

## **MPEPU RURAL YOUTH ENCOURAGEMENT (MRYE) OUTREACH INITIATIVE**

The MRYE outreach initiative, under the inspired leadership of Samukelo Vilakazi, was started by a group of very enthusiastic 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year engineering students at the University of Pretoria, all of whom came from disadvantaged rural backgrounds and were aware of the problems of poverty, poor education and deprivation facing these learners in the rural areas. We are pleased to report that students from other Faculties, including the Science and Agricultural Faculty, have joined the group and a branch of MRYE has been started at the University of Johannesburg. The group's mission statement is "*We are driven by passion and willingness of our hearts to empower the youth of South Africa so that they can make informed decisions*". They preach the message that education would provide the key to enable hard-working learners to rise above their situation and open up opportunities for them to continue with tertiary education and so embark on a successful career. They provide learners with details of subjects that they need to take at school in order to follow various careers. They discuss courses available at different tertiary institutions and make learners aware of the funding opportunities available to them.

News of MRYE's activities has spread and Samukelo has been approached by two different organisations/educational bodies in 2008 for MRYE to take part in one day outreach initiatives. On Saturday 26 April a group of 7 MRYE members visited Dennilton where they had been invited by a local youth group "Dream into Reality" (DIR) to present at two schools. Representatives of Denver College also gave exposure about their college. MRYE and DIR had a great deal in common. MRYE was appreciated for the work they were doing and DIR requested that MRYE attend another Saturday meeting that they were planning.

A second one-day outreach visit took place on Saturday 19 July 2008 to the Hammanskraal area where two schools gathered at Rakgotso High school. Presentations were made by Denver College, MRYE and Tshwane North College. Mr Modisane Motiang of Youth Unlimited, who had organised this event, suggested that MRYE and Youth Unlimited continue the partnership and participate in each other's events.

It is of interest to summarise some of the positive achievements of the group as well as the difficulties which they continue to face in their task:

### ***Achievements***

- Letters of thanks commending MRYE on the value of their visits have been sent to Prof Mike Wingfield from Principals of Schools and other officials in the rural areas visited.
- The learners have benefited and some have since registered for studies at UP and other institutions and become members of MRYE as well.
- The CTHB banner has been flown, as at each school the CoE, NRF, UP and DST have been thanked for sponsoring MRYE and there are about 1500 learners and teachers wearing the CTHB t-shirts in the rural areas.
- Very good support has been given by other HEI institutions approached for materials. In particular mention must be made of Miss Nancy Mashele, University of Johannesburg, and Dr Clase, University of Pretoria.

- Learners have requested additional information on other careers such as nursing, trades, paramedics etc. These requests have stretched MRYE members to learn about other careers and educational facilities.
- The MRYE students themselves have learnt a great deal about courses and careers available and their confidence and presentation skills have improved. They have had posters printed with the information about each Faculty at UP, entry requirements etc, which assisted them in making their presentations more professional.
- Samukelo Vilakazi's negotiating, planning and management skills have greatly improved, as have those of his team who take it in turns to organise the visits. They have learned also to accept and give constructive criticism to others in the group which then improves their future service delivery.

### **Major difficulties encountered on the visits**

- Lack of ability to understand English even amongst Grade 11 and 12 learners;
- Lack of ability of MRYE presenters to speak the relevant language of the province (Zulu, Sotho etc);
- Lack of facilities at many of the rural schools (books, desks, chairs and science labs);
- Lack of discipline, good behaviour and support both on the part of learners and educators;
- Inability of MRYE to get an appointment with anyone at the Department of Education in an effort to get a letter of support to present to rural schools to ensure that they will be well received;.
- Certain schools in Dannhauser offer either Maths or Commerce but not both; and
- Some schools do not offer Maths on a grade which will enable the learners to apply for entry to HEI's.

The CTHB has supported the MRYE group for three years. No other sponsor has been found despite many letters having been sent out by MRYE. The Board would have to evaluate whether or not to continue funding this group since no other sustainable source has been identified.



*The photos were taken at various schools visited by the MRYE team in 2008. Note the learners and MRYE team in their bright t-shirts displaying the MRYE and CTHB logos.*