



WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme receives global recognition

Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Noxolo Kiviet, mentioned Working on Fire as one of the Expanded Public Works Programmes that were building a core of young people who have skills in various fields of infrastructure development and environmental management when she accepted the Future Policy Bronze Award 2019.

South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme received the award - for its role in promoting youth economic empowerment - at the Future Policy Awards 2019 ceremony held in Belgrade, Serbia, on 16 October.

The Future Policy Awards aim to highlight policies that advance youth access to decent jobs, including environmental jobs, and that enhance civic and political participation for sustainable development and peace.

During her acceptance speech, the Deputy Minister said



Charles Chauvel, Global Lead, Inclusive Processes and Institutions of the United Nations Development Programme, representing UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner, and Martina Darmanin hand over the Bronze Award to South Africa. Photo credit: Inter-Parliamentary Union.

government aims to have five million more youth as beneficiaries of the EPWPs and mentioned how South African youth core skills came to the rescue of Canada when

WOF's firefighters were deployed to Canada to assist with firefighting operations.

Working on Fire congratulates the South African government, De-

partment of Public Works and Infrastructure, all Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWPs) and all the EPWP beneficiaries who make the programme a success.

During the opening ceremony of the Africa Netball Cup 2019 held at the Bellville Velodrome in Cape Town, the Working on Fire False Bay and Kleinmond Teams performed a WOF drill.

Masibulele Pascal Joseph, a Crew Leader from the False Bay Team, says they were honoured to have been invited to such a prestigious event. South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia and Lesotho battled each other for the Africa Netball Cup.

South Africa's Proteas started on a good note, beating Malawi 27 - 22 in the nailbiting opening game. The team ended even better, comfortably beating Zambia 72 - 53 in the final on 22 October to take the honours.

"Because of our involvement in netball, we were asked

Working on Fire performs at the Africa Netball Cup 2019

to do something different during the opening. We led the opening ceremony and performed a drill which the crowd was very impressed with. We are grateful for the opportunity to display what we do on such a prominent stage," says Joseph.

The chairperson of the Cape Town Netball Federation says they were impressed by the team's discipline and display of professionalism.

"We were impressed when we saw them practice their performance. They displayed professionalism and knew what they were doing. It was such a joy watching them and we hope to work with them again in the future."



False Bay and Kleinmond Teams showed off their drilling skills at the opening ceremony

KZN Firefighters battle Msunduzi Landfill blaze

Working on Fire in KwaZulu-Natal was part of the incident command task team responsible for suppressing the Msunduzi Landfill fire in Pietermaritzburg.

KZN Acting General Manager Bongani Nhlabathi says, "We were called out to the fire on Monday, 7 October 2019, dispatching 34 firefighters and the division superintendent with a fire truck. Neighbouring schools had to be closed due to hazardous clouds of smoke. On Tuesday, we started having night shifts working hand-in-hand with other municipal firefighters and also Mondi."

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs MEC, Ms Nomusa

Dube-Ncube, applauded Working on Fire and the municipal firefighters for combatting the fire and preventing a likely disaster by acting swiftly.

This fire was also a great opportunity to showcase the Working on Fire Incident Command System to stakeholders, who were very impressed.

"We are very thankful for the wonderful job done. Without proper leadership we couldn't have achieved what we did. I know it was tough, but the ability to be able to listen to other people's advice made this possible," says Msunduzi General Manager, Ms Boniwe Zulu.

The Msunduzi Landfill fire was successfully suppressed on Saturday, 12 October, with no fatalities.



Teams on the fire line

"I am very proud of the professionalism and discipline displayed by our participants and also the provincial management who formed part of this

fire suppression team," says Nhlabathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Teams kept busy as the end of the fire season approaches



WOF Scouts singing together with the KZN firefighters and management

WOF teams across Mpumalanga have been hard at work assisting their Fire Protection Associations with various veld and forest fires. A total of 24 teams were dispatched to battle blazes in September, when WOF teams assisted in the suppression of 53 fires, eight more than the 45 fires suppressed in August.

WOF aerial resources provided firefighting assistance and flew a total of 162 hours during the fire suppression operations in September.

Unpredictable weather patterns as the fire season draws to a close are

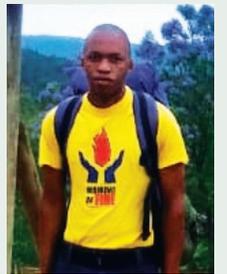
making this the most dangerous part of the season and WOF expects more of its teams to be dispatched to assist in fire suppression operations. WOF has already assisted in suppressing 15 fires in October and all the teams are on high alert and ready to be dispatched.

WOF continues to partner with various provincial government departments, municipalities, private and public landowners to minimise the dire effect of veld and forest fires.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Emotional pledge by Witfontein Type 2 Crew Leader Sive Zithule prior to Western Cape Summer Fire Season



Republic of South Africa is my home.

ACCOUNTABILITY
TEAMWORK
EXCELLENCE
ADAPTABILITY, and
MAKING A DIFFERENCE
...are all unequivocally my values.

I have declared war against any unwanted veld and forest fires.

Both beyond the rivers and the seas,
And behind the hills and the mountains.
In the event of a firefighting operation, with tenacity,
I withstand the challenging fuels, topography and weather conditions.

As I sacrifice with my sweat, tears and endangering my life,
In times of pride I have reminded myself of fire orders,
And in fear I have reminded myself of watch out situations,
My next deployment could be my last in service to mankind.

However I refuse to be the victim.

I am a highly trained and well-mannered veld and forest firefighter who at all times displays high levels of professionalism and discipline.

I then, therefore, shall remain forever committed and dedicated to my duties until I burn forever. Because if I die, I'll be committing an error.

I am a WOF firefighter.

Climate changes evident in fire activity in the Free State

The climate change evident across the world affects the behaviour and intensity of wildfires.

The Free State saw recent evidence of this effect of climate change with the massive fire in the Harrismith area in the



Firefighters on the fire line on the Platberg farm in Harrismith

Eastern Free State. The fire, that burned for over three days on the Platberg and decimated over 4 000 hectares of farmland, left a trail of destruction in its wake that required the Harrismith, Bethlehem Bravo, Qwa Qwa and Warden Working on Fire teams to suppress it. On the same day that they contained the Platberg fire, a fire was ignited in the Golden Gate National Park that required two WOF teams to contain it.

It is suspected that climate change is contributing to the continually high Fire Danger Rating Index measured in the province and the province experiencing up to nine wildfires burning per day.

"It was difficult suppressing the fire because of the mountainous terrain and the hot and windy weather conditions," says Nomasono Mazibuko, Warden Base Communications Representative. "We managed to manoeuvre through the mountainous terrain on foot along with our colleagues from different teams to suppress the fire. The landowner was very impressed with the work we did on the fire line."



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighters prove themselves fit and ready for action

More than 140 firefighters from nine Working on Fire teams in the western part of the Eastern Cape successfully passed their Yellow Card Training Assessment at the camp held at Lottering Base on the Lottering Plantation from 7 to 11 October.

This area was one of those affected by huge fires last year. According to the General Manager of WOF in the Eastern Cape, Phumza Dyantyi, the objective of the Yellow Card Training Camp is to issue the competency yellow cards to all participants who pass the required fitness test and examinations.

“These young men and women were assessed to see if they were mentally

and physically fit to face fires during the summer fire season which is expected to start on 1 December,” says Dyantyi.

Dyantyi says that the yellow card training was a good opportunity for participants to refresh their firefighting skills ahead of the fire season.

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries’ Working on Fire programme has about 580 firefighters at 26 bases in the province. These firefighters face very hot conditions and danger while fighting fires so they need to be emotionally and physically fit to work in such situations.

The yellow card assessment fitness test includes a 2.4 km run in a maximum



Eastern Cape firefighters are ready for the coming summer fire season

of 12 minutes for male participants and 14 minutes for females, completing 40 push-ups in a minute, 40 sit-ups in a minute, eight pull-ups as well

as passing through a fire wall.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Fire season comes to a hectic end

Working on Fire North West continue to serve the country by protecting it from the negative impacts caused by veld fires. WOF teams based at 17 bases across the province have been assisting Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) and landowners to battle scores of fires. As the winter fire season draws to an end, the province has seen an increase in veld fires fuelled by dry winds.

The teams assisted various FPAs, including the Potchefstroom FPA, during numerous firefighting operations, while other teams across the province implemented actions to enhance the integrated fire management strategy. These included fuel load reduction, fire awareness education at schools and communities and constructing firebreaks to help prevent the spread of fires.

The province’s partnerships with FPAs and landowners, along



Working on Fire teams have been deployed to a number of fires across the province

with intense efforts in implementing fire prevention measures, played a significant role in reducing unwanted wildfires. North West has experienced fewer fires thanks to communities following the fire awareness safety tips given to them to prevent unwanted fires.

Working on Fire is urging communities to remain vigilant as the winter fire season seems to be ongoing and has called on communities to report unwanted fires early so that they can be contained before causing destruction.

Written by Castello team BCR, Zukile Dhlomo

161 wildfires in Limpopo



WOF firefighters are working around the clock to suppress multiple wildfires that are burning across the province

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries’ Working on Fire firefighters in Limpopo have been kept on their toes by multiple wildfires that are burning across the province.

WOF firefighters have responded to 161 fires since the beginning of the 2019 winter fire season, with 63 of these fires occurring in September.

“We are working very hard trying to protect the environment and safeguard lives. It’s not an easy fire season and we are working twice as hard as compared to the previous year,” says Selaelo Chepape, the Type 1 Crew Leader at Molemole Base, whose team has been to more fires than all other teams in the province.

According to South African Weather Service, climate change is believed to be contributing to the extreme hot temperatures that are being experienced in the province.

This year’s winter fire season is totally different to what was experienced in the previous years, where most of the wildfires in October were experienced in the Waterberg District.

“Our teams have been working tirelessly fighting multiple fires in

Rooiberg, Thabazimbi and surrounding areas. This is a tough time for us and by the look of things, these fires will continue to burn even outside the fire season. We hope that all stakeholders will come on board and work together with us in saving lives and protecting the environment and infrastructure,” says Annelie Becker, the Base Manager for WOF Rooiberg Team.

Due to the changes in the seasonal weather, Waterberg District anticipates having more wildfires breaking out, especially in the mountainous areas. The vegetation is dry and with the lack of rain, the risk is very high.

“It will be a blessing if we have rain soon as that will reduce the current level of risk. Another challenge that our firefighters are facing is working long hours in very tough terrain where the frequent heatwaves are fueling these wildfires. We are so blessed to have these young men and women who have committed themselves to saving lives and protecting the environment,” says Becker.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

The Aganang participants used fun and games to educate the children and this method helped to keep them alert and paying attention. “We really had fun with the kids and our presentations were welcomed with warm smiles. We will be

visiting this crèche again to ensure that they remember what we taught them,” Mokobodi says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Safety tips and fun for foundation phase learners

“We believe that the kids should be groomed and shaped in the best method that they understand. Which is the reason why we opted to educate these



Learners equipped with fire safety education and tips at the Monotwane-Mashashane Community Crèche

kids with poems and drama to enable them to understand easily and be able to relay the message home,” says Elliot Mokobodi, the Base Communications Representative at Aganang Base.

Working on Fire Limpopo’s Aganang participants visited Monotwane-Mashashane Community Crèche where they conducted a FireSafe workshop for the children. The objective was to educate the children about the impacts of household fires and what to do if they find themselves trapped by fire.

“We hope that by educating these kids, we are also educating the adults at home who are unable to come to this kind of campaign that we run in the communities,” says Mokobodi.

Early Childhood Development fire safety workshop



Mpumalanga Fire Awareness Training Officer, Estella Cossa, leads a discussion on structural fires during the annual Early Childhood Development Workshop hosted by WOF in Thulamahashe, Bushbuckridge

The Mpumalanga Working on Fire Communications Cluster hosted its annual Early Childhood Development workshop at the Latter Rain Church of Zion in Thulamahashe in Bushbuckridge on 9 October.

The cluster hosted a total of 40 educators from daycare centres and preschools around Thulamahashe, who soaked up information from Fire Awareness Training Officer, Estelle Cossa, and Community Fire Awareness Officer, Mbuso Siwela, about fire safety in the home and schools.

Proceedings began with the educators sharing their expected outcomes regarding the workshop. Topics discussed ranged from fire hazards, evacuation plans and assembly points at each educator's designated school, with Cossa leading a discussion on

schools' risks of structural and veld fires.

Siwela shared information about the stop, drop and roll escape technique and explained in detail how to use a fire extinguisher. The group also took part in a risk management exercise, where educators stated what fire risks their schools were exposed to and found ways to mitigate them.

The workshop concluded with the educators receiving certificates of attendance from Working on Fire and being treated to lunch.

As part of implementing integrated fire management, WOF continually educates school learners and members of the communities about fire safety.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Free State fire safety workshop



Working on Fire fire awareness officers alongside teachers from various Early Childhood Development centres

The Free State Fire Awareness Officers held a FireSafe workshop to teach Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers in the Heilbron area about the fundamentals of fire, how fires are started, how to extinguish different types of fires, the different sources that can fuel a fire as well as how to successfully evacuate during a fire. The teachers were also empowered with knowledge to return to their schools to teach the children fire safety.

Working on Fire has been rolling out several FireSafe workshops with ECD centres across the country. The aim of these workshops is to empower these teachers with the knowledge to

understand and identify fire risks in and around their schools. The teachers were also taught how to conduct their own FireSafe workshops.

Moipone Motaung, the Free State Fire Awareness Training Officer, says, "We hosted our Early Childhood Development workshop in Heilbron. We taught 36 educators and four social workers who work in the area about fire safety inside and outside the house. After this workshop, we expect them to implement what we taught them."



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Working on Fire hosts debate competition at Kokstad

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal hosted the Provincial School Debate Competition with learners from three high schools at the Bhongweni Community Hall in October.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer Bongumusa Nyathi says, "The primary objective of the debate is to create an opportunity for Grade 9 and 10 learners to debate environmental issues that have a



The schoolchildren with their trophies

Working on Fire equips educators with fire safety techniques



Mthatha Daycare Educators now equipped with firesafe techniques

Eastern Cape Working on Fire conducted a fire awareness workshop for more than 30 Early Childhood Development (ECD) educators in Mthatha on 18 October 2019.

This workshop was conducted by the EC Fire Awareness Training Officer, Zola Hans, and the Community Fire Awareness Officer, Thulani Mkhosi. The aim was to educate the teachers on how to be fire safe so that they could implement what they had learned at their centres and practice fire safety with the learners.

"During the workshop, we ensured that the educators practiced the fire drill, that they understood the

importance of fire escape plans and that they would relay the message to their learners and make them understand as well," says Hans.

Educators had to make an escape plan for their daycare centres and identify fire risks at their centres.

Hans says that they had wanted to make sure this year that the information was given to the educators in a simple way that would assist them to pass the knowledge effectively to their young learners.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

negative impact on their social livelihood and natural environment."

Debating competitions are a great way for learners to meet learners from other schools and doing well can really help raise a school's profile.

Thembaletu Secondary School Grade 9 learner Mazowaya says, "I really enjoyed my first debate experience. It was nerve-racking in the beginning but eventually I got comfortable and confident in making my points."

Learners from Thembaletu Secondary, Franklin High and Carl Malcomess High School debated topics such as 'Society should look after our natural environment, because it is our only means of survival', 'Fire can be used as a land management tool to conserve

our environment' and 'Communities at risk of wildfire should take action to alleviate their risk in the home and on their properties'.

The day included a poetry competition between the three schools. This was also a confident booster for the learners to ignite their passion and improve creative, vocabulary, speaking and listening skills.

"For the individual learner, debating improves self-confidence, speaking and listening skills and increases their awareness of social and environmental issues. We are very thankful to the schools for participating," says Nyathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Participants learn more about cancer



Mpumalanga Social Development Practitioner, Makoloi Tele, conducted a Cancer Awareness Workshop at the Badplaas Base

As October was Cancer Awareness Month, Mpumalanga Social Development Practitioner, Makoloi Tele, raised awareness by hosting workshops at bases throughout the province.

Tele kicked off the month by engaging participants at Lydenburg in a group discussion regarding various forms of cancer. The participants were informed of the importance of regular cancer checkups and encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle, especially given their line of work.

"It is important that participants know that cancer affects everybody, whether they be young or old, male or

female and all races, so they can take a stand now and get tested to know if they are at risk," Tele says.

Besides cancer awareness, Tele continued highlighting gender-based violence during these workshops, as the high femicide rate continues.

"We will continue to educate our participants about the severity of gender-based violence so they can take positive action in their homes and communities," Tele says.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Cancer survivor shares her story with colleagues



North West Provincial staff held a moment of silence in memory of those who lost the battle with cancer

As Cancer Awareness month came to an end, the Working on Fire Social Development Practitioners (SDPs) conducted cancer awareness workshops at bases throughout the country.

The North West SDP, Peter Mampuru, did a presentation for the North West Provincial Office employees which focused on the advantages of early detection. A cancer survivor also spoke about her battle with the disease.

"We are encouraging people to go for regular medical check-ups and do regular breast checks. This will ensure that any signs of cancer are detected early and treatment can be started early. This improves the chances of surviving cancer. We also had a moment of silence

to honour those who have passed on due to cancer," says Mampuru.

WOF staff member and cancer survivor, Linda Pretorius, shared her story with colleagues. She said early detection and family support as she underwent treatment played a major role in her recovery. She has been in remission for the past eight years with no complications. Remission is when the signs and symptoms of cancer are reduced or undetectable.

All bases in the province held a moment of silence to remember those who have passed away due to cancer and to honour those still battling the disease.

Written by Editorial team

Firefighters urged to go for regular check-up



Eastern Cape firefighters are now well informed about cancer

The West District Social Development Practitioner, Siphokazi Jack, conducted workshops on cancer awareness for the West District teams in the Eastern Cape during October as part of Cancer Awareness Month.

According to Jack, everyone should be made aware about cancer, including its symptoms.

"Cancer occurs when abnormal cells divide in an uncontrolled way. There are different types of cancer, including breast cancer, brain cancer, lung cancer and prostate cancer," Jack says.

She says that early detection allows a person to get treated before cancer spreads.

The main objective of cancer awareness is to inform participants

about early diagnosis and treatment, engender involvement through supporting victims of cancer as well as to eliminate/prevent stigma.

"Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and most women are surviving it, especially if it was detected early," says Jack.

She advises everyone to be aware of possible breast cancer symptoms such as lumps, redness, inverted nipples or a bloody discharge from the nipple. Signs of prostate cancer were also discussed in the workshops.

Jack says all firefighters must go for screening to check for cancer, especially if they observe anything abnormal about their bodies.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Teams prepare communities for fire season



The Uniondale Team conducted a fire awareness activity for Grade 6 and 7 learners

As part of the preparation for the start of the summer fire season, Western Cape Working on Fire teams focused on raising fire awareness in communities and schools. This was done to ensure that community members took responsibility for their fire risks and knew what to do in the event of a fire to ensure their safety.

The Uniondale and Sedgefield Teams conducted fire awareness activities at two schools, teaching the children about the dangers of fire and how to be fire safe. The Sedgefield Team also conducted a door-to-door fire awareness campaign to help

community members reduce fire risks in their homes.

During the door-to-door campaign, residents were encouraged to clear their gutters of dry leaves, trim trees and remove any dry branches close to their houses that could fuel a fire.

The teams will continue with fire season readiness and specifically target communities with high fire risks. This will hopefully reduce the number of fires and the economic damage wildfires may cause in the province this year.

Written by Editorial team

Fitness and Endurance Challenge unites firefighters

Firefighters from the firefighting fraternity in the Free State recently participated in the Fitness and Endurance Challenge organised and hosted by SANDF Fire and Rescue.

The event served as an opportunity for the different firefighting teams to participate in endurance challenges and push themselves to their physical and mental limits. Each team consisted of five firefighters with representatives from the Working on Fire Bloemfontein Team, Mangaung Fire and Rescue, ACSA Fire

and Rescue and SANDF Fire and Rescue. The teams completed various cardio and resistance training exercises to the point of failure, while dressed in firefighting gear and carrying full equipment.

The Working on Fire firefighters represented the WOF programme well, showcasing their high fitness and endurance levels in all the activities in which they participated.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



Firefighters from the Working on Fire Bloemfontein Team participating in the Fitness and Endurance Challenge

Free State athletes dominate Clarens Golden Gate 4 in 1



Working on Fire firefighters participated in the Clarens Golden Gate 4 in 1 event

Athletes from the Working on Fire Free State Athletics Club recently competed in the prestigious Clarens Golden Gate 4 in 1 races that took place in Glen Reenen in the Golden Gate National Park.

Firefighters from across the province represented their teams and Working on Fire as a whole in the races. In the 42 km race, Siphso Mofokeng from Golden Gate Base finished the race in an impressive time of 03:11:00, earning him second place.

In the 21 km race for males, Thabang Mputhi from Golden Gate ended the race

in second position with a time of 01:29:00 and Ntswaki Motsoeneng took second place in the 21 km women's race with a time of 01:56:00. Mookho Kgatlako from Marquard was just behind her in third place with a time of 02:10:00.

Maswabi Lekhetho from Heilbron took third place in the 10 km race with a time of 00:51:17, completing the Working on Fire team's domination of the top spots in the races.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Scouts learn about food security

The KwaZulu-Natal Shongweni Team firefighters who attended the Food Security Workshop in September, have already started reaping the benefits of their new knowledge in their organic garden.

KZN Social Development Practitioner Sabelo Buthelezi says, "The programme developed this workshop to ensure participants have the knowledge and skills required to start a sustainable food production business on their re-entry into the community."

Through this initiative, the team has gathered the first harvest of spinach, which they have shared among themselves. Food from the garden will be sold or donated to needy families or schools in the community in future.

The team also took the opportunity to begin passing on their food growing expertise to the next generation by inviting the WOF Girl and Boy Scouts to join in in one of the daily maintenance routines the team does in the garden.

"The team taught the kids how to cultivate the plants, how to make compost and the identification of plants they were not aware of. This will also encourage them to start their own gardens at home," says Buthelezi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Say NO to gender-based violence



Crew Leaders with General Manager, Stephen Boyes during a workshop on gender-based violence

WOF Gauteng General Manager Stephen Boyes has challenged the men and women in the programme to come up with concrete solutions to gender-based violence in the areas in which their teams operate.

"Our crew leaders come from these communities. They are instrumental in driving the right message to their fellow men. On the other side, I have offered provincial female management opportunities to deliberate on the issue," Boyes says.

He says there should be a continuous engagement throughout the year through outreach programmes like fire awareness, so that the message of 'NO to gender-based violence' can be spread.

Bheki Dube, an assistant project manager, says that men were culprits because they didn't denounce vio-

lence. "We only become concerned once it is closer to home," he says.

Dube says he has been helping junior and middle management personnel to chart a way forward to confront any form of abuse, whether at the bases or in communities.

In his engagement with crew leaders, Boyes told them the murder rate is high in the country because of the violence we are meting out to our partners and children, which is at alarming proportions.

After an honest and frank engagement with the crew leaders and provincial management, Boyes says, "As of today, we will read and sing from the same hymn sheet."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



WOF scouts watering the garden

Firefighter reaps rewards in rugby and receives award



Firefighter Olwethu Nkotswana of the Wedela Team in Carletonville is a trailblazer in women's rugby and a highly successful one at that. She has just received the award of best player of the year at Pirates women's rugby club in the North West, playing in the Brutal League.

Nkotswana travels about 30 km to Potchefstroom weekly for training. Since her sport is very physical, she likes the fitness aspect of the WOF programme. She hopes to play in the national women's rugby team one day.

When asked if she is scared of injury, she just says everything is risky in life. Besides, she finds playing rewarding, not only in terms of earning a supplementary income, but she has earned more medals than she can count.

Nkotswana started playing rugby in 2008 as a winger but is now a fly-half. "Rugby is not a popular sporting code among many women in the township. I was introduced to the sport by a friend and fell in love with it," she says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

From taking risks to managing them

Isaac Setlhare is living proof that hard work, ambition and taking opportunities when they are offered is a winning combination for success at Working on Fire.

After completing his Matric in 2009, he couldn't pursue his goal of getting a qualification in Information Technology due to financial challenges. However, that didn't break his determination to succeed.

Setlhare joined WOF as a firefighter in March 2011 at Vaalwater Base in the Waterberg District.

"In 2016, I was overwhelmed when my Regional Manager selected me to attend the Type 2 Crew Leader training at the Academy in Nelspruit. I knew right there that my door to a brighter future was opening," he says.

Setlhare enrolled for a risk management course at IQ Academy immediately after he was appointed Type 2 Crew Leader at Modimolle Base.

"I used my stipend to further my education because I knew that WOF was a stepping stone to a successful life. It was not easy, especially during the fire season, but because I was determined to get my qualification, I worked twice as hard," says Setlhare.



Isaac Setlhare is ready to tackle his new position as the Occupational Health and Safety Administrator for Limpopo

In June 2019, Setlhare completed his Risk Management Certificate with flying colours. He was appointed as the Occupational Health and Safety Administrator for WOF Limpopo in September 2019. He is looking forward to enrolling for a Diploma in Health and Safety very soon.

"My message to fellow colleagues is that if you need something in life, you need to plan, work hard and persevere, because nothing comes easily in life. WOF is here to assist us in developing ourselves. Let's grab this opportunity with both hands," says Setlhare.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Crew leader finds success in entrepreneurship



Merriam Semoka

Entrepreneurship can turn one's life into a more purposeful project, says Merriam Semoka, a Type 1 Crew Leader at Leeuwfontein Base.

She started her part-time hairdressing business named Bridget's Hair Salon in 2014 in Moloto.

"I have a solid customer base and I am able to meet key financial demands with the profits. The cost of living is high. That is why I have been doing hairdressing in the afternoons and on weekends," says Semoka.

She says the fear of the unknown is the biggest obstacle for many young people like her but laziness will not pay

any bills. "I have to work hard and juggle many other issues as a mother," says Semoka.

Semoka says she has learned useful financial management skills in the programme that are helping her in her business.

Semoka has had no formal training as a hairdresser but says, "I do a lot of research to check out the latest hairstyles around the country so that I am not left behind."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Financial management workshop helps participant obtain qualification

Working on Fire financial management skills helped a participant recently to obtain his Grade EDC Security certificate.

Obakeng Morake, a firefighter and herbicide applicator at the Castello Base, applied the skills that he learnt at a WOF financial management workshop to manage his finances so that he could afford to do his security course. He saved some of his monthly stipend to fund it and attended classes on weekends when he was off duty.

Working on Fire Social Development Practitioners regularly host the workshops to teach participants to save and manage their finances. These workshops have helped many participants reach their goals by using their monthly

stipend wisely and being disciplined when it comes to saving. Morake is now closer to his dream of becoming a police officer and believes every step he takes at WOF moves him closer to achieving his goal.

"I believe the price of success is hard work and dedication. I sacrificed so many things to do this security course. The skill that I got from WOF's financial management workshop really helped me in managing my savings up until I did my security course. I am now waiting for my PSIRA then I will start applying for security jobs," says Morake.

Written by Base Communications Representative, Zukile Dhlomo



Obakeng Morake holds his security certificate

Eastern Cape firefighting capacity boosted with new recruits

“More than 100 youngsters from different areas in St Francis responded to a Working on Fire advertisement and gathered at St Francis to try their hand at being firefighters,” says Phumza Dyantyi, the WOF Eastern Cape General Manager.

Dyantyi says that only 18 young men and women passed the standard fitness test which includes a 2.4 km run, push-ups, sit-ups as well as pull-ups.

“This is one of the relocation teams in the province and it will assist a lot in fighting fires and preventing fires in the area of St Francis, a fire-prone area which always experiences huge fires every year,” she says.

The province is also recruiting a full WOF team in Karberg (relocation base)

that will also play a major role in fighting and preventing fires in that area and a top-up was done last week to ensure that the Witelsbos Team is at full strength for the summer fire season.

“We are creating job opportunities for young people in the province to minimise the unemployment rate,” says Dyantyi.

“All these new recruits will be taken to the Working on Fire Training Academy in Nelspruit where they will undergo training courses that include advanced firefighting, fire safety, other specialised skills and the essentials of integrated fire management,” says Dyantyi.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



More than 100 young people tried out for the recruiting opportunity at Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape

Firefighter is thankful for the WOF experience



Thulisile Mthethwa

Thulisile Mthethwa is a former Hluhluwe Base Type 2 Crew Leader who is now a firefighter with Nomabhodwe Fire Protection (Pty) Ltd.

“Before joining the programme I was unemployed. I was fortunate enough to be recruited in 2008. Through dedication I moved up to being a Type 2 Crew Leader at the base,” says Mthethwa.

Mthethwa recently took up the position with Nomabhodwe Fire Protection and is stationed in St Lucia.

“I am so grateful for the experience I gained during my time at Working on Fire. I learnt discipline, to work in a team and also to respect each individual no matter what their background,” she says.

She adds that one of the biggest things she learnt in the programme

was leadership, which to her is not just about being in charge of people but is about seeing gaps in your team and finding solutions to fix them. Leadership is also about being responsible for your actions and mentoring your subordinates.

“I am really enjoying the work that I am currently doing, as I am using the skill set WOF taught me, which is an advantage,” says Mthethwa.

Mthethwa hopes to be married and to establish her own business within the next five years.

“In encouraging my former colleagues, I’d say they must work hard, remember there is no ‘I’ in the word ‘team’ and never ever stop believing in their dreams,” says Mthethwa.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighters moving on

Former firefighters Kenny Malefo and Dimakatso Rahlogo from the Roodeplaat Team have joined the Gauteng Department of Agricultural and Rural Development as general workers at the Roodeplaat Nature Reserve.

Rahlogo says she had a remarkable journey in the WOF programme and achieved a lot at home. The work opportunity helped to lift her out of dire poverty.

Malefo says that they were grateful to have been part of the programme. He gained work experience through WOF which he was proud to put it in his CV. Before joining the programme, he had had no work experience.

The two say their new employer will not regret employing them in the reserve.

Crew Leader Elsie Molahlegi says that she wishes her former crew members the best of luck into the future, adding that they were disciplined and ethical participants at all times.



From Left Dimakatso Rahlogo and Kenny Malefo are now general workers at GDARD

“We all hope and trust that our turn will come to exit the programme to greater things in life,” says Molahlegi.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire recruits graduate

It was a day of celebration at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit when 134 Working on Fire recruits graduated as new firefighters at a passing-out parade and graduation ceremony at the Academy on 30 September.

The firefighters from Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal had completed 24 days of intensive fitness, theory and practical training.

Kishugu Training Operations Manager, Steven Alderson, opened the ceremony by welcoming all present.

The graduates entertained the crowd with songs and dancing and fire-

fighters L. Sisilana, A. Xake, E. Ntuli and M. Khomontsho recited a poem which was very well received by the guests in attendance.

Acting General Manager of WOF KwaZulu-Natal, Bongani Nhlathathi, gave the keynote address and handed out certificates along with Kishugu Instructor, Michael Sibiya.

The day concluded with a vote of thanks by Thando Sambokwe, Kishugu Training Deputy Campus Manager. The new recruits have already joined their teams at their respective bases.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer



New recruits stand proudly during their graduation ceremony at Kishugu Training Academy