hosted its fire season and Fire Awareness Campaign launch in QwaQwa on 22 May 2019. Stakeholders and community members participated in the event which started with a march through the main road

in Phuthaditjhaba. Firefighters from the QwaQwa, Harrismith, Golden Gate and Clarens Teams contributed by drilling, singing and forming a guard of honour to honour guests in attendance.

The good rain that the province has received has led to considerable growth in vegetation. A busy fire season is therefore anticipated with a high number of veld fires. Working on Fire teams were dispatched to 347 fires

during the previous fire season and as the drought has been broken, a higher number of fires are expected. QwaQwa was identified as a suitable location to host the launch because of the high number of fires the area typically experiences.

Community Fire Awareness Officer Glodinah Mofokeng says, "During the previous financial year, we reached 5 263 community members and 1 851 learners through our fire awareness activities and this year we hope to increase those numbers. The fire season and Fire Awareness Campaign launch was a great success and served as a good platform to launch our fire awareness activities for the year."

The event included fire awareness education in the surrounding community wherein residents were taught how to mitigate fire risks in and around their homes. Other stakeholders that participated in the event were SAPS, Emergency and Rescue Services, Maluti-a-Phofung Fire Services, the Provincial Disaster Management Centre, the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Programme and SANParks.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Camphill Fire – Work has begun

The process of tackling the smouldering underground fires in sections of the Onrus River Peat Wetland area, which is situated on the Camphill School and Farm Community property, has finally begun.

This wetland (peatland) is the only remaining piece of palmiet vegetation wetland and plays a critical role in the functioning of the Onrus River and the Onrus Estuary. It is considered to be ecologically important and must therefore be protected. The peatland covers an extensive area of 33 ha and is estimated to be 12 000 years old.

The sub-surface fire is burning in a 9 ha area which is covered by invasive alien plant species and is eroded. This section of the Onrus River area has been burning since 11 January 2019. Because of the intensity of the fire, it is practically impossible to douse it in a conventional manner. Unfortunately, the recent rains have not raised the water table, which would have extinguished the fire.

The solution

After consultation between Working on Fire (WOF), the Overstrand Municipality, Department of Environmental

Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Rob Erasmus of Enviro Wildfires, landowners, the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency and various other experts across the country, it was agreed that a 25-member WOF team would set up a base camp at Camphill Farm from 1 May. Using the unique spike tool developed in Indonesia, a series of 9 holes per m² would be drilled with the main focus being an area of 800m². The plan is to flood the fire from the bottom up.

The WOF team is working seven days a week and it is anticipated that it



The Swellendam and Kleinmond Teams operate the spike tool in the peatland area to douse the smouldering area with water from the bottom up

will take at least three months to fully extinguish the fire.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighters ready for fire season in Mpumalanga



A total of 480 firefighters passed their Yellow Card Training and are ready for the fire season

"You are now prepared for the upcoming fire season and we are proud of you for passing your Yellow Card Assessment," said the General Manager of Mpumalanga, Ovie Sehlabe, addressing firefighters at the four Yellow Card Assessment Camps that took place recently in the province.

A total of 480 firefighters in 24 teams from WOF Mpumalanga concluded their Yellow Card Training for the upcoming winter fire season on 6 May. Highveld region teams from Piet Retief, Wakkerstroom, Volksrust, Ermelo, Breyten, Badplaas, Warburton, Mayflower, Belfast and Sasol completed their two assessment camps in Badplaas on 3 May.

The teams from the Lowveld region – from Dullstroom, Nelspruit, Barberton, Sterkspruit, Lefpa, Nkomazi, Wilgeboom, Salique, Ijaka, Graskop, Mlambongwane and Waterval Boven – finished their

assessment at the Kishugu Training Academy in Mbombela on 7 May.

A competition was held during the four camps which saw the best 2,4 km runners in the male and female categories awarded trophies.

In the first camp in Badplaas, Wakkerstroom's Derrick Masango outran the men and Xoli Madida from Volksrust outran the other women.

