

## LUNCH WITH THE NRF AND THE MRYE STUDENTS

On Tuesday 27 March Mike Wingfield invited Francisca van Brakel and Gerhard Moolman from the NRF to lunch with the students from the MRYE outreach initiative supported through the CTHB. The core team members of the CTHB also joined the group and met Gerhard and Francisca who are now responsible for the Centres of Excellence at the NRF.



MRYE group (in green shirts) with Gerhard and Francisca and members of the CTHB core team

The Mpepu Rural Youth Empowerment (MRYE) initiative was started by a group of enthusiastic engineering students at the University of Pretoria three years ago and has grown to include students from other Faculties at the University and also students from the University of Johannesburg. Their aim is to empower the rural youth by informing them about subjects to be taken at school to enable them to go on to tertiary education and ultimately to plan careers and so uplift themselves from the trappings of an impoverished background which could otherwise prevent them from making a success of their lives. The opportunities of financial assistance available are also outlined to the learners. They visit rural schools during the school holidays where they give of their time and resources to assist the rural learners and educators. The MRYE group is being supported through the CTHB for two years whereafter it is hoped that they will find additional sources of financial support.

At the dinner Samukelo Vilakazi, the leader of the MRYE group, was asked to say a few words about the aims of MRYE and about their philosophy. We quote from his speech:

*“Planting a seed of knowledge is never an easy task, however, the combination of passion and support makes this usually arduous/difficult task easy to fulfil.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen I greet you!*

*Two years after the birth of MRYE we need to assess whether we are in line with the goals that we set up when we started.*

*Success can only be measured with respect to the goals that we set. One cannot sit back and say that because I’ve achieved a goal then I am successful - for that success soon becomes a “past success”. Being successful is the continuous achievement of goals.*

*Our aim is to empower and sensitize rural youth with knowledge. The responses we’ve received are in full agreement that MRYE empowers wherever it goes.*

*MRYE can be likened to a “fruit-bearing seed tree” and we would like to thank DST/NRF-CTHB for being the wind that helps us to scatter and plant the seed of knowledge. Not only have you been the wind, you have also been a support system watering and encouraging MRYE.*

*MRYE has been able to change people’s misconceptions on higher level education. We have also sensitized them about the importance of taking control of their situations. We have received feedback that pupils we visited are now students at different tertiary institutions i.e. UKZN, UJ and UP, TUT, etc. MRYE has really grown from its time of conception to now.*

*When we set our goals of empowering rural youth, little did we know that in the process of empowering others, we ourselves would be empowered.*

*We believe that there is always room for improvement so I always tell those I am mentoring that they must always do better than what I have done. When you build a house you don’t put all the bricks one next to the other but you put one on top of the other; that is how you end up having a house with a high wall.*

*We thank you for funding us in 2006 when we travelled to KZN, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. This year we have already been to North West and we are still going to Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KZN. Your continued support is highly appreciated in this regard.*

*We are still very passionate about what we do and will continue to approach our work with enthusiasm and vigorous zest. We thank you for being part of such a development process.”*

Gerhard Moolman of the NRF congratulated MRYE on what they had achieved and encouraged them to continue with the marvellous work they were doing. Prof Mike Wingfield echoed these sentiments and said that the CTHB was proud to be able to support MRYE.

Everyone took the opportunity of getting to know each other and thoroughly enjoyed the lunch as will be seen from the photos.



**The MRYE group having fun!**



**Mike Wingfield talking to the MRYE group**