

## LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK 2006

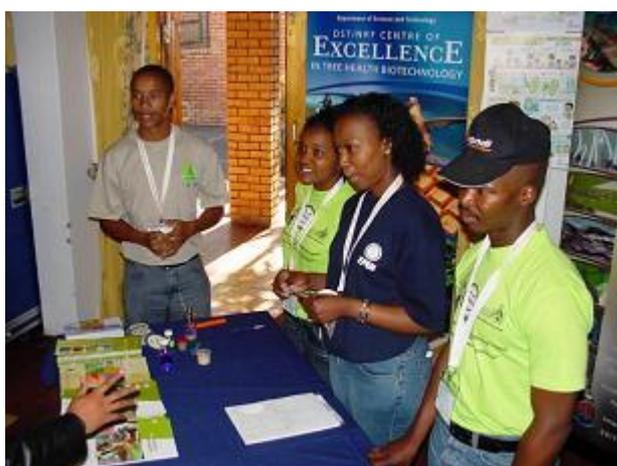
The National Science Week 2006 was launched on Thursday 11 May 2006 at the Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit (Mpumalanga Province) under the auspices of the DST (Department of Science and Technology).



From left to right: Kgosi Mongwaketsi, Happy Maleme, Dr Phil Mjwara, Samukelo Vilakazi, Patience Maditsi

The formal part of the proceedings, including the presentations and entertainment by the Swazi Jazz/Kiba Music group, took place in the marquee while the science exhibitions were housed in the main hall. The CSIR's laser show ended the proceedings.

The DST/NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) at FABI, University of Pretoria, had set up a very successful exhibition in Mokopane, Limpopo Province at the opening of the National Science Week in 2005. The CTHB was delighted, therefore, to be invited again to be an exhibitor at the opening of the 2006 National Science Week.



Three “FABIans”, Happy Maleme, Calvin Molepo and Kgosi Mongwaketsi, and two engineering students who are members of the MRYE Outreach Programme supported by the CTHB, Samukelo Vilakazi and Patience Maditsi, set out with great enthusiasm to represent the CTHB, FABI and the University of Pretoria. The CTHB stand was visited mainly by educators who were interested in receiving the information brochures

on different schools in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and the science brochures, periodic tables and other displays supplied by SAASTA. The demand was so great that supplies of most of the brochures ran out early. The educators were also fascinated by the demonstration of the DNA Extraction kit that

had been supplied by SAASTA. The CTHB team, being themselves experts in isolating DNA, could enlighten both the educators and the learners on what DNA was and how simple it was to isolate DNA using simple household material and equipment.



Although not many learners visited the exhibition areas until later in the day, they were interested in obtaining information and application forms for courses offered at the University of Pretoria. Some learners asked interesting questions after receiving different posters – in particular the SAASTA Biotechnology ones. The team had planned to run a competition for learners and hand out the FABI t-shirts as prizes at the end of the day. However, due to time constraints, a competition could not be organized, but the team handed out pens, rulers and FABI t-shirts to some of the learners who were overjoyed with these gifts.

Samukelo and Patience of the MRYE team managed to establish contacts with people from SAASTA and also with the MEC of Education in Mpumalanga. This will help them a great deal with their next series of outreach visits to Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces in July.

Amongst other exhibitors were the CSIR, Lowveld College, SAASTA, DST and Nkangala College.



The members of the CTHB team were delighted that so many of the dignitaries visited the CTHB exhibition, which looked most attractive with the banners of FABI, the CTHB and the Tree Protection Cooperative Programme (TPCP). Amongst these visitors were the Honorable Minister of Science and Technology, Mosibudi Mangena (**Photo, middle**), Dr Phil Mjwara, who had visited FABI a short time before, the Executive Mayor of Mbombela Municipality, Councilor Justice Nsibande, and the MEC for Education Mpumalanga, Mr Siphwiwe Masango. Calvin managed to take some good pictures of these dignitaries talking to members of our team and showing great interest in our exhibition.

Attending and exhibiting at the launch of the National Science Day 2006 was a marvelous experience for all members of the team. Not only were they able to share the valuable information with everyone else, but it was also a learning curve for all of them. They thank everyone for giving them the opportunity of going out there to carry the FABI and CTHB flag up high and we, at FABI, thank them for doing a fantastic job in the promotion of science.