Thabang and Beauty Mathebe from Loskop were triumphant in the second camp in Badplaas.

In the third camp at the Kishugu Academy, Felicia Games from Waterval Boven was the first woman home while Dimingo Dlamini from Nelspruit was crowned the best of the males at the last camp and Martha Vilaculous from Dullstroom was the best female runner.

Written by Amanda Mthembu

Firefighters ready to tackle the fire season

On 25 May, the last group of firefighters from North West Working on Fire completed their Yellow Card Training Camp (YCTC). This brings the total number of firefighters who have completed the YCTC to 314. The firefighters will



The 314 firefighters who completed their Yellow Card Training will be stationed at 17 bases throughout the province

be stationed at 17 bases across the province, ready to be deployed to fires during the winter fire season which officially starts on 1 June.

Eastern Cape firefighters fit and ready



Firefighters are equipped and ready for the fire season

More than 300 firefighters from the 17 Working on Fire teams in the eastern part of the Eastern Cape passed their annual Yellow Card Training (YCT).

The Yellow Card Training Camp was run from 28 April till 6 May in Elliot, which is a few kilometres from Langeni, a place that tends to experience huge fires each year.

The teams from Hogsback, Cata, Stutterheim 1, Stutterheim 2, Tsomo, Molteno, Joe Gqabi, Langeni, Elliot, Ugie, Nqadu, Matatiele, Mkhambathi, Port St Johns, Dwesa, Mhlalane and Ongeluksnek were divided into four groups with each group being assessed for three days.

Ground Operations Manager Antoinette Jini congratulated all the firefighters who passed the training assessment, noting that they had worked very hard to pass the assessment. She wished them well for the upcoming winter fire season which will start in June.

The assessment activities included a 10 km route march, line construction, firewall (passing through fire), PPC inspection, tool inspection, pity lectures and the fitness test that included a timed 2,4 km run (under 12 minutes for men and under 14 minutes for women), 40 push-ups, 8 pull-ups

and 40 sit-ups in one minute each.

Firefighters were then assessed on their knowledge of fire behaviours and watch outs, fire line safety principles, fire line equipment and uses. Eastern Cape Acting General Manager, Pumza Dyantyi, noted that the firefighters were now ready to reduce the risk of fires and ensure that communities remain safe from unwanted fires and encouraged them to work hard and continue protecting the environment. The Eastern Cape has a winter fire season and a summer fire season. It has about 570 firefighters most of whom (about 380) are deployed in the eastern part of the province. These young men and women assist partners such as the Eastern Cape Parks Tourism and Agency (ECPTA), Eastern Cape Umbrella FPA, Amathole Forestry Company (AFC) and local fire authorities in suppressing fires.

Working on Fire is an Expanded Public Works Programme funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs. The programme started in September 2003 with about 25 teams (850 beneficiaries) nationally and has grown to 5 000 personnel at 200 bases.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

The WOF firefighters will work closely with Fire Protection Associations, local municipalities and landowners to enable them to respond quickly and provide an effective wildfires suppression service.

The annual WOF YCTCs are invaluable in ensuring that the firefighters are fit, properly equipped and ready for active duty to reduce the personal and economic harm caused by unwanted wildfires during the fire season.

Firefighters get learners ready for fire season



The Madikwe Team raised fire awareness at Motshabaesi Primary School. Picture supplied by the Madikwe Team BCR, Vusumzi Raperere.

With the onset of the winter fire season, WOF North West firefighters have been taking all possible steps to lower the risk of fire in the province. Teams have been working across the province doing fuel load reduction and implementing other fire prevention measures.

A tried and tested arm of integrated fire management is educating members of the public about the dangers of wildfires and how to prevent fires in their homes and communities. As part of WOF’s constant engagement in

this regard, the Madikwe Team visited the Motshabaesi Primary School in early May where they educated learners with fire safety tips that could help them prevent fires in their homes and schools.

