

## Western Cape firefighting community launches fire season

The 2019 summer fire season is here and considering the history of extreme fires in the Western Cape, the firefighting community is anticipating a busy season.

Members of the Western Cape firefighting community, including the Department of Environmental Affairs Forestry and Fisheries' Working on Fire programme, various FPAs, Cape Nature, SANParks and landowners, joined Western Cape Provincial Disaster Management who launched the Western Cape summer fire season at Lourensford in Cape Town.

WOF Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, Department of Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries Deputy Director of National Programmes, Nceba Ngcobo, and other dignitaries attended the launch where the firefighting community showcased its preparedness.

WOF demonstrated its ground crew firefighting techniques and some of its aerial resources with a water drop demonstration.

Soon after the launch, the Greater Cederberg FPA (GCF-



The water drop demonstration at the launch of the fire season held in Lourensford

PA) also launched the summer fire season, with the same stakeholders present as well as WeatherSA and local landowners. General Manager for the GCFPA, Charl du Plessis, said

they were ready and their resources were in place together with their WOF team.

During the launch, WOF was given a certificate of appreciation for its good

working relationship with the GCFPA.



Limakatso Khaliyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF introduces its first Hotshot crew for Western Cape summer fire season

A total of 114 Working on Fire firefighters, drawn from various teams across the country and known as the 'Hotshot Team', has been deployed to the Western Cape on standby for this year's summer fire season. The Hotshot Team has received intense technical firefighting training and members were selected from Working on Fire's best firefighters and crew leaders in top physical shape.

Working on Fire's National Ground Operations Manager, Martin Bolton, says, "They had very strict

training where fitness was of a very high standard. We also used the highest international standards to train them on various aspects of firefighting and fire line safety."

Forty-five members of the Hotshot Team are based at Newlands Base, 24 at Vrolijkheid Base and 45 at the Southern Cape Witfontein Base.

The Hotshot Team will be assisting with firefighting operations in the province until the end of March 2020.



Limakatso Khaliyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Some firefighters from the Working on Fire "Hotshot Team"



# 2019 IN REVIEW

It is that time of the year again when many of us are preparing to spend time with our loved ones during the upcoming festive season. In many aspects, this has been a rewarding year for all of us at Working on Fire and it is heart-warming to see how everyone involved in the programme, from firefighters to management at all levels, worked tirelessly during this year to provide uninterrupted integrated fire management services to all our stakeholders.

Our international deployment in June this year to assist with firefighting operations in Canada



The 51 WOF employees who graduated from UCT

for the third time has elevated the image and appreciation of WOF to an all-time high. Following this deployment, WOF received high accolades from our Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Barbara Creecy, and the then Canadian High Commissioner in South Africa, Sandra MacCardell. The President of the country, Cyril Ramaphosa, also mentioned Working on Fire's role in the drought relief project and praised WOF for the work it does to protect and conserve the environment.



Minister Creecy (centre), Canadian High Commissioner Sandra MacCardell (right) and Director General Nosipho Ngcaba (second from left) also welcomed home the firefighters

Working on Fire's integrated fire management expertise is sought after and this was evident when I was invited as a guest speaker to the Canada Wildfire 2019 Conference in Ottawa, Canada, which took place in November.

Our expertise was again in the spotlight during the Onrus River peat fire when WOF firefighters used a unique spike tool developed by WOF for the first time in South Africa. Together with our partners, our teams across the country responded to hundreds of fires during the winter fire season, saving lives and protecting property and the environment.


We all know that firefighting is a dangerous career. However, we can celebrate knowing that we had no lives lost this year, and for that, I would like to thank our firefighters who put safety first when responding to these fires.



Minister Barbara Creecy at OR Tambo International Airport welcoming firefighters back home




40 Working on Fire firefighters and five senior management spent almost 30 days fighting the Chuckegg Creek fire




**Wildland Fire Canada Conference**  
November 18 - November 21  
Ottawa, ON

Designed by Whova



**Trevor Abrahams**



Speaking at  
The Poverty of Fire Fighting: The Social Dynamics of Wild Land Fire Fighting in South Africa / La pauvreté...

Working On Fire

Everyone beamed with pride early this year when we hosted our very first-ever graduation ceremony for 51 management staff who completed online courses through the Get Smart programme offered by the University of Cape Town.

Some of our participants are completing their matric through the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) opportunity provided by WOF. We have also seen the training of more than 100 elite Type I interagency Hotshot members, who have been trained to the highest international standards and will serve us well in our future international deployments.

I would like to wish all our participants, management and partners a safe festive season. Those who are driving to holiday destinations, remember to be safe on the roads. To our Western Cape and Eastern Cape



WOF's spike tool used during Onrus River peat fire

participants attending fires in the current summer fire season, please exercise all safety precautions. I wish you all the best.



# Mayor launches summer fire season

Koukamma Municipality Mayor, Sam Vuso, wished all Working on Fire firefighters a safe fire season during the official launch of the summer fire season in the western part of the Eastern Cape. The summer fire season launch took place in Witelsbos on 29 November 2019.

Mayor Vuso says, "Our area is full of plantations which play the major role in job creation and if these plantations are burnt, most people get affected. That's why we are happy to see the WOF firefighters ready mentally and physically to protect our environment."

The mayor says he appreciates that WOF has also placed aerial resources (a helicopter) on standby at Witelsbos to assist with fire suppression during the summer fire season.

WOF has put a great deal of effort into preparing for the 2019/2020 summer fire season, which officially kicked off on 1 December.

Various WOF departments have conducted refresher training courses over the past few weeks to ensure that they were 100% ready to assist when WOF is called on to help.

The refresher training courses included crew leader courses, helitack



Koukamma Mayor wishes WOF firefighters a safe summer fire season

crew training and Yellow Card training for WOF participants in the Sarah Baartman region.

It is vitally important that all the role-players involved in the practical aspects of implementing Integrated Fire Management solutions are on top of their game this season, as the drought the province is experiencing poses a great risk of unwanted wildfires.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# WOF co-hosts workshop on fire safety



Value Added Industries Programme's participants learn about the importance of an emergency plan

On 29 November, the Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal Fire Awareness Department conducted a FireSafe workshop for the Value Added Industries programme at Cedara.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu, says, "The aim of the workshop is to raise awareness about the risk of fires and how they can be reduced at work and home, to ensure less damage to property and loss of livelihood and saving of lives."

The workshop touched on various topics such as what to do in case of a fire at the workplace, the evacuation drill and risk mitigation.

"Prior to the workshop, we had conducted a risk assessment where we identified some hazards which we discussed during our workshop, which included mitigating methods," says Zulu.

Working on Fire partnered with the provincial Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) to co-host the workshop.

"We are very excited as EDTEA plans to organise more FireSafe workshops with us along with other programmes they have," says Zulu.

The EDTEA Training Coordinator said, "I am very happy with the work done by WOF. Our participants learnt a lot and we hope to continue working with WOF in the future."

"Educating participants from other programmes who work with other communities is another way to reach as many people through word of mouth about fire safety," says Zulu.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

# IDDR celebrations in the Free State a huge success



The Thaba 'Nchu Team welcomes the Free State Premier

International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) is marked every 13 October in communities around the world to raise awareness of people's exposure to disasters and the importance of mitigating the risks that they face.

This year, the Free State Provincial Disaster Management Centre hosted the IDDR event at the Central University of Technology. The awareness event was attended by many stakeholders in the province including Working on Fire, Eskom, Gift of the Givers, Mangaung Fire and Rescue, Free State Emergency Medical Services, SAPS, Mangaung Mu-

nicipality and the South African Weather Service.

Each stakeholder had an exhibition stall at the IDDR event with interesting information about their organisations. The WOF Thaba 'Nchu Team drilled and forming a guard of honour for Free State Premier Sisi Ntobela. After all the formalities were concluded, the children and community members could visit the exhibition stalls and engage with organisations.



Wayne Mokheithi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

# WOF hands over fire truck to Hessequa Municipality



The fire truck designed by Working on Fire for Hessequa Municipality

Working on Fire continues to build partnerships with government entities while developing its expertise and innovation in firefighting. WOF recently handed over to the Hessequa Municipality in the Western Cape a state-of-the-art fire truck it had designed and built.

Working on Fire's Chief Operational Officer, Shane Christian, says WOF has supplied a wildfire firefighting team, a structural firefighting team and vehicles manufactured at value for money to the municipality in the fruitful working

relationship that began in 2015. "The advantage of this agreement is that WOF participants are the first to be considered for permanent jobs opportunities in the municipality," he says.

Christian says this was the second fire truck WOF had produced for the municipality. The vehicle has considerably boosted the municipality's firefighting capabilities for the summer fire season.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



# MPU teams continue to raise awareness in their communities



The WOF Belfast Team and Community Fire Awareness Officer, Mbuso Siwela, conducted a fire awareness presentation for the Siyathuthuka community

When not suppressing fires, the Mpumalanga Working on Fire teams are always hard at work, visiting various schools and communities in their region to educate the masses with fire awareness talks and presentations.

In November, the teams visited many communities to educate residents about fire prevention and doing presentations on the topic of the National Veld and Forest Act. The purpose of the Act is to prevent and manage veld and forest fires.

The teams emphasised how the Act places a duty on every individual landowner to take precautions to minimise fire risks and to combat veldfires. They also encouraged landowners to become

members of their local Fire Protection Association (FPA).

The teams also visited schools, from preschool to high school level, where they covered many topics in the WOF lesson plan with the learners. These included the 'Do's and Don'ts' for the preschoolers, to 'Dangers of Fires' and 'Safety inside the house' for the higher grades.

With the winter fire season concluded and the school year closed, the teams will continue to visit communities, spreading awareness regarding veld and forest fires.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF Limpopo helps local clean-up campaign



WOF Lepelle-Nkumpi participants joined the clean-up campaign hosted by the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality

Working on Fire Limpopo's Lepelle-Nkumpi Team took part in the environmental clean-up campaign hosted by the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality in Lebowakgomo.

The event was led by Lepelle-Nkumpi Mayor Mrs Molala and included participation by stakeholders such as the EPWP, the Department of Environmental Affairs, Lebowakgomo Taxi Association, the Moropa Complex and Zebediela Radio Station.

After dividing into five groups, the stakeholders tackled the areas targeted for the clean-up, including the Lebowakgomo Shopping Centre, the Mall@Lebo Shopping Centre, Moropa Complex, the Civic Centre, Old

Mutual and the Lebowakgomo Cultural Centre.

"Waste management is an ongoing process in which we as the community can all benefit, more especially the unemployed. People should look at recycling as a means of putting bread on the table," says Mayor Molala.

"Making Lepelle-Nkumpi areas clean doesn't need education or qualifications because it starts with our love, passion, perseverance, character and personality towards our environment. We need to preserve our environment for the future generations," says Mayor Molala.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF cleans up at Howick Falls



All stakeholders conducted a clean-up campaign in the area

Working on Fire hosted a Good Green Deeds clean-up campaign at Howick Falls in partnership with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), uMgungundlovu District and the uMngeni Local Municipality.

The Deputy Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Makhotso Sotyu, together with the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Fish Mahlalela, handed over the Green Waste Drop-off Facility to the uMngeni Local Municipality.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu, says, "We firstly had pre-activities which included fire

awareness, with the uMngeni Team speaking at local schools about the importance of keeping their community clean. We were also joined by the High Altitude Team who cleared less accessible areas during the clean-up." Howick Falls is on the Umgeni River, seven kilometres of which is within the uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve. As Howick Falls forms part of the KZN Midlands Meander Tourist Route, making it a priority tourist destination, there could be environmental challenges through pollution impacting directly on the Umgeni River that flows to the Blue Lagoon beach in Durban.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Earning eco-friendly income

Ephraim Motaung of the WOF Vaal Marina Base is recycling empty aluminium cans and glass bottles as a means to supplement his monthly stipend. He says he was introduced to recycling by an elder in the Mamellong squatter camp.

When asked what motivated him, he says the cost of living continues to rise. "I couldn't make ends meet every month," says Motaung.

Motaung says people in the community make recycling easy to do by bringing bottles and cans to him. He also goes out to collect in the surrounding areas over weekends.

What is rubbish to others helps him make extra cash for his family and assists environmental conservation. Motaung sells the recyclable items to companies in the Vaal area.

"Our landfill sites are beginning to be full. It is through these initiatives that we will lessen pressure at the fill sites," he explains. "We stay next to the Vaal Dam and we also fish here. It is important that we keep it clear of any form of littering."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Ephraim Motaung of Vaal Marina has entered the recycling space to raise extra cash



# Dewetsdorp Team commemorates World Aids Day

World AIDS Day is observed globally on 1 December to remind the public and governments that there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education about HIV/AIDS.

World AIDS Day is an opportunity to learn the facts about HIV and to put knowledge into action. Once people understand how HIV is transmitted, how it can be prevented and the reality of living with HIV, they can use this knowledge to take care of their own health and the health of others and ensure that everyone living with HIV is treated fairly, with respect and understanding.

The Working on Fire Dewetsdorp Team commemorated World AIDS day by observing a moment of silence for those who passed away as a result of the virus and those who have lost loved ones



The Dewetsdorp Team lit candles to commemorate World AIDS Day

as a result of the devastating effect the disease has had on families and society at large.

Social Development Practitioner Duduetsang Koloi says, "Our teams across the province annually join the international community in showing support for the drive to reduce the

spread of HIV/AIDS within the country. By forming part of these events, they aim to inform society that the fight against HIV/AIDS is in the hands of each individual."



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## Men from MPU discuss burning issues

Mpumalanga Working on Fire male participants were joined by the men of the WOF head office and National High Altitude Team (HAT), in a first of its kind men's conference at the WOF Head Office in Nelspruit.

The conference was arranged by the WOF Social Development Department to provide a safe platform to discuss burning issues relevant to men, as part of WOF's commitment to the fight to curb this societal problem.

The event kicked off with a heated discussion of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which was facilitated by women workers from Grip, a centre which shelters and counsels women and children who are victims of abuse.

The men discussed the root causes of GBV and suggested solutions to the problem that they could implement within the organisation, their homes and in society as a whole.

The men soaked up information from different speakers from the South



Men from across Working on Fire Mpumalanga listen attentively at the first Men's Conference

African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Correctional Services and a former inmate who was incarcerated for committing GBV.

The day concluded with a presentation by an FNB consultant, who advised participants on money

matters, and a talk by motivational speaker, Ronnie Masilela, who encouraged the men to 'be bold, decisive and act'.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## Gender awareness and GBV workshop hosted in the Free State

Working on Fire has been rolling out gender awareness and gender-based violence (GBV) workshops across the country for all of its management staff

and participants. The workshops attempt to challenge gender stereotypes and the societal expectations placed on different genders. These can lead to

abuse in different forms such as rape, child molestation, assault, verbal and emotional abuse and gender discrimination.

A workshop held in Bloemfontein educated the attendees about how these gender stereotypes can lead to the moral breakdown of society and how to effectively change behaviour and mind-sets to enable progress in communities and decrease the alarming rates of violence currently festering in South Africa.

"It was an interesting learning experience where attendees were taught the difference between gender and sex and I think, moving forward, everyone who attended the workshop will take the lessons back to their communities," says Social Development Practitioner Duduetsang Koloi.



Management staff and firefighters participating in the workshop



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF men gather to talk about gender-based violence



WOF Eastern Cape held a Men's Forum in Stutterheim

Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape held a Men's Forum in Stutterheim recently to discuss the possible reasons why women and children are abused and what role culture plays in responses to gender-based violence (GBV).

The forum followed the '16 Days' march that was organised by Kusile Women Empowerment in collaboration with WOF in the Eastern Cape.

Eastern Cape Social Development Practitioner Yvonne Nte says the forum was also meant to create a platform for WOF men to discuss issues that affect them as men in society.

During the forum, there were presentations from FAMSA and the Departments of Health and Social Development on the causes and impacts of GBV.

Some of the topics discussed were what it means to be an African man and the growing incidence of gender-based violence in the country. They also touched on men's physical and mental wellness. A pastor said that the church had a big role to play in addressing GBV, as men are guided on their roles and responsibilities.

The WOF men used the forum to brainstorm possible solutions to GBV.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



# WOF uses drama to raise awareness about abuse

As part of this year's 16 Days of Activism against Violence and Abuse of Women and Children, the Working on Fire Western Cape Social Development Department has produced a short drama that raises awareness about the victimisation of women and children.

Led by Social Development Practitioner (SDP) Collin Paulus, a group of management staff participated in the play that depicts scenes highlighting different aspects of abuse, including a domestic violence scenario and an employee who had been sexually abused by an uncle as a child.

Angelo Cole, a Dispatcher who plays a role in the drama, says, "The whole thing weighed very heavily on me because moments of abuse were enacted and I felt the pain that was inflicted on the victim during the abuse." Paulus says the play encourages those who have been victims of abuse to seek professional assistance and shows that Working on Fire SDPs were also available to help.

The team has taken the mini-drama, which is based on true stories, on a road show.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



The Sedgefield Team embarked on a door-to-door campaign to raise awareness about the abuse of women and children. The team marched through the street with placards bearing anti-violence messages

## WOF KZN launches the Men's Forum



Working on Fire men take a strong stand against women and children abuse

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal recently hosted Men's Forums in Zululand and Midlands. The forums were inspired by the realisation that many men who were responsible for family violence acted through a lack of knowledge, a lack of opportunity or space to talk about their problems, failing to open up with their issues and to seek assistance from professional practitioners, or other issues related to power and control over their partners.

KZN Social Development Practitioner Sabelo Buthelezi says, "We wanted to motivate, engage, assist and inspire men

to be examples of change in their community, to build a society where all people who live in it are free without fear."

The forums discussed various topics including men's health, which was presented by the Provincial Occupational Health and Safety Officer, Mr Ximba. His input included alcohol use, depression and suicide, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and prostate cancer.

"Guest speakers tackled the role of men in our society in the recent and ever-increasing gender-based violence cases in our communities, and the importance of ubuntu – human virtues, compassion

## Healthy body, healthy mind



WOF participants joined the Modimolle SAPS fun walk

WOF Modimolle firefighters were invited by Modimolle SAPS to participate in the SAPS sports day recently. Representatives from various government departments also took part in the fun.

The objective of the event was to encourage people to engage in fitness and sporting activities in their communities and their workplaces to keep fit and healthy. The day started very well with six WOF

participants in the fun walk finishing in the top 10. The WOF participants also performed their famous drill to entertain the spectators and played a friendly soccer match against a SAPS team.

The event was a fun opportunity to build friendship between the stakeholders and was enjoyed by all.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

and humanity," says Buthelezi. The WOF men were also split into groups that discussed the root causes of GBV and possible solutions that could change the mind-sets of men and help women and children to feel safe again.

"All in all, both sessions were successfully hosted. Participants felt free to share their thoughts and ideas, not scared of being judged. But I also saw

other men advising each other on better approaches to dealing with conflict in the future," says Buthelezi.

Both forums concluded with a march against GBV for the WOF men to show they stand against violence and the abuse of women and children.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Teams speak against violence on women and children

North West teams partnered with various stakeholders to launch the '16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children'. The teams partnered with the Department of Health, South African Police Services (SAPS), Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and community members to raise awareness in communities about the abuse of women and children.

The teams visited different communities, including Reivelo, Obakeng village and Kgakala location, and spoke about the different forms of abuse

that women and children experience in communities. They were joined by the SAPS who advised those who had been victims of domestic violence to seek help and report the perpetrators.

The other groups also explained the services they provide to victims of abuse, such as trauma counselling and victim support.

The teams that participated in the '16 Days of activism' activities included the Madikwe, Reivelo and Wolwespruit teams.

Written by Editorial team



North West teams partnered with various stakeholders to raise awareness about the abuse of women and children. Photo supplied by Madikwe BCR, Vusumzi Raphere.



# WOF participant has big business plans



Hazel Mabeba celebrates acquiring the resources that will help her business to bloom

Hazel Mabeba is a living proof that determination, passion, planning and hard work are the keys to successfully achieving a goal. When she joined WOF she had already planned how to utilise her stipend effectively.

Mabeba joined WOF as a Stores Controller for Molemole Base on 24 March 2017 after hearing that WOF had a vacancy for a disabled person.

"I grew up with a passion for designing and sewing clothes from a young age. Due to financial challenges, I couldn't pursue my dream of opening my own design and tailoring company," says Mabeba.

Mabeba saved from the stipend that she received at WOF for six months to be able to register her own company. She has registered her business on various government databases to enable her to apply for funding.

"I was a woman on a mission with a passion to be an example to our community. With the assistance of various organisations, I was able to write a

proposal to various departments, including the Limpopo Economic Development Agency, to assist me with the purchase of the resources to kick-start my project," says Mabeba.

Mabeba's dream of being a business-woman became real when LEDA donated two sewing machines to her to start her business. Mabeba now runs her business in her spare time, designing and sewing duvets and linen.

She sews on weekends and during holidays as she doesn't want her work to suffer due to her business. She is planning to expand her business to a point where she can run it full-time and employ youth from the surrounding communities.

"I would like to thank WOF for targeting people living with disability as that allowed me an opportunity to grow my confidence and to believe that I can achieve everything that I set my mind to," says Mabeba.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF Mpumalanga gets a female Regional Manager

Working on Fire Mpumalanga welcomed Busisiwe Nkambule as a Regional Manager in November.

Nkambule is the second woman in the history of the province to be appointed to this position and joins the Regional Management team of Jonas Zandamela, Sam Nkosi, Vincent Lubisi and Welcome Motha.

She will manage the LEFPA, Dullstroom, Nelspruit and Lydenburg teams and will be led by Ground Operations Managers Thabiso Mohale and Walter Khoza.

Nkambule has a lot of experience under her belt, having worked at Fire Wise Nelspruit as a project manager. She previously worked at Child Welfare Nelspruit and the Omega Centre of Management.

Prior to her appointment, Nkambule served as a Type 3 Dispatcher at the Working on Fire Provincial Office from May this year.

Nkambule has a daughter and enjoys watching movies, traveling and exercising in her spare time.

Nkambule began her new duties on 19 November and is looking forward to making a positive impact as part of the provincial management staff. WOF



Busisiwe Nkambule is the second woman in the history of Working on Fire Mpumalanga to be appointed a Regional Manager

Mpumalanga wishes her all the best in this new career chapter.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## Female firefighter selected for rugby tournament

Olwethu Nkotswana, a firefighter at the Working on Fire Wedela Team, has been selected to the Pirates women's rugby team that will compete in the 50th Emirates Airline Dubai Sevens Invitational Rugby Tournament.

The annual tournament is being held at the Sevens Stadium in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 5, 6 and 7 December 2019. The Pirates team departs from OR Tambo International Airport on 2 December and returns on 9 December.

Nkotswana says it is a great honour to participate in the international tournament. "We are going there with a winning attitude because we worked hard during our training," she says.

A confident Nkotswana says fitness levels were high among her teammates and they won't disappoint fans in Dubai.

"We recently participated in the tournament in the Western Cape and we won the title," she says. "We are looking forward to making our country proud by bringing the title home. This is my first



Olwethu Nkotswana

time leaving the country. I am excited that women's rugby is beginning to gather momentum and it will surely grow."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Cherry Marathon conquered by WOF firefighters

Ficksburg is known throughout the country as the Cherry Town as cherries are an important crop grown in this part of the eastern Free State. The Ficksburg Cherry Festival takes place during the third week in November and is in its fiftieth year.

Well-known South African artists provide live entertainment and the festival is usually hosted by a national celebrity.

This year, Working on Fire participants from the Bethlehem, Marquard, Clocolan, Heilbron, Clarens and Ficksburg teams in the Free State participated

in the half-marathon proudly wearing their yellow T-shirts as a sign of unity and solidarity. Working on Fire manned a water station to ensure that the runners rehydrated during the race. The participants performed so well that it was recognised as the second-best water station.

All the WOF participants who participated in the race managed to finish the full distance of 23 km. Vangile Khambule from Heilbron ran the race in 01:41:00, winning the ladies' event. Sipho Mofokeng, with a respectable time of 01:30:00, and Thabang



Sipho Mofokeng is provided with water by members of the Ficksburg Team

Mphuthi, who finished in 01:35:00, both securing spots in the top 15 of the men's event.



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



# The sky is the limit

Keleabetswe Baakeleng is a former firefighter at Krugersdorp Base who later became an Occupational Health and Safety administrator at the Gauteng Provincial Office.

She later worked for the Department of Environmental Affairs as a data capturer before moving to Johannesburg as a trainee metro police officer.

Baakeleng will graduate this month as a metro police officer at a passing-out parade at the Johannesburg Expo Centre.

Baakeleng says the journey has not been easy. The fitness requirements

during her training at JMPD were challenging to keep up with but she relied on her WOF programme fitness training methods.

"I started from humble beginnings like most young people. I share my story with you to inspire those who are slipping into despair. My journey has been difficult but do-able to undertake," she says, adding that she is grateful to have been part of the Working on Fire success story.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



## Thulani is new SC Fire Awareness Training Officer



WOF Eastern Cape congratulates Mkhosi on his new appointment

Working on Fire Eastern Cape's provincial management has congratulated Thulani Mkhosi on his recent appointment as the Fire Awareness Training Officer for the Southern Cape. Mkhosi will start in his new position in January 2020.

Mkhosi joined the WOF programme six years ago and has been working as the Eastern Cape Community Fire Awareness Officer for the past two years.

He was originally recruited as a firefighter at the Hogsback Team and a year later was selected for the Type 2 Crew Leader course at Break Through Academy in Mpumalanga.

In 2015, he was nominated to attend the Type 1 Crew Leader course in Mpumalanga and won the student of the course award. When he returned, he worked under the supervision of Base Manager Craig Els.

Mkhosi says that they conducted awareness in schools and communities during that time and that's when he realised how passionate he was about working with communities and schools.

"It was after this exposure that I was appointed as the Fire Awareness Facilitator for the Eastern Cape from 2016 to 2017," he says. "The journey has been tough, rocky and exciting sometimes, and with passion and hard work, I managed to be where I am today," Mkhosi says. "The journey prepared me to respond proactively to the challenges of the Working on Fire Programme."

Mkhosi thanks WOF Eastern Cape for the support given him over the years and appreciates the experience he acquired while in the province.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF helped start former firefighter's conservation career

Sthembiso Ndlovu is a former beneficiary of two expanded public works programmes (EPWPs) who is now a field ranger at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Recruited on 12 March 2011, Ndlovu was a contract worker at Working for Water before joining the Working on Fire programme.

"The programme taught me how to work and communicate with people from different backgrounds and also how to behave and to recognise everyone as an individual," says Ndlovu.

Ndlovu believes WOF was the key to obtaining his current position. "Being at WOF assist me with fitness, discipline and travelling to different areas and learning about various cultures," says Ndlovu.

He says he is enjoying conserving nature as it was something he used to do at the WOF programme. He hopes to become a manager at a nature reserve in future.

"In encouraging my former colleagues, they must never lose focus on their goals and dreams. Be patient, good things come to those who wait," says Ndlovu.



Sthembiso Ndlovu in his new uniform



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Balfour participant creates works of art

Working on Fire Mpumalanga participants assisted their Fire Protection Associations to suppress many fires during the fire season. For most participants, the long hours and energy invested in putting out these fires left little room for pursuing other passions.

This is not the case for firefighter Sibusiso Mkhize, a self-taught artist and painter who was recruited as a firefighter at Balfour Base in 2017.

"I grew up drawing everything and anything on any canvas, and when people began complimenting me, I knew I had the potential to produce work like any other artist," Mkhize says.

Mkhize now produces beautiful paintings using watercolours and also sculpts. He proudly states that he can draw on any blank canvas, and his customised T-shirts are in demand in his community.

Mkhize hopes to take his art to another level and be professionally trained in the future. He sees his work hanging in art galleries all over the world one day.



Balfour participant, Sibusiso Mkhize, showcases one of his paintings

"I thank my primary school teacher, Mr Kubheka, for teaching me the basics like mixing paint and so forth," Mkhize says.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer