

Bursary recipient puts pupils first

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Selfless student offers free lessons

ABURSARY winner from Solomon Mahlangu is not sitting idly by while he waits to start his academic year at UCT – he’s helping pupils at his alma mater get the best academic start to the year they can.

Olwethu Bitterhout, 18, won a bursary to study mechanical engineering from the department of public works and while he waits for UCT to open in March he is giving free lessons to pupils in need of help.

Olwethu, who comes from a family of seven, was one of six pupils in the Eastern Cape to be awarded a bursary to the value of R130 000.

“My parents would’ve never been able to afford university fees for me. My mom has been unemployed since 2009 and my dad works at the municipality so he is the breadwinner here at home. They wouldn’t have been able to send me to university [so] I took it upon myself to work really hard and get a bursary,” Olwethu said.

An A-student throughout his high school career, Olwethu spoke about how helping others was how he ended up helping himself.

“At school when my friends and I studied, we’d always do so as a group. I’d help others who didn’t understand while also being helped in areas that I lacked.

“This proved to me that group work was a great method of studying and ensuring that what you’ve learnt, you don’t forget.

“As a result, all of my friends and I got great marks,” he said.

Olwethu helps pupils from other communities as well.

He helps those struggling in maths and science as well as dabbling in other subjects.

Proud mother Nomonde Bitterhout said: “I am so happy that he has held on and taken his education seriously because now he has been awarded this opportunity. I only pray that he holds on. Words are simply not enough to explain the joy I

feel in my heart. As a matter of fact, when it comes to school he was always extremely diligent.

“Even the people he associates [with] are people he studied with,” she said.

Department spokesman Thami Mchunu said: “The department of public works has been running a bursary programme which is specifically aimed at students coming from rural areas, semi-rural areas and township schools.

“In the bursary programme there are certain schools which have been pre-approved whose pupils attended a winter school. From the winter school, our bursary recipients are chosen.

“Olwethu picked himself out for this bursary through his brilliant performance. He was at a school which was provided with a winter school by the department of public works.

“Throughout, his performance was outstanding. He is one of 40 [nationally] who have been awarded this bursary.”



GIVING BACK: Olwethu Pitterhout spends his free time at his alma mater, Solomon Mahlangu High School, tutoring struggling pupils while he waits to start at UCT in March
Picture: FREDLIN ADRIAAN