Learners were also encouraged to pass the fire safety tips they learned on to their peers and families and to remember to report fires as soon as possible to prevent them from spreading.

Written by Editorial team

Uniondale Team teaches learners about fire safe message



The Uniondale Team poses with the Grade R learners following a successful fire awareness programme.

Firefighters in the Western Cape are continuing to roll out the #BeFire-Safe message across the province in preparation for the 2019/20 summer fire season. Many of the 700 firefighters stationed in the Western Cape will be conducting fire awareness presentations that highlight the dangers of fire risks in communities, or will be giving demonstrations on how to construct firebreaks and reduce fuel loads to help eliminate the risk and spread of fire.

The Uniondale Team in the Southern Cape, for example, recently conducted a fire awareness programme at the Uniondale High School for

24 Grade R learners, covering various topics, including safety in the home.

While remaining on high alert during the 2019 winter fire season, WOF in the Western Cape will be hard at work during the next few months to preparing communities for the 2019/2020 summer fire season.

Close to 300 firefighters in the Southern Cape remain on high alert during winter as the southern sector of the Western Cape experiences a year-round fire season.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

WOF equips children with fire safety tips



Maria Eliaser sharing fire safety tips with the children at Ikhageng Day Care Centre

The Vingerkraal participants visited their local village to conduct a fire awareness campaign with the objective of educating the parents in the community about keeping their homes safe from fires.

“If you want to relay the message to the parent, sometimes you need to use their loved ones, which in this case are the kids,” says Maria Eliaser, a firefighter at Vingerkraal Base. “We shared some safety tips through the rhymes that we recited with the kids at the day care centre.”

Most of the burns that children incur during the winter fire season are due to negligence or lack of knowledge. 90% of these incidents could be avoided through knowledge of fire safety.

“During the presentation, we helped the kids to identify the hazards on the picture frame, which represents their homes. By so doing we were planting the seed of knowledge on the items that they should not play near, like candles and matches,” says Lesiba Matlou, the Base Communications Representative at Vingerkraal Base.

WOF is running fire awareness campaigns across the country educating the landowners, community members and school learners about the impact of fires and the preventative measures to apply to avoid becoming a victim of a fire.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

As part of preparing for the winter fire season, the Devon Fire Protection Association roped in Community Fire Awareness Officer Lerato Mokwena to present a series of workshops on basic firefighting to farm workers in Devon.

Mokwena says fire awareness education is the core pillar of integrated fire management and that a focus on the basic do’s and don’ts of fire activities will help farmers avoid fatal fire incidents in their area.

“I am glad that farmers in the area are working closely and arranged these workshops,” says Mokwena, adding that lives would be saved through these interventions. More training and workshops were needed in future to strengthen the capacity of the farm workers.

Empowered with prevention tips



Mokwena says the farm workers were excited about the workshops.

“Some of them shared personal stories about their encounters with fire. They are not firefighters but from now on, they know what to do to address fire challenges,” she says.

Barbara Lang, the chairperson of Devon FPA, says she was grateful that the workshops were relevant for their employees. The value of the workshops was that employees now understood what they would need to do on farms if there was a fire.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire continues to spread the FireSafe message

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme in the Eastern Cape continues to show its commitment to protecting the environment and saving lives.

After the huge number of fires the province experienced during 2018, the Community Fire Awareness Officer, Thulani Mkhosi, has been conducting FireSafe workshops and presentations around the province since the start of the year in communities that are at risk of fires.

Last week Mkhosi empowered more than 20 community members in Benfield on how to be fire safe.

"We are trying to reduce the numbers of fires in the province by giving FireSafe workshops and presentations in communities so that they are able to prevent fires and know what to do in case of fires," says Mkhosi.

He says that these educational workshops and presentations enable community members to identify and mitigate the risks of fires.

"This is also being done to get the communities ready for the winter fire season which starts on 1 June this year," says Mkhosi. He urged community members to always remove fuel near their houses



Community members taught to be fire safe

to prevent runaway fires from destroying their homes and properties.

One of the community members said that the information would assist communities with fire prevention and he promised that they would start building firebreaks in their respective areas to prevent fires from spreading to their homes.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Joining forces to save lives and protect the environment



WOF participants educating the community about wildlife and fires

Working on Fire Limpopo's Marakele participants joined forces with UNISA environmental students to educate the community of Kagiso Village in Thabazimbi about wildlife and wildfires.

Most of the wildfires that occur in the nature reserve are due to a lack of education in our communities. There's still a belief in our society that you need to use fire to hunt, and that on its own is a huge risk that can end up costing the nature reserve and the country millions of Rands.

"Not only are we saving lives through our fire awareness presentation, but we are also protecting and preserving the environment for future generations," says Thato Mamaru, the Base Communications Representative at Marakele.

The community was educated about the danger of starting fires in open areas and the negative impacts that these fires have on the wildlife. WOF also shared tips on how to suppress fire while waiting for the firefighting services to arrive.

"We also educated the community members about communicating while on the fire line as lack of communication can lead to fatalities," says Mamaru.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire partners with Mtubatuba Municipality

The Department of Environmental Affairs Working on Fire (WOF) programme has successfully launched its Community Fire Awareness Campaign in partnership with the Mtubatuba Local Municipality, Provincial Disaster Management Centre and uMkhanyakude District Disaster Management Centre. The launch took place at the Vezobala Community Hall in the Dukuduku area in ward 4.

KZN Community Fire Awareness Officer, Makhosi Dladla, says, "The aim of the event was to raise awareness and prepare the community for the forthcoming winter fire season and to encourage new partnerships and resource sharing."

The build-up activities for the campaign began two days before the launch when the task team started a door-to-door campaign targeting the elderly citizens and people living with disability.

"Elderly community members living alone should be visited from time to time and be educated about fires and other disasters as they cannot always attend public events in the community," says Dladla.

A roadshow was held on the following day, with Working on Fire and Mtubatuba Municipal firefighters drilling in town and using a loudhailer to address



WOF partners with Mtubatuba in cautioning the public about the winter fire season

the public about the dangers of fires and the importance of keeping safe during this fire season.

"I was very happy with the work we did together with the Working on Fire team, conducting the door-to-door campaign aimed at elderly community members. As we have seen large numbers of fires in this ward it was imperative to start off this campaign in this community," says Mtubatuba Mayor, Councillor Gumede.

"Through the campaign, we hope to change the behaviour of community members, for them to be more vigilant during this fire season and not start unnecessary fires, particularly during dry days this winter," says Dladla.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Limpopo highlights burn awareness through education

National Burn Safety Awareness Week is marked every year between 6 to 12 May and is aimed at educating the communities about taking precautions to prevent burn incidents from occurring and to minimize injury from them.

As Working on Fire has a mandate and responsibility to ensure that people, property and the environment are always safe, WOF Limpopo's Provincial Social Development Practitioner, Michael Ramatsea, joined by the Fire Awareness Cluster, visited Helen Franz Hospital in Blouberg where they collaborated with the health

practitioners on the burn awareness educational campaign.

WOF Blouberg participants also attended the awareness talks to gather more knowledge that they will share with the communities when they conduct their fire awareness presentations and workshops.

"We gave the fire awareness talks to the patients, nurses and WOF participants. Due to winter approaching, burn incidents are more likely to take place in households and, in most cases, they happen as a result of human negligence," says Ramatsea.

Improving fire awareness in high-risk communities



The North West Fire Awareness Team and firefighters have been conducting fire awareness activities building up to the Fire Awareness Campaign launch. Pictures supplied by the Highveld Team BCR, Katlego Otukile.

On 31 May, the North West Fire Awareness Team and various stakeholders launched the Fire Awareness Campaign (FAC) to prepare communities for the winter fire season. The FAC aims to teach communities how to be fire safe and how to prevent unwanted wildfires. The campaign raises awareness of the risk of wildfires and empowers those at risk to take responsibility to reduce the risk and impact of fires in their communities.

During the FAC, the North West Fire Awareness Team does regular presentations on how to reduce fire risks in communities. Firefighters use the opportunity to demonstrate how the community can construct firebreaks and do fuel load reduction.

Building up to the FAC launch, the Fire Awareness Team conducted joint activities with stakeholders to encourage communities to get ready for the fire season. The Fire Awareness Team worked with JB Marks Disaster Management, the Traffic Department, Department of Health, local Fire Department, Labour Department and the South African Police Services to raise awareness about the different stakeholders' services and promoted fire safety at various schools and communities and through the local radio station.



WOF conducted a burn safety awareness education activity for the patients, health practitioners and WOF participants

The patients and the health practitioners were grateful for the information shared with them.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighters remember fallen heroes

Working on Fire recently commemorated International Firefighters' Day on 4 May, the special day set apart to honour firefighters across the country and internationally for the phenomenal work they do in keeping their communities safe while risking their lives and well-being.

Firefighters and management staff across the Free State observed a moment of silence for fallen heroes such as Bongani Nkala and Kagiso Motlhabane. Both were from the Dewetsdorp Base and were involved in a tragic accident on the way to a fire. They paid the ultimate price for keeping their community safe.

"Today we honour our heroes, our firefighters, and we want to thank them for their selflessness in the way they perform their duties and how they serve



The Dewetsdorp Team visited the grave of a fallen hero who died in the line of duty

their communities with pride and dignity," said Thabo Moiloa, Ground Operations Manager.



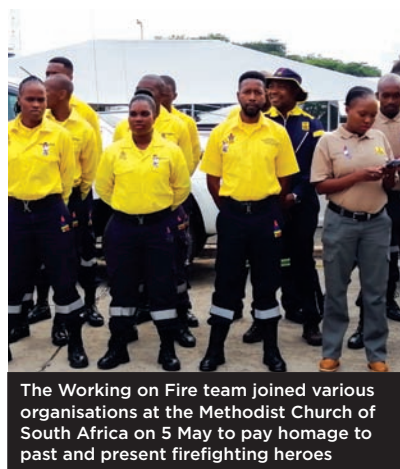
Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Mpumalanga Working on Fire celebrates International Firefighters' Day

WOF Mpumalanga joined the firefighting community in the province to celebrate International Firefighters' Day (IFFD) with various programmes held from 3 May to 5 May. IFFD is observed on 4 May every year. It was instituted after a proposal was emailed out across the world on 4 January 1999 after the deaths of five firefighters in tragic circumstances in a bushfire in Australia.

Teams from all the bases in the province observed a moment of silence to commemorate the day at their bases on 3 May.

The Volksrust Team stood out from the rest and showed their creative side by creating a body circle to show the



The Working on Fire team joined various organisations at the Methodist Church of South Africa on 5 May to pay homage to past and present firefighting heroes

togetherness, teamwork and solidarity of firefighters.

The Lowveld region teams, who were busy with their Yellow Card Training Camp, saluted fallen heroes on 4 May at the Kishugu Training Academy where the camp was held.

The General Manager of WOF in Mpumalanga, Ovie Sehlabela, and a team of firefighters joined the Lowveld Escarpment and Fire Protection Association (LEFPA) and various other organisations at the Methodist Church of South Africa in Mbombela on Sunday, 5 May, to pay homage to all fire heroes.

Written by Amanda Mthembu

KZN hosts first WOF Kids Boy Scouts Camp

The KwaZulu-Natal Social Development Department recently hosted a Working on Fire Boy Scout Camp at Shongweni Dam. The pilot project aimed to positively influence boys to find their purpose in life and to understand how to become good men.

KZN Social Development Practitioner, Hloniphile Ndlovu, says, "There are many social ills that can be prevented if young men are effectively coached and mentored in life. Substance abuse, domestic violence and crime escalate in communities where there is no close personal leadership."

Ndlovu says the Shongweni Team's participants were eager for their sons and even nephews to join this initiative. Participants' sons and nephews aged 10 to 18 years old were invited and some provincial staff's children also joined.

After an explanation of the ground rules and expectations, a briefing session was conducted that defined what being 'a boy' meant and the roles boys must play at home and in the



Shongweni participants with the Boy Scouts

community. The boys then learned how to pitch the tents they would be sleeping in overnight.

"Activities of the day began on the sports field, where teamwork and pair-work games were played, with each boy getting a chance to participate as an individual in a team," says Ndlovu.

KZN HAT Project Manager, Nathi Nene, had a table manners session

with the boys, where some boys used a knife and fork for the first time in their lives.

After lunch, Assistant Project Manager Howard Mathebula taught the boys about electricity and supervised a practical exercise of wiring a light bulb.

"We were fortunate to take the boys on a hike with a reserve official, where they learnt about taking care of nature,

Move for Health Day celebrated



Bethlehem Alpha and Bravo Teams and regional management staff participate in an aerobics session

With winter having arrived it becomes important for us not to put away our running shoes but rather to become more active. Considering the annual weight gain most of us experience during this season due to indulging in warm comfort foods and staying under the blankets a bit too much, Move for Health Day on 10 May serves as a timely reminder to stay active.

World Move for Health Day is an international event created in 2002 by the World Health Organisation to promote physical activity. The Working on Fire Bethlehem teams joined the regional management staff for a day full of fun and activities and were put through their paces by a professional fitness trainer.

Social Development Practitioner Selaelo Mathokwane says, "Staying active is one of the best ways to keep our bodies healthy and to improve our overall well-being, which leads to a better quality of life."



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

saw indigenous and invasive alien plants and even saw giraffes and other wild animals," says Ndlovu.

During the evening, the boys enjoyed stories around the campfire and had popcorn and hot chocolate. The next day the boys were shown how to take down their tents. Regional Manager Smuntumunye Shange gave a talk on 'boys' hygiene'. After breakfast, they hiked to the Shongweni Dam wall and walked through a dark tunnel to see the dam at different levels.

"The boys were then asked to give feedback in writing or drawings. This session led to one of the boys being given a chance to teach the other boys to draw because his drawings were so good," says Ndlovu.

The SDP feels the project "should be done in all communities. The boys formed a very good team and if well taken care of, the programme can be 'a brotherhood for life', hence the hashtag '#Never leave a brother behind'."



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer



WOF women become soccer professionals

Three women firefighters from the Abe Bailey and JS Moroka Teams are kickstarting their soccer careers in August when they will play in the new National Women's Soccer League as professional footballers.

The trio have already signed contracts with their respective clubs. Thabisile said it was long overdue for women to enter the professional soccer space.

"We now have contracts and every weekend we travel to Witbank for practice. It is a serious breakthrough even though age is not on my side," she says.

Ramabanta Nomasono is playing for the Gauteng-based Janine van Wyk team in Bedfordview. Kenewang Moatlhodi of the Abe Bailey Team is playing with Thabisile in the same club, Witbank Coal Wizards.

Their dream is to play in the national A team and travel the world. They will have to resign from the WOF programme in August to focus full-time on the new

task at hand. Although they say they will be earning a living wage, when pressed on what was offered to them, they declined to divulge the figure but only said it was 'a smart salary'.

They say they are determined to take women's football by storm.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

My stepping Stone

KwaZulu-Natal-born Sibongiseni Zondi is the Provincial Assistant Stock Controller.

Recruited on 5 July 2011 as a firefighter at the Shafton Base, he went through WOF induction training, advanced veld and forest firefighting and specialised training in chainsaw operations.

"In 2013, I got a promotion from firefighter to Provincial Assistant Stock Controller. This is where the new beginning, hopes and dreams started," says Zondi.

He successfully completed Store-keeping, Base Management Training and an Intermediate Computer Course, which he completed in October 2017.

In August 2018, Zondi was given an opportunity he had never imagined would happen, for him to do an online Supply Chain Management course at the University of Cape Town. He completed the short course without difficulty.

"My journey in the programme has been educative, motivating and fruitful. I am very grateful to the WOF team leaders, WOF Management and the founders for giving people like me the opportunity, the power to open closed doors for the future, allowing us to learn to fly while under their wings, and for being part of their strategic plan, values and vision," says Zondi.



Sibongiseni Zondi

Zondi says he learnt so much from long-distance learning. He knew he had to be self-disciplined and able to manage his time, but adds that he had to be strict with reading the books in his free time and leaving reminders for assignments.

"Successfully completing this course and graduating was a huge accomplishment and I'm very proud of myself, to be honest. It wasn't easy. Some of us don't have anything besides WOF, so when opportunities like these come, grab something for yourself and keep it for future benefits," he advises.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Building a career at Working on Fire

Nkululeko Mlanjeni, the recently promoted WOF Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, is a former firefighter from the Stutterheim Team who joined WOF in 2007.

"When I heard that Working on Fire would be recruiting in Stutterheim, I saw it as an opportunity to turn my life around. I went there to try my luck and fortunately I got the job," he says, adding that he had struggled to find decent work before joining WOF.

"The journey has been tough, rocky and exciting sometimes and with passion and hard work, I managed to be where I am today," says Mlanjeni.

"In 2008, I was nominated to attend the Type 2 Crew Leader course in Mpumalanga and I passed very well," says Mlanjeni, who followed that achievement by passing the Type 1 Crew Leader course and becoming one of the best crew leaders.

"I worked very well with my team members, stakeholders as well as the communities around our areas. It was after this exposure that I was appointed as the Regional Manager in 2014," he says.

Mlanjeni says working around the province with more than two teams



Working on Fire continues to open up opportunities for young people

created a conducive environment for his professional growth.

"I saw myself moving from firefighter to Crew Leader to Regional Manager to being an Auditor for four provinces, namely KZN, EC, Free State and Western Cape, in 2015. What a journey full of learning, unlearning and delivering," says Mlanjeni with a smile.

In March 2018, Mlanjeni was appointed as the Health and Safety Officer for WOF Eastern Cape and his hard work there paved the way to his appointment as the Eastern Cape second GOM.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Fitness pays off for WOF netballer

Mmasa Faith Masiela is a firefighter at Molemole Base in Limpopo who is pas-



Mmasa Faith Masiela was named the best netball player by Capricorn District Municipality

sionate about keeping fit and playing netball. She participates enthusiastically in the weekly WOF fitness activities, such as running the 2,4 km timed run, push-ups and pull-ups.

"I grew up playing netball at school and in my community. When I joined WOF I was encouraged by my supervisors and my colleagues to follow my passion for playing netball," says Masiela.

Masiela was named the best netball player at the Capricorn District Municipality Employees Sports Tournament that was held on 11 May 2019 in Polokwane.

"Thanks to WOF for contributing to my achievement. I couldn't have achieved this award without the support of my team, my supervisors and my family. WOF encourages us to be fit and that on its own was motivation enough to perform better," says Masiela.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Pensioner Mashaba outruns the 'boys'

"You are as young as you feel," says John Mashaba who, despite being a pensioner, is still outrunning firefighters at Injaka Base. Mashaba is a driver for the Injaka Team and is not looking to retire anytime soon.

Mashaba has participated in many long-distance races, picking up numerous medals in his long career.

He proved his proud claim that he could outrun his colleagues at the recent Yellow Card Training Camp at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit when he went head to head with the younger males.



long-distance races at the age of 66

Mashaba says he loves his work at Working on Fire and challenging the young ones in fitness and training. His ultimate goal is taking part in the annual Comrades Marathon.

"To compete, I need to complete a few marathons and source funds, but anything is possible if you believe," says Mashaba.

Written by Amanda Mthembu



Thabisile Lubisi is now a public order police officer after exiting the WOF programme

Former Nkomazi firefighter joins SAPS

Thabisile Solani Lubisi is a proud former Working on Fire participant who enthusiastically acknowledges WOF as a key player in her professional advancement.

Lubisi joined the WOF programme in 2015 and was trained as a wildland firefighter based at the Nkomazi Base in Mpumalanga. She was also trained as a brush cutter operator.

While in the programme, she learned a lot about teamwork, hard work, perseverance and discipline.

"The two most valuable skills WOF gave me, which helped me get into SAPS, were discipline and fitness. Thank you for that, Working on Fire."

In January 2017, Lubisi was recruited to work for the South African Police Services as a public order police officer. Public order police must maintain or restore order during strikes and public protests.

"I am really enjoying my new job and am grateful towards WOF for helping me get this far," says Lubisi. "I hope to grow in SAPS, move up the ranks and continue to serve South Africa with pride."

Lubisi encourages current participants to seize all opportunities to learn new skills as these would serve them in their career journeys.

Written by Amanda Mthembu

WOF was his opportunity for change

Happy Makhofane of the JS Moroka Team says that he is grateful for the work opportunity and not just because it was the first formal employment he found.

Makhofane says he was a criminal and was imprisoned from the age of 14 to 28 years old.

"I regret every crime I have committed," he says. Makhofane says he trained as a bricklayer while serving a jail sentence. When he came out he had no money to start life afresh. He didn't believe anyone would want to hire a person with a criminal record and he couldn't afford the tools he needed for self-employment.

Getting the opportunity to join the WOF programme meant not only an income but "It is with the programme's money that I bought building tools," he says.

During his time off, Makhofane supplements his stipend by doing small building jobs in various communities. He says he also gets hired to build walls and houses in his area of Siyabuswa in Mpumalanga.

Makhofane, who is his family's only breadwinner, says he is grateful



Happy Makhofane

that he was never judged for his previous misdeeds by crew members and thanks WOF for giving him a chance to change.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

First WOF female base manager

Noluthando Kaptein, a 34-year-old former firefighter, is the first Working on Fire (WOF) female Base Manager appointed in the Western Cape.

Kaptein joined WOF in 2007 at the Fisantekraal Base. She was quickly promoted after just a year-and-a-half to become a Crew Leader in 2009.

Under her leadership, a number of other female crew leaders were developed at the Newlands and Helderberg Bases to gain more leadership experience and build their confidence. For example, firefighters Sinazo Layini and Nontembiso Godlo from the Helderberg Team and Nosipho Mpande from the False Bay Team where among the many firefighters who were brought up to Crew Leader positions under the leadership of Kaptein.

Between 2016 and 2018, Kaptein was the first female base manager under the leadership of the Cape Peninsula Fire Protection Association (CPFPA) for the Helderberg Base. Following the end of her contract in 2018, Working on Fire stepped in and continued her contract as a base manager.

Kaptein says, "I was a shy person and needed a job to support myself and my family. I was without work for two years which made things very difficult. Running the 2,4 km run was the first day to a better me. I've learnt so many things from WOF through its leadership training and



Noluthando Kaptein

also exposing me to different bases and broadening my family. WOF changed life for my daughter and family as I can now put food on table and my child can have a good education. Thank you to the CPFPA for also allowing me the opportunity to manage a team which I never dreamed of doing before."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Crew Leader assisted at the National Elections

Frank Maseko, a Type 2 Crew Leader at the Maropeng Base, was part of the logistics division team at the Independent Electoral Commission during the running of this year's provincial and national elections.

After seeing positions advertised, he applied and received a positive reply on the same day as his application.

"The payment rate is very good because it is only for a day. I had to attend the IEC's training workshops on weekends in the build-up to the polls," says Maseko.

He says he was excited to be part of the elections and proud to answer the

national call to help the country execute its democratic mandate. Everything ran smoothly.

The election was an historic moment for him because it was only the second time he had cast his ballot. "I cast my vote in the morning before assuming my duties," he says.

Maseko says he is apolitical but he learned the importance of patriotism during this time and has decided to vote in every future election.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Frank Maseko