



Giving kids A GOOD START



A better life begins with a good education right from the start. That is why the Kouga Wind Farm Community Development Trust is working with the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Africa A+ Schools to improve the quality of learning and teaching in 33 of our community crèches.

The Trust will invest R20 million over the next five years in bringing our Early Childhood Development (ECD) professionals up to standard.

A number of local facilitators have been selected from five wards in the Kouga Municipality to be trained to serve as mentors for local crèches. The facilitators, who all manage their own ECD centres, will be equipped to support future centres in the area.

The emphasis of the training is on providing quality early education that will develop creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in children.

The training spans a period of three years, each building on the learning of the previous years, so that they will be fully-fledged trainers of other ECD managers by the end of their third year. ■



Getting reading right

The value of literacy among our children is so important. Kouga Wind Farm has employed two reading coaches at Sandwater Primary School. Their daily task is to sit with groups of Grade 3 learners and help them improve their reading skills.

Antonese Nuwenhuis has been at Sandwater for two years and loves working with the children. "I feel so good when I see how excited they get about learning new things," she says. Basic vocabulary in English and Afrikaans as well as number skills are taught in a fun way, often by playing games.

Nicolette Matole has only been part of the team for a few months, but she shares the same passion for working with children and instilling a love of reading in them. Both Antonese and Nicolette have been inspired to enrol next year to become primary school teachers.

Foundation phase teacher Mariska Grebe is enthusiastic about the difference that the reading coaches have made. "I would be lost without them," she says, adding that there has been a noticeable improvement. Pupils who could not read at all are now reading at a basic level and can sound out difficult words, while those who could read are reading with expression. According to Mariska, having good reading skills positively impacts all aspects of their schoolwork. ■

Grade 12 finishing programme

Kouga Wind Farm Community Development Trust is working with Rehoboth Training Solutions on a programme to assist adults who did not finish their matric, or who failed and need a few subjects to pass, to obtain an Amended Senior Certificate (ASC). Candidates are tutored mostly by retired teachers from the community and can write three subjects at a time, over a period of two years, to qualify.

Bulelwa Nondedwa is in the first year of the programme, and is writing English, Life Sciences and Religion Studies. As a working mother with a teenage son, she admits it has been difficult to balance her commitments and studies. She is full of praise for her tutors: "They really know what they are doing." Next year, Bulelwa will write her final subjects. And then? She wants to go to seminary to become a minister in her church.

Manelisi Klaasen only has two subjects to write this year - Business Studies and Life Sciences - in order to get his ASC. He is grateful to the tutors who have helped him to prepare well and focus on his studies. His dreams? "I want to go into Hospitality Studies, so that I can open my own catering business."

Nicole Goliath has had to balance working in Humansdorp with attending classes four mornings a week, but says it has

been worthwhile. "The classes have been amazing. It was just like being back at school, with the tutors helping us so much." Nicole has already written papers in Mathematical Literacy, Economics and Business Studies. Once she gets her ASC, she will work as an admin clerk, but her long-term plan is to study Tourism and become a flight attendant.

Project coordinator Michelle Dorfling is passionate about adult education and training, and believes in encouraging a culture of independent learning. She says, "I have huge respect for adult learners who have taken ownership of their own learning." She recognises that it is an enormous challenge for those who have been out of school for a while to adjust to the academic discipline required.

Rehoboth training centre manager Angie Baartman says 2020 has been especially difficult because of Covid-19 but the students are determined to succeed. With the help of Humansdorp Secondary School, the students wrote interim exams using past papers. In October, a special awards ceremony honoured the top achievers in each subject.

Rehoboth started the project in 2019 with nine students, but, with a grant from the Trust, accommodated 30 learners this year. ■



Bursaries make dreams reality

Over the past three years, the Kouga Wind Farm bursary programme has helped 33 students to study a range of courses at tertiary institutions across South Africa.

The programme, administered by Masinyusane, covers everything from tuition and books to transport and accommodation. This year, students who had to return home during lockdown also received laptops for online learning. In return, students must pass 75% of their courses each year.

Three bursary holders are completing their studies this year. Damelin student Vathiswa Ntshota will complete her three-year Diploma in Human Resources Management. Originally from Keiskammahoek, she "came to St Francis Bay to look for work. I can never express how grateful I am to Kouga Wind Farm for the difference the bursary has made to my life. It came at a time when I really needed it, and it meant that I had no financial worries - even when I went home during lockdown."

Capsicum Culinary School student Kelly Smith is finishing the practical portion of her pastry chef qualification. She hails from a family of bakers, so this is a dream come true. "A year ago, I would not have believed that this could happen. Then I saw the advertisement and I just knew that I wanted it." She plans to start her own catering company and become a food blogger.

Another Capsicum student is Ziyanda Sotafile. After matriculating, she worked as a coffee shop cashier, but soon learned to bake. Currently, she works at the St. Francis Links, hopes to continue studying the Food and Beverage programme and to one day own a catering business specialising in seafood.

Paying it forward

Bursary holders are expected to pay it forward and commit 50 hours per year to volunteer work in their communities.

Second-year BA student Mekyle Solomon, from Jeffreys Bay, volunteers at the Kruisfontein Primary School feeding scheme. "It has taught me the meaning of selflessness and of having a sense of responsibility," he says. Mekyle is determined to qualify as a teacher, or to continue studying child psychology at Nelson Mandela University.

Nicole Jantjies is a first-year BA student studying English and Psychology at NMU. "This programme has taught me to become more sociable," says shy Nicole. She volunteered as a tutor with the Grade 12 finishing programme for adults and says she has been humbled to realise that not everyone has access to the same educational opportunities. ■



Kelly Smith



Vathiswa Ntshota



Ziyanda Sotafile

Temp teachers close Covid-19 gap

Covid-19 has left many schools without enough staff to cope with the daily demands of teaching while also covering classes for teachers who are absent due to illness. To ease the burden, Kouga Wind Farm has supported the employment of 15 temporary teachers to act as assistant teachers at seven local schools.

Garth Jacobs, the Education Department facilitator for the area, praised the contribution these sponsored teachers have made in helping schools to function. He believes the Department would not have been able to service the needs of Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools without this assistance.

Kouga Wind Farm's contribution has allowed third- and fourth-year student teachers to fill the temporary positions until the end of 2020. Garth adds that "it has been good for the students to see what they will face once they actually start teaching!"

Fourth-year Intermediate Phase student Maxine Lippert has taken on the task of teaching Grade 4 and 5 English at St Patrick's Primary School in Humansdorp with passion. She says:

"It has been phenomenal and prepared me for my future in a way that university did not. I now feel so much more equipped for my career - and I am so grateful for this opportunity."

At Sandwater Primary School, the addition of three student teachers also came as a blessing. The school recently lost their principal, which meant that one class had no teacher. Shanda van Rooyen, acting principal, says the students were "a life saver". Launick Fortuin, a fourth-year Foundation Phase student, who took over the teaching of the Grade 1 class, says, "I loved it! It really was a great experience for me." She will return to university next year to complete her studies. ■

New appointments: Kouga Wind Farm Community Development Trust

Administrator:

Bophelo Mpilo Development Centre (BIDC)

The Trust aims to empower previously disadvantaged communities living within a 50km radius of the wind farm. Running the Trust on a day-to-day basis is a tough and very important responsibility, especially because the Trust is going to invest more than R800 million in the area over the next 15 years. BIDC will help us to ensure that the investment has a lasting effect by collaborating and building long-term relationships with our communities.

Independent Community Trustee:

Thabisa Ncama

Thabisa Ncama, an administrator at a school in KwaNomzamo, is your new independent community trustee. She is excited to start on this new venture.

"I am passionate about community development and about the upliftment of the poor," she says.

BIDC ran a lengthy voter education process leading up to the election of the trustee. Community meetings were held in each area, where community members were asked to nominate candidates for the position. Nominations were received from Kruisfontein, Sea Vista and KwaNomzamo.

The candidates were screened – to be eligible for election, they had to be over 18, have lived in the area for at least 10 years, have matriculated and not have a criminal record.

They also needed to show leadership qualities and have a passion for community development. An independent organisation ran the voting process to ensure a fair election.

Thabisa will be joining other members of the Trust at regular meetings to oversee constructive and impactful community development in the area. ■



Go well, Wendy!



When CEO Wendy Parsons joined Kouga Wind Farm – one of the first wind farms in South Africa – in 2015, it had just been connected to the national grid. So those were exciting times with much to learn and new systems to put in place.

For South Africa, the idea of renewable energy was quite new and she says it was

great to be at the forefront of something that has grown so much since then.

Wendy grew up in the Eastern Cape, but with most of her family now living in the United Kingdom, she is leaving our shores to be closer to them.

"I am genuinely sorry to be saying goodbye to Kouga Wind Farm; however, this area will always be special to me," says Wendy.

She has made many treasured memories over the past five years, including:

- getting to visit the beautiful Kouga area so often;
- meeting many wonderful people who are making a positive impact on local residents and businesses;
- learning so much from the wind farm's ED Manager, Trevor Arosi, and many other great influencers in the industry;
- witnessing the impact that women can have on their communities once they are given an opportunity to develop themselves; and
- learning to speak basic isiXhosa.

Wendy has some parting words for the people of Kouga: "Hard work always pays off – you can choose to be blown around in the wind like a plastic bag, or to raise your sails and head for your destination."

We wish Wendy every blessing in her new direction. ■