

CTHB/TPCP TEAM BUILDING DAY

On Friday 23 June 2006 the TPCP/CTHB team undertook a team building exercise at Kwalata Ranch near Pretoria. Seventy four of the 86 members of the team, made up of students (honours, Masters and PhD's), post-doctoral fellows, research fellows and staff (academic, technical and administrative), were able to attend. Everybody arrived at Kwalata Ranch at 09:30 full of anticipation of an exciting day of work and fun.



Mike Wingfield inspiring his team

The morning session was held in one of the conference rooms and took the form of a motivational and discussion workshop. Mike Wingfield, Director of FABI and the CTHB, briefly outlined the history of FABI for the benefit of the newcomers to the team. He spoke of the unique nature of the TPCP/CTHB group within the FABI family (of about 180 people) which was made up of people from many different countries. The TPCP/CTHB is the biggest single research programme at the University of Pretoria, and is based on substantial external income. It produces around 40 publications annually in ISI rated journals, more than most other groups in the country, and is the largest single group working on tree health issues in the world. Collaboration nationally and internationally was essential for the group, and each member of the team was an essential cog in the wheel to success.



Lunch at Kwalata

The mission of the CTHB is research in terms of tree health. The deliverables are many, with the main ones being: educated students, who will take up positions all over the world; research and production of publications in high impact journals; and the emergence of self sustaining Biotechnology companies out of CTHB and FABI, ie Inqaba Biotech.

Bernard Slippers made the point that the group is publishing some outstanding work, judged by any international standards, and encouraged them to ensure that excellence became a habit and a passion. Ways to maximize the group's strengths towards achieving even greater international impact at all levels of operation were discussed. Bernard motivated all students and staff to place information pertaining to their work on their personal websites, which would also increase the impact of their efforts. He encouraged FABIans to read better and broader journals both inside and outside their narrow research field.

After lunch the fun part of the day started. The group was divided into 4 teams and there was great competition, excitement and many sore bones and muscles after the teams had competed in both physical and creative games.



The day ended with a most enjoyable braai in the lapa when everyone could relax and any tensions which had accumulated through the afternoon's energetic team building competition could be dissipated over a few drinks round the campfire. Everyone arrived home safely and agreed that it had been a most enjoyable day. The "newcomers" feel that they have become part of a very special CTHB/TPCP team and are proud to be able to call themselves FABians.



Bernice Porter relating the legend of the award-winning orange team's clay hippo creation



TPCP/CTHB group at Kwalata team building