

## **MRYE's BID TO BE RECOGNIZED AS AN OFFICIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

Two of the five Key Performance Indicators of the CTHB programme are “knowledge brokerage” and “service rendering”. In order to perform in these areas the CTHB has engaged with a variety of student and science outreach groups. In particular, the CTHB has supported the MRYE (Mpepu Rural Youth Encouragement) Outreach Programme since 2005. (Refer to the CTHB website for articles on their previous visits under the leadership of Samukelo Vilakazi).



**MRYE and learners at Ekuthuthukeni**

During one of MRYE's outreach trips in 2009, an unfortunate accident left three students badly injured and claimed the life of Ivon Maphoso. For the CTHB, this tragic accident emphasized the need for MRYE to obtain some sort of official status in the Community Engagement structure of the University of Pretoria (UP). This view was also supported by the CTHB Review Panel and the CTHB Board, who recommended in 2009 that further funding would be dependent on MRYE's affiliation with one of the official Community Engagement Projects of UP. Following meetings in 2009 and 2010 between MRYE and representatives from UP (Natural and Agricultural Sciences Faculty, Department of Community Engagement and the Student Recruitment and Retention Centre), an interim agreement between the Division Student Recruitment and Retention and MRYE was signed early in 2010. They recognised MRYE as a UP student initiative that would be supported, but that could not be recognised as part of the Department of Community Engagement, which only funds credit bearing activities within a Faculty. This interim agreement was in operation for 2010, during which the MRYE group received training and recruitment material. They also received assistance with the identification and prioritization of UP feeder schools and areas to be serviced by MRYE, although the CTHB remained their sole funder. In November 2010, Mr Edwin Smith and the Student Recruitment and Retention Division at UP reported their satisfaction with the work being done by MRYE. A new Agreement was signed on 29 November 2010 confirming UP's support of MRYE and its activities in 2011. However, no alternative or additional sponsor has thus far been secured by the MRYE group.

In 2010, MRYE undertook three trips. The first was to Mpumalanga between 4 and 11 April, during which 11 schools were visited over the 5 days by 9 members of the MRYE team. Their second trip was to North-West Province between 13 and 18 July, where 14 schools were visited by 7 members of the MRYE team. Their third visit was to 3 schools in Kwazulu-Natal where they combined the trip with

the celebration of Samukelo Vilakazi's (the founder of MRYE) graduation as an electronics engineer from UP.

In 2010, the MRYE team leader was Sithembiso (Excellent) Khumalo. He was himself a product of MRYE in having been recruited and encouraged to enrol for a course at UP. In 2011, the MRYE leadership has had to be split between Sithembiso and Aaron Mabaso as Sithembiso has accepted a contract position in UP's Information Technology Department while doing his 4 multi-media modules of undergraduate study.



In 2011 the MRYE group have already undertaken four outreach trips. The first was to the Eastern Cape in January/February where 14 schools in the rural areas were visited by 6 of the MRYE team members. In March the groups took a weekend trip to the Weenen area of Kwazulu-Natal after receiving numerous invitations from schools in that area to visit and inform the learners about career guidance opportunities. In April, three members of the MRYE group embarked on a trip to Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal where they visited to Kwa-Bhanya High School. In July, a large group of 11 MRYE members left on a 10-DAY visit to rural schools in the Komatipoort and Acornhoek areas in Mpumalanga.

Although the MRYE group planned a trip to North-West province in September 2011, their budget from the CTHB for 2011 was exhausted. Instead, at their own expense, the group visited the Eastern Cape again to attend the celebration of the graduation of one of their other members. They planned to do some mentoring at neighbouring schools during this visit.

A small amount of additional money has been raised through certain MRYE members being part of the JCP programme at the University. This only amounts to about R300 per member per visit. The CTHB is thus actively encouraging MRYE to identify additional sponsors.

Over the past two years, the MRYE group has achieved success in their outreach and mentoring programme. The CTHB Board at its meeting in November 2011 will be asked to approve a further year of financial support for MRYE in 2012.