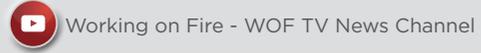




WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire teams gear up for winter fire season

Working on Fire firefighters throughout the country have begun the Yellow Card Training (YCT) which forms part of WOF's annual winter fire season readiness which begins on 1 June. Due to COVID-19, which has temporarily changed our way of living, WOF has adjusted the YCT to ensure smaller groups

camp. This adjustment reduced the risk of teams travelling and gathering in large groups.

During the YCT, the firefighters were assessed on their physical fitness and operational knowledge and firefighting skills while adhering to coronavirus health and safety guidelines, such as wearing masks and face shields and maintaining social distancing. The new regime includes washing of hands and sanitising of equipment.

Scores of teams from the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and North West teams have started the YCT at their respective bases. All teams are expected to have completed their YCT by the end of July.

After all the teams have completed their Yellow Card Training more than 5 000 firefighters will be stationed on high alert at almost 200 bases throughout the country as the winter fire season nears. They will continue to assist partners with integrated fire management services such as fuel load reduction through prescribed burning.



COVID-19 prevention measures were taken during all Yellow Card Training, participants wore masks or face shields among other measures

are being trained at their bases to minimise the spread of the virus.

Previously, the YCT camps hosted up to five teams per camp with more than 100 firefighters gathered at the



The Yellow Card Training is done annually to assess firefighters' skills and fitness as part of WOF Winter Fire Season readiness



Outgoing Department of Environment Forestry and Fisheries Director General, Nosipho Ngcaba has been a strong supporter of Working on Fire throughout the years

WOF bids farewell to Nosipho

Dear Nosipho,

On behalf of the entire Working on Fire family, we wish to extend to you all our best wishes for the future.

You have always been a great supporter of the young men and women in Working on Fire and we want to thank you for your contribution in having developed this programme into one of our most successful Expanded Public Works Programmes.

We thank you for always having been willing to listen to us and for the time you put aside to engage with our participants.

The success of the Working on Fire programme over the past 17

years was built on a solid partnership with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, which was aided by your resolute leadership and support of Working on Fire.

Your dedication and commitment to ensuring that Working on Fire is able to provide employment opportunities to our youth and make a huge contribution to protecting our environment through integrated fire management practices have contributed enormously to our success.

We wish you well in your future endeavours. We will never forget you. Enkosi kakhulu!

Working on Fire Management and participants.

PARTICIPANTS HAPPY WITH WOF RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 Calamity

by **Admire Sebula**

Where do you come from?

I would desire to know your place of origin.

Day in and day out, the subject matter is you.

When I switch on my small screen, my radio, you still are the topic.

At the funerals, celebrations and weddings, the topic is still you,

We are tired of you.

And Oh, my Lord save our world an enemy is here to stay and kill,

He kills black and white, big and small, young, and old.

Our strengths are gone,

Our hopes are broken,

Our future is dying, where do you come from?

I want to know your place of origin.

Government, give us medicine to cure this parasite so we can keep our nation alive.

You are a cruel disease.

Brothers and sisters, keep social distancing,

Stay at home,

Wash your hands frequently,

Sanitise your hands and utensils,

Cover your coughs and sneezes to be able to combat this enemy.

Together we can.



Admire Sebula, a Type 3 Dispatcher at Limpopo shared his views about the COVID-19 pandemic through a poem

Human Love/Self Worth

by **Portia Ntsala**

You are not your AGE, nor the size of the clothes you wear

You see - You are bigger and greater than that.

You are not your WEIGHT, nor the colour of your hair...

You see - You are more beautiful than that.

You are not your NAME, nor the dimples on your cheeks...

You see - You are brighter and smarter than that.

You are all the books you read, as that reveals who you are.

You are all the words you speak, as that is determined by your behaviour.

You are your croaky morning voice, as that determines the start of your day.

You are all the smiles you are trying to hide, as that reveals how strong you can be.

You are the sweetness in your laughter, as that shows off the joy in you.

You are every tear you have cried, as that strengthens you.

You are made of so much BEAUTY, but you seemed to forget,

When you decided that you were defined by all the things you are not.

Remember your WORTH...

Remember you are HUMAN.



Believe in yourself

by **Mathews 'Raz Mathaz' Mthimunye, Type 1 Crew Leader, Dullstroom Base**

Some people find it difficult to believe in themselves because they think there are people who are better than them.

There is no one who's better than anyone, even though some people do better things than others, they are not necessarily better people.

Do not give up on yourself,

even if the pace you are walking seems slower than others.

People are facing many challenges in life

but they persevere because they believe in themselves.

Believe in yourself.



Ofentse Marope, Type 1 Crew Leader, NW Castello Base

I'm happy and satisfied with how the WOF programme responded to the coronavirus and how the programme put measures in place to ensure the safety



of its employees. It's my responsibility to ensure the safety of my crew each morning by sanitising them and doing screening. I also control the movements in and out of my base and I make sure that the base is clean and free of germs. I'd like to thank the North West WOF management for playing a vital role by supplying transport for crews to and from work every morning and afternoon so they can avoid overcrowded public transport. It is difficult for every citizen of South Africa but this is the time we have to unite and fight this pandemic. Nkosi sikelela iAfrika.



Karabo Legobate, Base Communications Representative, North West Reivilo Team

Reivilo Team participants are feeling more confident and safe after going back to work with all measures in place, with sanitisers and masks that are provided to keep us safe and the screening every day. These precautions keep the team safe from COVID-19 and minimise the fear of catching the virus and fearing for our lives.

Babalwa Sidamba, firefighter and BCR for the Cofimvaba Team

The Cofimvaba Team is grateful for the measures that have been taken by Working on Fire against COVID-19. Especially for making the lives of people a priority by taking care of them and for drafting a new policy (WOF Prevention of Spreading COVID-19 in the Workplace Policy) which works hand in hand with the government's recommendations and regulations to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. WOF has also provided us with masks and ensures that we have the necessary equipment to protect ourselves.



Pumzile Mcelwa, Lusikisiki High Altitude Team BCR

Working on Fire has been keeping us informed and educated about the pandemic via WhatsApp group messages, newsletters and phone calls to get us ready for the 'new normal'. We are happy as participants as we see our health has been prioritised as very much important. We are happy with the WOF measures and it is only left to us to



adhere to the measures as we know our health depends on each other. We thank you!

Sinothando Botya, BCR for the Elliot Team

The Elliot Team is very happy with the WOF COVID-19 measures at the base as they help the team to protect themselves and others at the workplace. After the COVID-19 awareness we received, we have been applying all the precautions such as wearing face masks, washing our hands and sanitising when interacting around other team members. We are so happy with management for everything that has been done for us to ensure that we are safe and we will definitely fight COVID-19 together.



Yandisa Zifo, BCR for the Langeni Team

As the Langeni Team, we think the WOF COVID-19 measures at the bases are good. It's a new thing and challenging but we implement all information we get from the management and crew leaders like social distancing, wearing masks and gloves, and washing our hands with water and soap. We are getting along with it bit by bit and we thank our management for sending us those memos about how to be safe at bases. We are living in fear of getting infected by this COVID-19. As firefighters we can survive the virus but our family members can't. Some firefighters live with grandmothers and kids who are vulnerable.



WOF firefighters launch the 2020 Yellow Card Training Camp



Limpopo Sondela participants write the assessment during the Yellow Card Training Camp

WOF firefighters have returned to work to prepare for the upcoming 2020 winter fire season that begins on 1 June and ends on 31 October 2020.

The Limpopo Yellow Card Training Camp (YCTC) commenced on 13 May. Due to the national lockdown regulations following the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, WOF decided to host the YCTC at the bases where the firefighters are situated to minimise the risk of spreading the disease. WOF adheres to strict prevention measures such as social distancing, wearing of masks and not shaking hands, among others. The first training was held at the Mogalakwena Base where 25 firefighters were assessed on physical fitness tests such as the 2,4 km run, push-ups and sit-ups.

The YCTC aims to ensure that all firefighters are fit and ready to be able to assume active duty during the fire season. Personal safety plays a major role at WOF and during the YCTC, all firefighters are taken through the personal safety measures to observe during wildfire operations.

Only firefighters who are professionally trained to suppress veld and forest fires qualify to attend the YCTC and only firefighters who are issued with yellow cards are eligible to be deployed to the fire line when needed.

