



WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



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WOF assisted with the suppression of 110 fires during the 2019/2020 Summer Fire Season

Working on Fire teams and aerial firefighting crews in the Western Cape and the western parts of the Eastern Cape assisted firefighting authorities, partners and landowners with firefighting operations at 110 fires during the 2019/2020 summer fire season.

The summer fire season, which started in December 2019 and ended in April 2020, became more challenging than usual on 23 March 2020 with the announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa of the national lockdown to limit the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

However, the Working on Fire Executive Committee Incident Command led by WOF Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, adapted operational methods to ensure that WOF could continue to provide its firefighting essential services. As a result, WOF teams responded swiftly, but safely, to fires that occurred during the lockdown period in the Western Cape and the Sarah Baartman District of the Eastern Cape.



Working on Fire aerial firefighting resources flew 736 hours fighting fires across the province during this 2019/2020 fire season

In the Western Cape, over 600 firefighters from bases across the province, 16 aerial resources, as well as 114 Hotshot Crew members deployed from other provinces to beef up firefighting resources for the duration of the summer fire season, responded to multiple fires. In the western parts of the Eastern Cape, 82 firefighters stationed at five bases responded to a total of 16 fires, limiting the damage to 14 003 burned hectares. Aerial resources flew a total of 736 hours

while assisting at some of the fires that burned over 43 000 ha in the Western Cape. WOF aerial resources in the western regions flew 460 hours, dropping thousands of litres of water to douse the raging flames.

WOF Western Cape's General Manager, Melany Duthie-Surtie, expressed appreciation to everyone who worked hard during the summer fire season to assist partners in protecting properties and the environment.

"I would like to thank every firefighter, both from the province as well as visiting teams, who were deployed to assist during this fire season. Our partners are very satisfied with your work. To those who left to prepare for their province's winter fire season, we wish you all the best. Our teams remain on high alert even during the national lockdown as we provide an essential service," she says.

The WOF Eastern Cape General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, says the province is adapting its procedures for the Yellow Card Training in preparation for the winter fire season, to accommodate the lockdown regulations.

"As we wrap up the summer fire season, more than 500 firefighters will now be preparing for the Yellow Card Training which assesses their physical and emotional readiness for the winter fire season. I urge all firefighters to prioritise safety and adhere to the coronavirus hygiene recommendations," says Dyantyi.

MD Message: WOF provides uninterrupted essential services amidst the Coronavirus pandemic

The 30th of April marks the end of what we now know as phase 5 of the national lockdown announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa late last month to stop the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

During this time, Working on Fire has adapted to new methods of operating which adhere to the conditions of the national lockdown and ensure the continuation of WOF services as an essential service. Our teams were still in the summer fire



WOF Managing Director Trevor Abrahams

season in the Western Cape and the western parts of the Eastern Cape. In KwaZulu-Natal, which is in the winter fire area, one team was able to swiftly respond to fires while on home standby, giving us the confidence to be able to provide uninterrupted essential services during these trying times.

I would like to thank the Working on Fire National COVID-19 Incident Command (IC), for taking pro-active steps to ensure that WOF adheres to lockdown regulations while providing an essential service and to ensure that management, staff and participants adapt to the 'new normal' in order to mitigate against the spread of the pandemic. With the phased-

in approach of the national lockdown, as the COVID-19 IC, we have been working on the 'Ready for Work' plan which will be effective 1 May 2020 looking at each province's risk for Coronavirus. We looked at various approaches to ensure all the provinces' functional and operational staff are protected from Coronavirus, monitoring and screening of firefighters, especially targeting those who are ill, and accessing flu vaccine to minimise the spread of COVID-19. We plan to have non-essential staff work from home.

We have put on hold the ABET and University of Cape Town graduation ceremonies and had to postpone the Yellow Card Training (YCT) to the second week in May and June and extend the current Yellow Cards' expiry date to the end of July.

Our firefighters have been preparing for the YCT, which is annual refresher training that assesses the physical fitness and operational knowledge and skills of our firefighters as part of the Winter Fire Season Readiness. This year, the yellow card will be conducted base-by-base

while observing COVID-19 protocols and personal hygiene recommendations.

The outbreak of COVID-19 as a global pandemic has necessitated drastic measures as governments try to contain the spread of the virus. Some of these measures have created extreme hardship for many, especially the poor. As WOF, our management has made donations amounting to some R480,000 to the Solidarity Fund, which has been set up to address the extreme socio-economic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 regulations. We reiterate and recognise that some in management were not able to make the commitment now but may still be able to do so in the future.

I urge our participants, management, partners, stakeholders and South Africans to do our part to comply with our government's efforts to minimise the spread of Coronavirus and play your role in your own community.

PARTICIPANTS AND MANAGEMENT SHARE THEIR NATIONAL LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCES

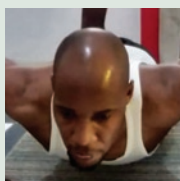
Zintle Dudumashe from St Francis Bay Base, the Eastern Cape



During this lockdown as coronavirus threatens our lives, I've realised that life is short. But the advantage of it is that we get to spend more time with family while home on standby. We pray, play cards and sing together. On my side, I isolate myself, follow the lockdown and hygiene rules and I do my push-ups and sit-ups in the morning in my room, to keep my body fit and strong. Let's be safe firefighters. The country needs us. Together, we can beat this coronavirus pandemic.

Lucky Morajane, Driver at Reitz Base

I am enjoying lockdown more than I thought I would. Because I couldn't be with my family I thought it would be a long, boring lockdown, but it's not. When I get up in the morning, I do a one-hour physical workout and again later in the day for 30 minutes to keep my body healthy. Plus, lots of reading during the day. I've completed the book called 'My MAMIWOTA' and now I'm reading the book 'Wired Love'. I boost myself with some music as well.

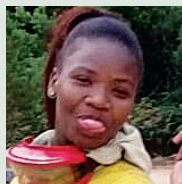


Allistair Ferndale from Uniondale Base



It is a privilege to go to work daily as essential services, to be on standby for any fires that might burn while people are in lockdown. It is also good for me to continue working because most people are bored at home. On the other hand, at the base we have activities that keep us busy. Sometimes working is frustrating and scary because of the virus.

Zanele Nkhoesa from Helderberg Base



Working during lockdown is a good thing for me because it helps to keep me busy and not to stress about what is going on, because thinking a lot about it gives me anxiety. It also breaks my heart to know that other people will not have a salary in April. For those who are supposed to be at work, let's do the right thing - put on the gloves, masks, and let's not to forget washing our hands. Working together as a country, we can beat this COVID-19.

Sibongile Hlatshwayo, Type 1 Crew Leader from Normandien Base

I taught myself more about the coronavirus and the safety precautions I must follow to stay safe and be in good health. I had a lot of time to spend with my family, as much as it is very difficult to stay indoors. But we have to as it is safer. I spend most of my time doing indoor activities. I cook for my family, bake, read books, do schoolwork with my kids and exercise. I have made it my mission to also educate my family about the dangers of this virus. I miss going to work.



Hlengiwe Mbele, BCR from Underberg Base

When it first started, I had a lot of fear. It sounded like it was going to be a lot of deaths. But as the days progressed in the lockdown, I got used to being at home and agreed with my family that being at home is the best way to be safe. We are experiencing being with family 24/7 which is unusual as we spend more time at work. We get time to bond with family but it's also frustrating, with lack of public transport to go to shops. But I'm learning a lot about my children, seeing another side to their creativity and helping with schoolwork.



Sbongiseni Gumede, Base Communications Representative from Albert Falls Base



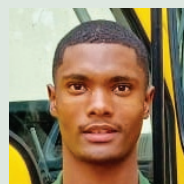
My challenge started when we were advised not to touch our faces. I have an issue with my eyes which are also irritable. If I've rubbed my eye, I would sometimes think I have the virus. Since I'm used to waking up early, I wake up at 3am, browse the internet and make breakfast. By 8am, I'm done with most of my chores. I don't go out to my friends, so I don't increase the chances of contracting the virus. The winter fire season is around the corner. I have started exercising to stay fit and I feel ready for the Yellow Card Training Camp. If we work together, we will curb the increase of this virus but only if we, especially the youth, respect the regulations.

Martha Tepo, North West Fire Awareness Training Officer

At first it was depressing having to be home 24/7. What I have learned is to discipline myself in terms of eating healthily, exercising and do my daily work commitments on time. I drafted a timetable of meals to eat and what exercises to do, which I incorporate in my daily work. I also read novels and watch movies during weekends. This experience taught me that I should value the life I have and continue practicing a hygienic lifestyle, even after the lockdown. I miss my family but can't be with them. I miss going out to bases doing workshops with teams and having fun. I hope one day everything will go back to normal again.



Marcellino Cedras from Mamre Team



It feels good to know that I am part of the essential services protecting the country from fires during this time of lockdown. Other than that, the lockdown does not affect me because I live close to the base and I always have my permit with me in case I get stopped by the police.

Ziyanda Craggs from Mbombela Base

It is not easy, because I am constantly living in fear of catching the virus. It is hard to trust that anyone I come into contact with, especially colleagues, does not have the virus. It is not nice to live in fear. On the other hand, I am glad that I wake up daily for the good cause.



Poem by Portia Ntsala, Free State participant



COVID-19 have mercy.
It started small...
We even used it as a source of comedy.
We knew we were strong...
Until it affected one of us.
Until you, COVID-19, robbed us...
robbed us of our FREEDOM.
The Sun rose each day and so did the numbers.
Our Schools are closed.
Our Dreams are shattered.
Our Opportunities are fading each day.
Have you not sympathy?
We are restricted movement.
Stores are closed...
Children are crying... crying in hunger.
Fathers are dying... dying of drowning in worries.
Mothers are suffering... suffering from hearing the cries of their children.
We have people in hospitals, people are sick and hungry.
Are you not ashamed???
Let us stay strong for one another.
Let us unite.
One day, the sun will rise and the numbers will not.
Always do what is good and right,
In businesses, relationships and life.
That way, the Universe always knows what to give you back.

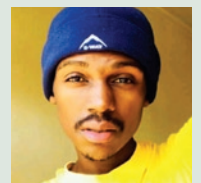
Nche Annah from Barberspan Base



What I have noticed during this lockdown is that people are not taking the lockdown seriously. They are roaming the streets risking their lives. The President announced the lockdown to help the country fight COVID-19. I would like to encourage everyone to stay home and practice good hygiene. Together as South Africans, we can fight COVID-19.

Zukile Dhlomo, firefighter from Castello Base

The coronavirus lockdown has brought a new day-to-day life change as we had to adapt to the new restrictions imposed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the address to the nation about the lockdown. As a person who loves to go out, it is an extremely stressful and traumatic experience. I no longer go to crowded places, don't shake hands and I stay at home. This has affected me badly as we had to leave the project in Western Cape to return in North West before the date that was allocated to us. I'm just concerned about the winter fire season. Currently, we can't do fire awareness or fuel load reduction in schools and communities due to the lockdown regulations.



Mbazwana Team battles the first fire during the national lockdown



Mbazwana Team suppresses a fire at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries plantation

In the midst of the national lockdown due to the global coronavirus (COVID-19), the Working on Fire Mbazwana Team was called out to attend a fire in the community, just before the official start of the winter fire season.

KZN Acting General Manager Bongani Nhlabathi says, "As Working on Fire, it was not unusual for our Zululand coastal teams to receive fire call-outs as early as January this year."

WOF has suppressed 10 fires since 4 January, mostly in the Zululand area. People are encouraged to immediately report signs of smoke or fire to the authorities. This will help reduce the damage to properties and the environment and save lives. "Community members must please trim overhanging

trees near their homes, create a fire-break around their property and practice candle safety in their homes.

As we are in a national lockdown due to the COVID-19, parents must also be reminded to lock flammable substances away from their children's reach," says Nhlabathi.

It is imperative that community members only start a fire if weather conditions permit and fires must not be left unattended. Working on Fire participants are currently on standby at home in case of any emergency during the lockdown period. Let's stay at home and be safe.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Western Cape teams fight seven fires during lockdown

Western Cape teams were declared essential workers during the lockdown that was imposed on the country to manage the spread of COVID-19. So far, Western Cape WOF teams have already assisted in suppressing seven fires during the lockdown.

Three of the fires were extinguished in the Southern Cape with the assistance of the Hottentots Holland, Bredasdorp and Concordia teams and a Hotshot crew. The Tulbagh, Kluitjieskraal and Vredenburg teams as well as WOF aerial resources assisted in putting out four other fires in the western parts of the

province. Vredenburg Base Communication Representative Keletso Mosito says the team enjoys being in the field as fighting fires provides a different atmosphere during lockdown.

"Working during lockdown is a privilege because instead of sitting and doing nothing at home we do not get that bored. When we are at work we come up with various ideas to keep the day going and educate ourselves as well," he says.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Teams swiftly contain fires despite the lockdown



Working on Fire Eastern Cape teams responded to three fires during the national lockdown

Working on Fire's Coronavirus Incident Command (IC) has worked tirelessly since the national lockdown was announced to adapt normal operational procedures to adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures and ensure that WOF continues to provide firefighting services.

The Witelsbos and Tsitsikamma teams, which had been on standby, successfully put the adapted procedures to the test when they responded to three fires in the Eastern Cape during the national lockdown. The fires occurred in the Eersterivier and Woodlands areas. The swift response of the teams assisted the local fire authorities to contain the fires. WOF Eastern Cape General Manager,

Phumza Dyantyi, thanked the teams for their commitment to their duty during the lockdown period. In terms of government COVID-19 regulations, firefighting is deemed an essential service.

"Being able to provide an unhindered service proves that our adapted operational procedures are working. We will continue to provide firefighting services while protecting our participants and adhering to coronavirus prevention measures. I must also thank our management who ensured that all our firefighters were issued masks and gloves as part of our coronavirus prevention measures," she says.

Written by Editorial team



The Vredenburg Team mops up after an underground fire earlier this year

Six WOF teams assist in fighting Table Mountain fire in Cape Town

A fire robbed some Capetonians in Tafelberg Road, Cape Town, of their cars and properties in March.

The fire erupted shortly after mid-day on a windy Sunday in the Mother City. Four WOF aerial resources were immediately dispatched but were stood down due to the intensity of the windy weather.

"When we measured the wind at the time we dispatched aerial resources it was 60km/h but it went up, gusting to about 80km/h. So we had to stand down the helicopters because it was too dangerous to fly," says Philip Prins, the Table Mountain National Parks fire chief.

The Newlands Team and the Hotshot crew were among the six teams that were dispatched for the initial attack on the flames and six fire trucks were deployed to fight the raging fire.

The fire ravaged parts of Signal Hill and Lion's Head before it reached the edge of residential areas where it destroyed a number of houses and cars before being extinguished.

Prins says the fire burned a total of about 60 ha and was very dangerous because it had burned near residential areas.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Firefighters battle Tafelberg Road fire

WOF garden already feeding participants



It's been a month since Working on Fire Limpopo's Social Development Department launched the food security project at Phiphidi Base.

Since the country is on national lockdown which is meant to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, the WOF Phiphidi participants are grateful to the programme for implementing the food garden. "The timing was perfect as we are now benefitting from our garden. The lockdown came as a surprise and it's something that we've never experienced before. However, the garden is making things easier for us," says Tiny Tshivhase, Type 2 Crew Leader at Phiphidi Base.

The Phiphidi participants have already started harvesting vegetables such as spinach and mochoina (mustard greens) that they planted in March. They have also planted aloe as aloe gel is a good topical treatment for cuts and

burns which the WOF firefighters are exposed to on a daily basis.

WOF launched the food security project to encourage people to plant their own vegetables and herbs which will assist them in their diet and reduce household expenses.

"We are planning on creating similar gardens at the local community centres to assist our communities to eat healthily and to encourage them to learn to plant their own food," says Tshivhase.

With a steady supply of vegetables from their garden, the participants at Phiphidi Base will be able to use more of their stipends for other needs. By making land and resources available, WOF has reduced another burden for its participants.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire partners SEBEI in ecological infrastructure study



The Department of Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) Working on Fire Programme (WOF) has partnered with Socio-Economic Benefits of Ecological Infrastructure (SEBEI), a project of the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI) institute of the University of Cape Town, through the High Altitude Drought Relief Project.

The project aims to improve the water supply of Department of Water and Sanitation storage structures, including the Nagle and Inanda Dams.

Climate change has made rainfall in South Africa more erratic and less predictable, increasing the likelihood of floods and droughts. With a mean annual rainfall of only 450 mm per year, and equivalent potential evaporation of about five times this figure, South Africa is a water scarce country. The demand for water is outstripping supply in most provinces due to population growth and economic development.

High Altitude Project Manager Henry Nene says, "The High Altitude Drought Relief Project was part of a workshop with SEBEI which aimed to provide an evidence base of the socio-economic and hydrological benefits of these investments and

to showcase them in a prototype investment case.

"During the workshop we established that removing invasive alien plants in river catchments is a motivation to invest in ecological infrastructure, depending on the type of investor, e.g. communities, municipalities, national government, private sector."

WOF's High Altitude Teams (HAT) specialise in accessing mountainous river catchments that are difficult to reach by vehicle. By removing the alien vegetation the HAT teams make more water available for human use.

There are six study sites being investigated in this project, three of which are in the uMngeni catchment in KZN and three in the Berg-Breede catchment in the Western Cape. The uMngeni catchment is of great economic significance and contributes an estimated 11% towards South Africa's annual GDP.

This investment in ecological infrastructure not only safeguards the water supply in communities but contributes directly to poverty alleviation, thus serving the key aim of the WOF programme.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Nkomazi Base firefighter also fights for human rights



Lydia Sono epitomises rising above one's circumstances to be the best person one can be. Despite experiencing a horrific attack she still has a lot of compassion and is doing amazing things in her community.

Born and raised in Schoemansdal in Nkomazi, Lydia knew she was different and grew up identifying with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community. This led directly to her being raped. After being frustrated with not getting the help and justice she needed, Lydia stood up for herself and formed an LGBTQ community support group.

The young activist and advocate against gender-based violence (GBV) joined Working on Fire in 2017 and says being part of such an organisation has given her even more courage in her advocacy.

She especially tries to live by one of WOF's main objectives of 'Saving Lives'.

"What I love about WOF is that it is inclusive of everyone and I experienced first-hand how supportive they are when it comes to human rights and dignity," says Sono.

Sono is now a familiar face at anti-GBV platforms across the province and her work was acknowledged when she received the Mpumalanga Sunrise Women Award in the Humanitarian category.

Sono continues to hold the WOF flag high, and is scheduled to speak at a global LGBTQ summit to be held in Johannesburg soon.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Uniondale Team adapts routines to lockdown regulations



Uniondale Team at a parade during the lockdown

Although Working on Fire firefighters were declared essential services workers during the national lockdown, the Uniondale Team in the Western Cape went the extra mile to adhere to lockdown regulations while continuing to do their duties.

The team adjusted its morning and afternoon parades to ensure that there was enough spacing between participants, as a preventative measure against the highly contagious COVID-19, which is known to be

spread by physical contact with the virus. Rather than stand close to each other for a normal parade, the participants resorted to forming a circle instead.

The firefighters disinfect their gym equipment and sanitize their hands regularly to ensure they are safe from the deadly virus and assist to combat its spread.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

WOF manager makes a difference during lockdown



Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, Nkululeko Willies Mlanjeni, delivers food parcels to those in need in his community

Many Working on Fire employees apply the company value of 'making a difference' beyond the call of duty. One such example is Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, Nkululeko Willies Mlanjeni. With the help of his family, Mlanjeni donated food parcels to those in need in the community of KwaMlungisi Location in Stutterheim.

"This has been a custom in our family to support those who are less fortunate because we know most of them depend on social grants, which are often not enough," says Mlanjeni. "As a lot of families

spend time at home during the lockdown, this has taken a toll on those who are less fortunate, as they run out of essential food items. My family donated food parcels to two families. We are proud that as a young family we play our part in the community during these trying times."

With the help of local supermarkets, Mlanjeni hopes to continue providing relief during the lockdown to those hardest hit economically in his community.

Written by Editorial team

Free State management staff assist participant in need



Free State Acting General Manager, Lazola Banzana, hands Jeffrey Mosala a generous cash donation on behalf of the Free State Management staff

During recent floods experienced in the Free State, Jeffrey Mosala, a participant from the Bloemfontein Team, had his home destroyed before his eyes. Household goods and various items of sentimental value were washed away while they were inside their home.

Management staff from the WOF Free State provincial and regional offices were made aware of the situation and immediately took it upon themselves to ease Mosala's burden. They donated various household items and appliances in

addition to a cash gift to assist Mosala and his partner to purchase essential items.

"On behalf of my partner and myself, I would really like to thank the management staff for this gift. It shows that management cares about us as participants. This will help us greatly in getting some of the essentials that we lost in the flood," says Mosala.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Graduate hoping for a better future

Teboho Mofokeng was a disillusioned young man in 2019. After completing a B.Com degree in Sports and Recreation Management at North West University in 2018, Mofokeng had returned home and applied for jobs for eight months without success.

The unemployed graduate then heard that recruitment was taking place for a new Working on Fire team that was being opened in the small town of Reitz in the Free State and decided to give it a shot.

He was duly selected after passing the fitness test and interview and sent to the training academy to train to become a veld and forest firefighter. He received further training and was appointed as a first-aider for the Reitz Team.

Mofokeng says being at WOF is assisting his search for employment, preferably in marketing or facilities management.

"I would like to thank WOF for the opportunity to be part of the organisation. Previously, while I was still unemployed, I had to go to the local library to search and apply for jobs. However, since receiving my stipend, I'm able to purchase data and this makes it easier to search and apply for jobs on the internet," says Mofokeng.



Teboho Mofokeng



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

MPU teams raise awareness in community and schools

Working on Fire Mpumalanga teams from all regions were hard at work during the months of January and February visiting schools and their communities, raising awareness about fire dangers and how to be fire safe, before the COVID-19 pandemic halted fire awareness activities.

The main topics for the three months were 'Inside the house safety', 'Fireproof your home' and, as February was Wetlands Month, 'Wetlands'.

Each team visiting more than three schools and communities.

The Wakkerstroom Team also assisted their base partners, Birdlife South Africa and the Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre, as they hosted various schools in celebration of Wetlands Day.

Although the day is usually marked on 2 February annually, Wakkerstroom and Birdlife South Africa held theirs



One of the Mpumalanga teams doing an awareness activity at a school

on 20 February. The day consisted of educational presentations from different organisations, including WOF, with the consistent theme being that of preserving our wetlands because of their great importance to our ecosystem.

As soon as lockdown restrictions are eased, WOF teams will again educate the community at large to prevent fires and protect the environment.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

WOF teams enjoy a fun evening at open-air cinema

Working on Fire's False Bay, Mamre, Helderberg and Strand teams and managers spent an evening at The Galileo Open Air Cinema at Central Park, Century City 2, where they enjoyed a burger meal and the screening of the movie, 'A dog's journey'.

The teams were invited to the event by the management of the Cinema, which launched the 'Local Heroes' campaign as a token of appreciation for organisations and individuals making a positive impact on communities.

Helderberg's BCR, Zanele Nkhosha, says she and her team appreciated the outing and they had a good time.

"We are happy that the community sees us as their heroes. We will continue making them proud," she says.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



The False Bay Team about to enjoy the evening

False Bay crew leaders do themselves proud in marathon

The WOF False Bay Team in the Western Cape prides itself on its team members, who are gym fanatics and marathon enthusiasts.

Just before the country was ordered to adhere to the COVID-19 lockdown rules, two False Bay crew leaders, Pascal Joseph and Nosipho Mpande, Vredenberg Crew Leader, Thandile Joseph participated in the annual Weskus Marathon at Langebaan on the West Coast. Type 1 Crew Leader Pascal Joseph finished the race in a very competitive 14th place and clocked 02:54:31.

After weeks of training, Mpande finished her first-ever 42 km marathon with pride. "It was my first time running 42 km. I was a runner in school but I



Pascal Joseph, Thandile Joseph and Nosipho Mpande at the Weskus Marathon

started full force last year with small races, 10 and 15 km. I did the race in 3 hours and 40 minutes," she says.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

WOF athletes do well at 2020 Surrender Hill Marathon



Sipho Mofokeng, Roselina Khambule, Azola Bangani and Thabang Mphuthi

Working on Fire made an impact in the 2020 Surrender Hill Marathon event on 7 March. The races started in Clarens in the Free State and challenged runners with difficult uphill stretches in the surrounding mountains. In addition to the marathon, the programme included a half-marathon and 10 km race.

Azola Bangani, the acting Regional Manager, completed the Men's 10 km race in a time of 1:22:52 and Roselina Khambule from Heilbron Base finished the Women's 10 km race with a time of 1:24:11. In the Men's 21 km race, Thabang Mphuthi from Golden Gate Base finished the race in ninth place in a time of 01:24:48 and colleague Sipho Mofokeng, also from Golden Gate, completed the race in 01:34:10, earning him a spot just outside the top 20.

"This was my fifth time competing in the Surrender Hill race. It is one of the most difficult races in South Africa with the long rolling hills. This race serves as a qualifier for the Comrades and Two Oceans Marathons," says Bangani.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



Waterval Boven participants do fuel load reduction at the Blaauboschkraal stone ruins

Waterval Boven team safeguards ancient stone ruins

In what has become an annual fixture on their calendar, the Waterval Boven Team, led by its base partner, the Lowveld and Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA), conducted fuel load reduction on 6 February at the Blaauboschkraal stone ruins.

The ruins are a provincial heritage site thought to be the remains of structures created by people who settled in the region in the 16th century, who built extensive terraces and round stone dwellings and kraals in the high-altitude grasslands.

The project, begun by Johan Heine in conjunction with LEFPA and Working on Fire, contributes to the conservation of the historical site by clearing and cleaning the ruins to reduce the risk of fire.

The Waterval Boven area is rich with history and the stone ruins are among a number of heritage sites located in the area.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Crew leader fashion creation shines at Miss Teen KZN Top Model

KwaZulu-Natal Normandien Team Crew Leader Sibongile Hlatshwayo showcased one of her amazing fashion creations at the Miss Teen KZN Top Model SA 2019 competition in Umhlanga. Her outfit was worn by the winner, 16-year-old Unè Boshoff, the daughter of WOF KZN Provincial Coordinator Michelle Ferreira.

"My daughter has been modelling since she was seven and loves being in front of the camera. She had only been part of the Reflection Model Agency for a very short while when she was given a last-minute opportunity to enter the KZN Top Model SA semi-finals," says Ferreira.

Unè had to have two outfits for her pageant, a 'cultural' outfit and an evening dress. She immediately said she was proudly South African and would love to wear a traditional Zulu outfit because she now lived in KZN and felt that it was part of her culture.

"I asked dispatchers and also my provincial colleagues if they know of anyone who could make a traditional outfit for Unè. Precious from HR referred me to a crew leader in Normandien, Sibongile Hlatshwayo. I made contact with her and she sent me pictures and ideas of things she had made previously. I immediately fell in love with her work," says Ferreira.

Hlatshwayo was very excited to make the dress despite having only two weeks to make it and was able to complete the task. "The dress fitted Unè like a glove and a beautiful friendship was formed. Sibongile has



Sibongile Hlatshwayo with Unè

such talent and such a passion for her work and for her designs, we were proud to show off her work at the KZN Top Model Finals," says Ferreira.

As Miss Teen KZN Top Model SA 2019, Unè carries the title for a year and qualified to be a finalist in the Miss Teen Globe SA which will be held in 2020. This will open doors for her on an international level in modelling.

KZN Top Model SA is a non-profit organisation formed to build confidence and leadership and to give the youth platforms to showcase their talents and encourage them to become role models in their communities.

"Zakhele Khumalo, the founder of KZN Top Model, commented on the ramp that Unè looked like a princess," Ferreira proudly says.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Base manager transfers skills



One of the teams in Gauteng doing fence maintenance in the West Rand

The Roodeplaat Team is singing the praises of their base manager, Nathi Ngobeni, for transferring skills in the layout and design of a wire fence at the nature reserve.

Ngobeni has been with the reserve for more than 20 years and has been working with the team since 2012.

Crew Leader Katlego Molapo says they were learning vital skills for free from Ngobeni that they could use in their homes or render as a service to communities. Molapo says the team was given the opportunity to do the actual work and not just observe.

"We are obliged to be hands-on otherwise the base manager feels we won't learn anything," he says.

Ngobeni says some of the crew members could start their own businesses but they needed to believe in themselves and stop lacking confidence.

"There is demand for fencing since it serve to delay and deter criminals from entering peoples' personal spaces," says Ngobeni enthusiastically.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Innovating safety of kids

De Wildt Team driver, Katlego Moleele, is using his carpentry skills to communicate fire awareness to learners in schools through self-made robots.

He says he records fellow firefighters doing the fire awareness activities and then plays the recordings later for others. There is a rechargeable battery and a music player in the speaker of his device.

Moleele, who says the safety of children is a subject that is close to his heart, thinks the idea could be adopted by the Department of Basic Education to improve the schoolchildrens' safety on roads, such as when learners cross roads while

going to school in the morning and afternoon.

"I will make more speakers. I have carpentry skills acquired from the training academy in Nelspruit. We need to take fire awareness to the next level because the safety of kids and people is vital. This can be used to educate young ones all the time," he says.

Crew Leader Michael Baloyi says Moleele's innovation, which they want to roll out to more centres, can go a long way to helping children's safety.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Katlego Moleele displays the tools of safety that he makes

All-rounder is now his own boss



Senzo Ziquba (first left, front row) with some of the young people he employs

Senzo Ziquba, a former WOF KwaZulu-Natal High Altitude Type 1 Crew Leader, is now his own boss.

Ziquba well remembers being recruited in March 2009 at the New Germany Nature Reserve by then Type 1 Crew Leader Henry Nene, who is now a HAT Project Manager.

"Before joining the programme, I had part-time jobs here and there, mowing people's yards to earn money. Working on Fire was my first permanent employment," says Ziquba.

"There are a lot of things that I learned while working at the Working on Fire/HAT Programme, especially that when you work hard, you can achieve your goals. I also learnt a lot about respect," he says.

After completing his 21 days' training in veld and forest firefighting, he completed the chainsaw operator's certificate.

"I later attended a very difficult Type 2 Crew Leader course in 2011 in the Western Cape and came back to lead a 60-men crew. In 2012, I attended the Type 1 Crew Leader course, followed by rope access training and then moved to the High Altitude

Team," says Ziquba. He proudly recalls completing a driver's course in 2014 and becoming one of the first crew leaders who could drive.

Ziquba took the bold step of resigning in September 2019. He has started his own company and created employment for eight crew members who are doing rope access work in mountainous terrain.

"Thanks to my experience, I am enjoying my new journey and working closely with other people. I prioritise empowering my employees to plan the work that needs to be done on their own, and encourage respect for each other," says Ziquba.

He encourages his former colleagues to respect their jobs, be a positive influence in their teams and not rest until they reach their goals.

"Respect for your job and others can take you far in life. Thank you so much to Working on Fire and HAT for the opportunities they gave me," Ziquba says.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Farming is her first passion

Dineo Mohlabe grew up in Sekororo Bellville village in the Maruleng Local Municipality. Unusually for a girl, Mohlabe was very interested in herding the cattle and goats while growing up.

"I was always passionate about farming, but at first, my family thought it was just a dream and wanted me to have dreams like other girls. But in my heart I knew what I wanted and told myself that one day I will follow my dreams," she says.

In 2013, she enrolled in a hospitality course at Sekhukhune FET College but, after completing level 2 of the course, couldn't continue due to financial constraints. She graduated instead with a diploma in computer studies from Lindeli College in 2014.

In 2015, after she became a victim of gender-based violence, she left her family home to find her own place.

"After moving out, my grandfather gave me a cow and told me that it would assist me in the future. I knew that my grandfather trusted me as he always encouraged me to pursue farming as a career," says Mohlabe.

After operating her own tuck shop selling light meals at a local school, Mohlabe joined WOF in March 2016 as a firefighter at Sekororo Base.

"I borrowed money from my mother to buy two cows to expand my livestock. I used the stipend that I was earning at WOF to repay the loan from my mother, which made it easy for me to go back to borrow more money from her after paying off the first loan, she says.



Dineo Mohlabe enjoys spending time with the livestock on her farm when not saving lives and protecting the environment

Dineo now co-owns a farm with her fiancé where she farms with cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and broiler chickens. She employs two local workers who assist her in running the farm while she's at work saving lives and protecting the environment.

She is being assisted by the Department of Social Development with a business plan and funding applications.

"I'm planning to leave firefighting in the future to focus on my livestock farming business. I'm thankful to WOF for giving me the opportunity to pursue my dream. If it wasn't for the stipend, I wouldn't be where I am today. Thank you WOF," says Mohlabe.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Ex-participant stays true to his dream

Nneo Ntekwane of the Maropeng Team is officially a 'former' firefighter after recently exiting the programme to become a general worker at RCL Foods, the giant chicken meat producer that consumers still known as Rainbow Chickens.

He says Working on Fire was his economic refuge, which came to his rescue and helped his household to survive poverty. He left because the new employer offered a better salary which sustains him as the breadwinner at home.

Ntekwane says he is hanging onto his dreams and that his former colleagues

should also try to remain positive at all times.

"I have always wanted to complete my diploma in electrical engineering. I had financial hurdles when studying, hence I had to drop out. But I've found a new lease to my career and I am using it effectively," says Ntekwane.

Ntekwane adds that he wants to start an electrical workshop in future.

"You need to be optimistic to succeed and stay focused on the dream you want to achieve," he says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Nneo Ntekwane says WOF served as his economic refuge during hard times

Overseas deployment sparks new business



Sello Mdaka ventured into property development after returning from Canadian deployment

Sello Mdaka of the Roodeplaat Team saw an opportunity thanks to his deployment to Canada to kick-start a property development business. Mdaka is building rooms to rent out with the money he earned in Canada.

"I applaud the senior management of the programme for providing a financial adviser after returning from the deployment," Mdaka says.

This enabled him to think deeply about how to make the money work for him.

"I thought, 'This is going to take me into economic participation. I have earned the money in a hard way therefore investing it in business makes sense,'" says Mdaka, who was determined to spend the money wisely.

He started his business after realising that there was a huge demand for residential rentals and that potential clients were already engaging him.

"The business will be a lifetime investment," says Mdaka, who has already been able to build a house for his family.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer