

Pouring his all into Macassar

Tasmin Cupido

When Rashied Isaacs, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) area official for Macassar, founded the programme to educate Macassar youths on the Cape's water crisis he never imagined it would earn him another service award.

All he wanted to do through the project was to promote water saving among schoolchildren, although he went about conveying the message "differently".

When Isaacs received correspondence from the City of Cape Town's Safety and Security Directorate, inviting him to its annual mid-year commendations ceremony on Tuesday 31 July, he was surprised.

He received a service commendation at the ceremony.

The 46-year-old successfully launched and ran a competition with three local schools – Marvin Park, Macassar and Oklahoma primary schools – in March and April. He was assisted by women from three Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) groups in the area.

"I wanted to do something different with this project, which saw me going to the schools and speaking to the children on the importance of water saving," Isaacs said.

"Instead of me giving them all the information, I challenged them to come up with water saving tips, which they had to share with us through drawings and comprehensions. The response from the Grade 4 to 7 learners was amazing, and it was remarkable to see the ideas they came up with."

While some learners entered the competition in groups, some took the bold step to go it alone. In the end, Isaacs had the task of wading through more than 150 entries, all unique and award-winning in its own right, he adds.

"Owing to budget constraints, my colleagues and I decided to collect money among ourselves to buy stationery items for the prizes," he said.

"I also received a donation of medals from Nantes Athletics Club in Athlone, of which I am a member."

After reading every entry, Isaacs selected four entries from each school and returned to the schools to share the good news and hand over the prizes.

"I wanted to honour the children and make them feel special for the work



Rashied Isaacs, DRM area official for Macassar, with entries received from learners for a water awareness competition in Macassar. Photo: Tasmin Cupido

they had done," he said. "The smiles on winners' faces was irreplaceable."

This is not the first honour bestowed on the Athlone resident, who has been employed by the City for 23 years. The former fireman received a special commendation for his work during fire season in Khayelitsha in 2012, and he received the same award for his Safer Sports Fields Programme at Macassar schools in 2015.

"That project saw me train high school learners in First Aid, with those who successfully completed the course doing duty at sporting events," the father of two, who is also an avid sports photographer, says.

"It also aimed to promote scarce skilled careers like nursing and medicine and saw some success stories, with one trainee going on to do a paramedic course and three studying nursing."

Furthermore, Isaacs was also named the directorate's Officer of the Year in 2016, an award which his recent achievement has brought him in line for yet again. "This special commendation would not have come my way had it not been for the interest and willingness from the children, so this is as much their award as it is mine," Isaacs says.

"I love working in this community and making a difference through my education. I see good in the Macassar community and want the youth to dream and think out of the box. This project has put the community on the map when it comes to safety and education, and showed that DRM's awareness programmes is effective."