The YCTC will move across the province until all WOF firefighters have been assessed.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Teams get ready for fire season



During the Yellow Card Training, precautions for COVID-19 prevention were put in place and observed

Eastern Cape firefighters who are currently busy with their Yellow Card Training (YCT) which assesses their physical fitness and firefighting skills as part of Working on Fire's winter fire season readiness programme are taking the necessary precautions to prevent the spreading of COVID-19.

The firefighters go through daily screening to check temperatures and are provided with masks and face shields. Social distancing and hand washing are also observed in all activities under the strict supervision of training officers.

They also ensure that all equipment used during activities are sanitised regularly. So far, eight teams have

completed their YCT and six more will continue at various bases across the province.

On completion of the YCT, over 600 firefighters will be stationed at 18 bases across the province, on high alert to respond and assist partners with wildland fires.

"Our firefighters have adapted well to the measures we have in line with the coronavirus. Some teams have successfully completed their YCT. They have also started with implementing fire prevention measures as part of our winter fire season readiness," says WOF EC General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi.

Written by Editorial team

KZN firefighters ready for the winter fire season



Ulundi participants doing the fitness test

Over 700 Working on Fire participants in KwaZulu-Natal are attending the annual Yellow Card Training Camp (YCTC). This year, the training camp will be held at base level to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure.

The YCTC is a refresher training course for participants who will be on active duty during the upcoming winter fire season.

Ground Operations Manager Mortas Khambule says, "As a province, we have to ensure safety measures in terms of COVID-19 are adhered to at all times. Participants practice social distancing, use sanitisers and soap and water to wash hands and clean surfaces. Participants wear their masks during the one-day refresher course." Teams are assessed through

fitness tests that include push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups and a 2,4 km run. They also do refresher training on health and safety, the use of firefighting equipment and fire suppression techniques.

"I was very happy with the dedication, discipline and creativity participants displayed during the training camp. Even the instructors were impressed, especially with doing fitness tests while ensuring social distancing," says Khambule. The YCTC ensures the safety of participants and contributes to the safety and protection of community members and landowners.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Limpopo participants return from lockdown



Limpopo participants adhere to the COVID-19 rules upon returning to work after lockdown level 5

Working on Fire Limpopo teams have returned to bases after lockdown level 5. As WOF is a declared essential service, the participants had to return to work from 4 May to prepare for the 2020 winter fire season.

"We have improved our safety measures to comply with the COVID-19 regulations and the WOF COVID-19 Policy. We are prioritising the safety of our participants," says Khutso Mokoto, the provincial Occupational Health and Safety Representative for Limpopo and appointed compliance officer.

The province has elected the COVID-19 awareness task team which is led by the compliance officer, to roll out COVID-19 safety awareness education to all participants across the province. Participants are educated about the

importance of social distancing, wearing face masks, washing hands frequently with soap and water and sanitising their hands and equipment. "The reason we are equipping our participants with these safety measures is that we want them to curb the spread of the coronavirus. We also want them to take the knowledge that we share with them to their communities and their families to keep them safe from being infected," says Mokoto.

All bases were disinfected and the participants were issued with face masks, soap and sanitisers to use while at work. All participants are screened upon arrival at the base for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Mpumalanga reopens bases after national lockdown eased

The Working on Fire Mpumalanga Provincial Office and bases across the province officially reopened in the first week of May after the national lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus, which was in full effect in April, was downgraded to level 4.

The WOF Social Development and Fire Awareness departments were tasked with inducting the staff and teams back into the workplace. The provincial office reopened on 4 May, with provincial staff going through an induction process that required a screening test and being educated about precautionary measures to deal with the virus.

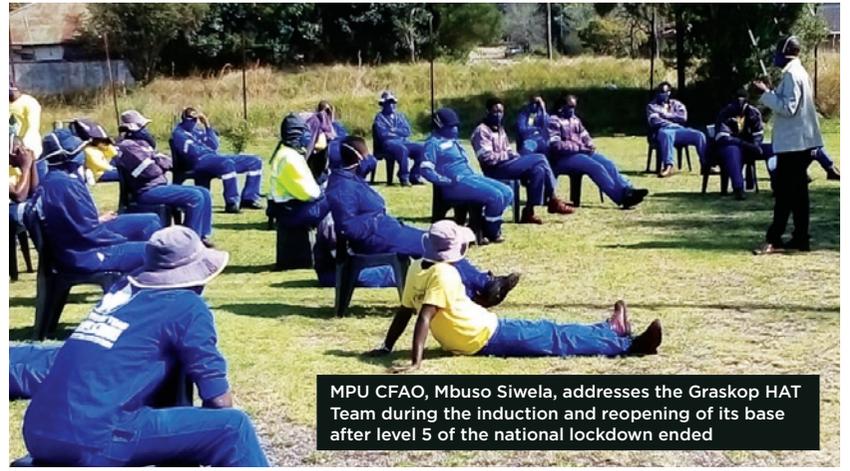
“It is of vital importance that one is self-aware and takes the necessary steps

and measures to disinfect the workspace, wash hands regularly and wear a face mask,” says MPU SDP, Makoloi Tele.

After the reopening of the provincial office, the Mpumalanga operational and support staff travelled across the province, reopening bases and inducting teams and educating participants about workplace safety regarding COVID-19.

“This induction was a chance for us to ask pertinent questions and get clarity and understanding of this virus and how we can keep ourselves, our fellow colleagues and our families safe during this difficult time,” says the Graskop HAT BCR, Veld Mashego.

Base staff and teams also received face masks and various COVID-19 sup-



MPU CFAO, Mbuso Siwela, addresses the Graskop HAT Team during the induction and reopening of its base after level 5 of the national lockdown ended

plies to ensure safe and clean working conditions in the workplace.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

WOF Free State teams serve in the midst of COVID-19



The WOF Vrede Team arrive at the base and are immediately temperature scanned

Working on Fire Free State has been systematically resuming operations in the provinces that will be entering their winter fire seasons, with teams having gradually returned and taking every precaution to ensure that firefighters remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Occupational Health and Safety department, assisted by the operations and communications clusters, commenced with educating firefighters about the COVID-19 disease and the daily steps and routines to follow to combat it, such as frequent washing of hands, social distancing and wearing a face mask.

“The OHS department, operations and communications clusters started roll-

ing out the COVID-19 WOF Policy, issuing thermal scanners, masks, hand sanitisers, floor cleaning solutions and antibacterial handwash. The Memel base manager was also scanned as he joined in our team talk. The purpose of this exercise was to get the teams ready for Yellow Card Training as we about to enter the Free State fire season and ensuring that all the teams are COVID-19 compliant. As required by government, all companies must prepare their workplaces and ensure that all employees are trained and comply with COVID-19 regulations,” says Free State OHS Officer Akhona Magcakini.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

WOF prepares firefighters for work amid COVID-19 pandemic

The announcement by President Ramaphosa that the country would move from level 5 to level 4 of the national lockdown from 1 May 2020 enabled more industrial sectors to return to work, including Working on Fire. WOF KwaZulu-Natal then commenced the ‘Back to Work’ induction for management and participants.

KZN Acting General Manager Bongani Nhlabathi says, “The induction included participants being screened and they also received a workshop on the WOF Prevention of Spreading COVID-19 in the Workplace Policy, to ensure participants are aware of how to keep themselves safe during this time, as they return to work.”

The Royal Natal Team had their base manager Stephen Richert participating in the screening process, to also show the importance of this process when clocking in at work.

The programme was well received by base partners. “We were fortunate to receive support from base partners who appreciate the services we provide to the communities and their organisations. The Greater Kokstad Municipality disinfected the base before the participants occupied it. The eThekweni Municipality also donated hygiene parcels which included three rolls of toilet paper, Sunlight Liquid, powder and bar soap, shoe polish and



Royal Natal Base Manager Stephen Richert being screened by Regional Manager Sanele Mkhize

hand sanitiser for each participant,” says Nhlabathi. The province is happy with the support from partners and the dedication and discipline shown by participants as the rest of the national lockdown proceeds.

“We are also proud to see teams being creative and creating hands-free handwashing devices at their bases. Keep it up. The province has trained 30 veld and forest firefighting teams and five High Altitude teams,” says Nhlabathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

WOF strengthens measures to curb COVID-19



Witfontein Team exercise social distancing during a parade

Working on Fire Western Cape has implemented safety measures for teams continuing to work during the level 4 lockdown to ensure they adhere to the government regulations.

All teams, including High Altitude and drought relief teams, were provided with masks and sanitary detergents and each team received a thermometer so that every employee can be screened daily.

The HAT and drought relief teams that were on home standby during level 5 of the lockdown were thoroughly

inducted on their return to work to ensure they are protected from contracting COVID-19.

New measures were put in place whereby a risk assessment is conducted daily when participants are picked up for duty by WOF vehicles. This is to ensure that anyone who might have been in contact with a COVID-19 infected person is identified and allowed to get medical assistance or self-isolate.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

WOF firefighters respond to the first wildfires in the province

Working on Fire (WOF) Limpopo's Blouberg firefighters responded to the first wildfires that broke out in their area on 12 May 2020.

The WOF firefighters were dispatched alongside Blouberg Municipality firefighters to respond to the first wildfire that was reported at Boulast. Their immediate response paid off as they managed to suppress the fires before they could reach the premises of Helen Frans Hospital. Only three hectares of grass vegetation were destroyed.

The second fire was reported that afternoon at Ga-Molele village in Senwabarwana (Bochum), where the team showed a high level of professionalism by responding fast and suppressing the wildfire. Only two hectares of grass vegetation were burned by the fire. The causes of both fires are unknown.

Two more wildfires were reported the following day; one at Ga-Molele where the Blouberg Team was dispatched again and the other at Platreef in Mokopane which the Mogalakwena Team attended.

Although not yet in the winter fire season, our firefighters are always alert and ready to be deployed. They kept fit by doing physical exercises in the comfort of their homes during the lockdown, to



Limpopo firefighters suppressing the first wildfires in the province that started in the Capricorn District at Senwabarwana

remain ready to perform their duties of saving lives and protecting the environment.

Firefighters are complying with the COVID-19 safety regulations whereby they still maintain social distancing in the line of duty. Though it is not easy, they are doing their best to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

We are pleading with the communities to report all the fires that they see in their areas to their local fire brigade immediately and to refrain from starting fires in open areas that might cause runaway fires.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Team helps FPA with winter fire season preparation



Castello Team members worked for two days on the block burn project

WOF teams returned to work after lockdown to begin integrated fire management activities in preparation for the winter fire season while also observing the coronavirus prevention measures WOF has implemented at all bases and offices.

The Working on Fire North West Castello Team successfully completed a two-day controlled burn project in Roodekraal, assisting the Potchefstroom Fire Protection Association (Potch FPA). This project was done in the second week of the team being back at their base following the month-long national lockdown during which our teams across the country were on home standby to adhere to the level 5 restrictions.

The controlled burn was done to reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires and to promote the beneficial use of fire. Controlled burns are vital for our biodiversity and agricultural ecosystems and essential for the propagation of many indigenous plant species.

Potch FPA chairperson Kobus Roux acknowledged the team's good work. "The Potch FPA, with the help of the Castello Team, has done a very successful block burn for a very satisfied client of 230 hectares over a two-day period. It consisted of nine kilometres of 30 metre-wide firebreaks before we started with the two block burns," Roux wrote in a post on social media.

"I'm happy and satisfied with how WOF responded to the coronavirus and how the programme put measures in place to ensure the safety of its employees. We have sanitisers to wash hands, we do screening and make sure that the base is clean and free from germs. I would like to say thanks to the provincial office of North West for arranging and supplying daily transport for firefighters from home to bases to ensure they avoid crowded places," says Castello Base Type 1 Crew Leader Ofentse Marope.

Written by Editorial team

Team prepares for fire season



When teams are deployed, the First Aider is responsible for ensuring firefighters maintain social distancing and wear their masks

Working on Fire teams throughout the country are now focused on implementing fire prevention measures in fire-prone areas to prepare for the coming winter fire season, after work was placed on hold when teams were on home standby during the national lockdown level 5 stage.

The Eastern Cape Lottering Team conducted a fuel load reduction by means of a controlled

stack burn along the N2 national road. Stack burning involves the controlled burning of dead, dry vegetation that can fuel wildfires.

To ensure firefighters' safety, a First Aider trained in the WOF COVID-19 prevention measures was tasked with monitoring compliance during the activity.

Written by Editorial team

HAT and drought relief teams exceed expectations



Theewaterkloof Drought relief project team cutting alien plants at the Berg River catchment

Working on Fire's High-Altitude Teams and Drought Relief project in the western region of the Western Cape have exceeded expectations in terms of production.

In the past financial year, the 21 combined teams managed to clear an area over 6 000 hectares of alien invasive plants, thus saving water for the water-scarce province.

HAT Ground Operations Manager Jason de Smidt says this was the highest the teams had ever achieved in one year since they started.

"In total, we cleared 6 465.5 hectares, which is 105 percent of our total target. This is the most hectares that HAT Western Cape has cleared during any financial year since we started in 2011. Our environmental protection footprint continues to grow and our implementation continues to improve," he says.

De Smidt says the teams are important for water security, biodiversity, fire management and general conservation.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Lydia Sono and her friends are on a mission to distribute as many face masks as possible to the vulnerable elderly in their hometown of Schoemandal

Nkomazi participant does her bit to flatten the curve

Lydia Sono, a participant from the Nkomazi Base in Mpumalanga, is doing her bit to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by making and distributing face masks for the vulnerable elderly in the Schoemansdal community.

According to Sono, she and her friends saw a need for this initiative after realising that the elderly were not getting the necessary education and help needed about the novel virus.

“Most of the elderly in my area had no face masks or tools to use as precautionary measures for this virus and we wanted to help them,” Sono says.

Sono, a renowned youth activist and LGBT advocate, asked her large

following on social media for donations to buy materials to construct the masks. Her followers donating the funds and the young group approached a local dressmaker, who volunteered to sew the masks.

“The Department of Health has also given our masks the stamp of approval as there are specific requirements when making masks that improve the ultimate safety from viruses,” says Sono.

To date, the group has made and donated close to 2 000 masks to the elderly in Schoemansdal.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

Firefighter seizes mask-making opportunity

Katlego Molapo, a Type 2 Crew Leader at the Roodeplaat Team, is using his entrepreneurial skills to make extra money making masks. He began by sewing some masks for his team members.

“Before returning, I started making masks already which I sell for R30 a unit. I am doing very well,” he says.

Molapo wants to use obsolete material from Working on Fire which will enable him to reduce the price to R15 each. Katlego says he needs the Safety/Compliance Officer to first approve the obsolete material if it meets the requirements and standards set out by the Ministry of Health for cloth face masks.

Molapo says he bought a sewing machine years ago but initially underrated his skills and experience. He has been supplying caps to the Gauteng Azishe game teams every year. He saw an opportunity to make money out of the COVID-19 pandemic while providing a community service.

“Our task as firefighters is to save lives. Therefore, I am using my skills to



Katlego Molapo cashes in the demand for masks

help curb the spread of the coronavirus in communities and our work environment while making a living,” says Molapo.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Shongweni Food Security Committee attends to garden during lockdown

The KwaZulu-Natal Shongweni Team, who received the food security workshop in September 2019, had their first harvest of their organic garden in October. The programme developed this workshop to ensure participants would have the knowledge and skills required to start a sustainable food production business when they leave the programme.

KZN Social Development Practitioner Sabelo Buthelezi says, “The team later organised a committee to take care of the garden and report any changes to me.”

“Since the national COVID-19 lockdown was implemented in March 2020, there was a worry that all the hard work done would be a waste if everyone stayed at home. Thanks to the Shongweni Committee, two participants volunteered to walk to the base as it is close to their home to ensure that the gardens continue to produce healthy organic food.”

The team reaped the first harvest of spinach which they shared among themselves. The rest of the food from the garden will be sold or donated to needy families or schools in the com-



Participants cultivating the organic garden

munity. “Participants use earthworms to nourish the soil. Later they will be preparing the space where they are going to put new organic seedlings. Chillies are ready for harvest, while greenpeppers are not yet ready but getting there,” says Buthelezi. The Shongweni Team plans to plant new seedlings before winter and will move and replant trees as they are going to plant a pawpaw tree. Vegetables to be planted include cabbage, beetroot, spinach and carrots.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Teams lend a helping hand to assist the needy

The national lockdown has affected the global and national economies and the hardest hit are often those who depend on social grants and the unemployed. With families and children spending most of the time indoors to observe social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, many households run out of essential food.

To fill the gaps, local business owners from the Valspan community decided to help the community they serve and requested the assistance of the Vaalharts Team members to distribute food parcels to 51 households.

“These are business people from the community so they saw the need to help those who need help and asked for our assistance since we also serve this community. We were glad we were able to help. Seeing how people appreciated the help made my day,” says the Vaalharts Team BCR.

Escorted by local police, the team and the business owners ensured that they were safe while visiting these households by wearing masks and encouraged everyone to do the same.

Written by Editorial team



Vaalharts Team members assisted local business owners to distribute food parcels to those in need

Aspirant commercial farmer



Katlego Molapo cashes in on masks making

Vaal Marina's Thabang Nyauza is an emerging pig and cattle farmer who aspires to becoming a commercial farmer. Nyauza was inspired by farmers he aided when putting out veld fires in the Midvaal area.

"Some of the farmers were willing to give in-depth advice on the best farming practices. I gave it a try and it worked," says Nyauza.

He says he started by saving his monthly stipend and could take advantage of plentiful grazing land in the area. "Some of the farmers helped by giving me free feed for both pigs and

cows," he says. "I have 12 cattle and nine pigs."

Nyauza wishes to lease land and become a commercial farmer in the long run. Out of the fire season, he attends farmers' information days around Vaal Marina.

Although still faced with major challenges, including expensive vaccines and medication for the livestock, Nyauza says, "I have invested more time and resources in the livestock."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Warburton participant kept busy with art during lockdown

Petros Dube, a participant from Warburton Base in Mpumalanga, kept busy with his art during the national lockdown.

He recalls how he began drawing in Grade 3 and says people in his life, from friends to teachers, have encouraged him to perfect his craft.

"My Arts and Culture teacher in high school noticed my work and requested that I do a drawing of my school. She entered me in an MTN Foundation art competition, where I won my first art award. After the award, I got requests to paint and draw on preschool walls around my community and it was successful," Dube says.

While mastering the art of drawing he developed an interest in graphic design. "I like to draw cartoons and provide narration of them, with topics ranging from social issues to just a simple



Petros Dube from Warburton is passionate about graphic design and art

joke to entertain my colleagues," says Dube, who regularly produces and shares his work with his team.

He hopes to pursue his talent either academically or mentored by an established graphic artist. He also hopes to be part of the Working on Fire

A poet in the making

Jacob Malebye originates from Cyferskuil in North West and currently resides in Belabela in Limpopo. He joined Working on Fire in 2018 as a firefighter and was promoted to a brush cutter position in 2019 at Sondela Base.

Like many participants, Malebye found his way to WOF after completing his National Senior Certificate and being unable to afford furthering his education.

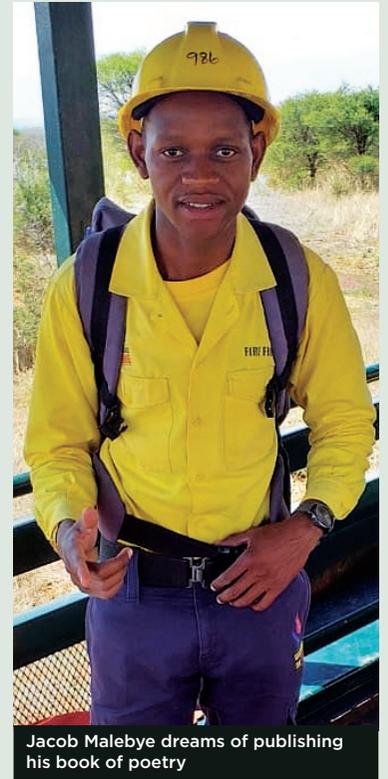
Malebye developed his passion for writing poetry while growing up, but thought it was just a hobby that he would outgrow. Malebye does not have any formal education in writing.

"Ever since I joined WOF, I was motivated to explore my talent and to develop my skills. That is when I resurrected my writing skills. The experience that I have gained at WOF and the new activities that I am exposed to are assisting my writing," says Malebye.

He is writing his poems to share the tales of his journey in life and to educate others about the impacts of wildfires on our environment.

Malebye can't use his WOF stipend to publish his poetry because he has enrolled to study Human Resource Management at IQ Academy and he is also the breadwinner in his family.

"So far I have written 47 poems that I hope to publish in the future. All



Jacob Malebye dreams of publishing his book of poetry

I need is financial support for editing and publishing my manuscript to enable me to make my dream come true," says Malebye.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



Communications Department one day, because he loves the communicative aspect of the work.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer



Crew Leader Wiseman Mbele uses music to encourage adherence to COVID-19 lockdown regulations

Crew leader encourages social distancing through music

Crew Leader Wiseman Mbele, from Kleinmond Base in the Western Cape, has collaborated with other artists, including famous comedian Marc Lottering, to produce a song called 'Keep your Distance'.

The song encourages South Africans to maintain social distancing and stay at

home to stop the spread of COVID-19.

"As we all know, people are dying of the disease. We don't want more of our people to go through the same thing. Yes, we know the pandemic has brought a bit of difficulty in our lives but it's for the best that we adhere to government regulations as it is trying to protect

us," says the firefighter, also known as Stizomayn.

A link to the song is in the comment section. Please let us know what you think of the song.



Limakatso Khaliyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

CELEBRATING 17 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS IN EMPOWERING YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS

WOF alumna thankful to the programme



Puseletso Jordaan in her office at the Rouxville Police Station

Puseletso Jordaan joined the Working on Fire programme in 2013 as a storeperson for the Rouxville Team. She was previously involved in a car accident which caused a paralysis of her right leg known as a hemiplegic limp. Although considered a disability, Jordaan never let the injury define her.

She attended training in Nelspruit where she was taught how to conduct her daily duties as a storeperson and, while in the programme, she was provided with numerous other training opportunities such as basic computer literacy training and HIV and AIDS training. The training

she received from WOF made her much more employable and ultimately led to her successful application for a position at the South African Police Services.

"Thank you for the experience and training I received from the Working on Fire programme. I never let my circumstances and my disability keep me back. I would like to encourage my former colleagues not to think that the training and experience they are receiving in the programme will not benefit them because all the experience and training I received allowed me to join the SAPS," says Jordaan.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

The right move

Mantelali Mofokeng, former firefighter of the Vaal Marina Team, has exited the Working on Fire programme to take up a new position as a child caregiver at a non-governmental organisation called SAVS.

"I am grateful for the opportunity that the programme offered me. The work opportunity was my first formal job," says Mofokeng.

Thanks to the programme offering free training, she says she learnt many things in the programme that she is bringing into her new job, such as occupational health and safety.

"I am working with kids. My knowledge of OHS, especially around first aiding and safety in the work environment, are key skill sets for the position," she says.



Mantelali Mofokeng is a former firefighter from Vaal Marine Team

Her WOF experience and skills will now help to protect the precious lives of the children at the centre.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Grateful WOF made him a better person

"My name is Babalo Mdwekesha. I joined Working on Fire in 2010 as a firefighter. I worked very hard and was dedicated to my work. In 2011, I was appointed Crew Leader and the following year I was promoted to become a crew leader driver.

"Being the person that I am, that is always striving for greatness, in October 2018 I was appointed a High-Altitude Team Assistant Regional Manager for the Cape Winelands region.

"I would like to thank Working on Fire High Altitude for all the opportunities presented to me. When I first arrived at the company, I knew nothing. I am grateful that the company spent its resources to equip me with all the necessary skills and knowledge. It is true, the sky is the limit for everything we do in life."



Limakatso Khaliyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



HAT Assistant Regional Manager Babalo Mdwekesha grateful to WOF for growth opportunity

Grab every opportunity with both hands



Sthembile Radebe in her WOF uniform

Sthembile Radebe is a former firefighter from the Karkloof Base who is currently in training at the Durban Metro Police.

After completing all the academic requirements for her diploma in Human Resource Management at Oval International College, she was unable to seek employment as her certificate was withheld due to an outstanding debt.

"I joined the programme to lessen the burden for my parents. Due to limited finances, I wasn't able to take my certificate because I still had outstanding fees to pay," says Radebe.

After recruitment to WOF in February 2019, Radebe was selected to join 40 participants who were deployed to assist in the Canadian fires. "It was a great experience in my life because I had never imagined myself working overseas

at my early age, but WOF made things possible," she says.

When the WOF KZN provincial office needed a temporary receptionist, Radebe was suggested by her team and she became the face of the provincial office, which gave her valuable office experience and skills in dealing with people from different backgrounds.

"I resigned in February 2020. I enjoyed being part of Working On Fire as I gained a lot of experience and discipline. I'm very proud to say I once

worked for Working On Fire. Being part of WOF was a blessing in my life as I was able to put something on a table at home and my family was very proud of me," says Radebe. "The skills and abilities I've gained helped me develop to be a strong woman and empowered me to reach my professional goals. I'll always remember the help and support of my colleagues."



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer