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Author: Nokuthula Mabuza



Ntando Gumede Simo Mlaba Msizi Sithole

ACHIEVERS

KZN pupils vow to make families proud through bursaries

NOKUTHULA MABUZA
nokuthula.mabuza@inl.co.za

KWAZULU-NATAL matriculants, who received bursaries from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), have promised to make the department and their families proud.

Msizi Sizwe Sithole, 17, said achieving the bursary was one of the biggest and most important achievements of his life. He said it has removed the financial burden on his single unemployed mother.

Sithole of Mkhazane village in Ulundi, said he has been living with his four siblings and his mother after their father left when he was 6 years old. They were struggling financially, but his mother did her best to ensure they have a better life, he said.

"My elder sibling is studying nursing; the others are still at school. My mother is a volunteer at a local crèche but she made sure we have everything needed for school."

Sithole said he was not always focused on his studies with his interest in playing soccer, however his perspective changed in Grade 9 when he was nominated to attend the DPWI camp.

"I was only 12 when I started going to the camp. I was as excited as I would ride Greyhound, the bus I've been wanting to ride all my life. But what mostly interested me was the programme. The DPWI gave me a very good experience."

Sithole is planning on pursuing a career in architecture or electrical engineering at the University of Cape Town. He was grateful to his agriculture teacher and deputy principal B S Mbatha who constantly motivated him and his peers.

"You have to work hard so that you can live a soft life. It is up to an individual to decide if they want to join the DPWI family or not."

Ntando Gumede, 17, who hails from Lamontville outside Durban said she was planning on taking the full advantage of the bursary programme considering that it was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Gumede will study towards a

construction management and quantity surveying course at the University of Johannesburg.

She said being accustomed to being the highest achieving pupil throughout her high school years, her matric year proved to be quite challenging in third term. "Come fourth term, though, I told myself I would discipline myself to achieve top marks," Gumede said.

She was proud to find that her final matric results were better than she had anticipated. She achieved distinctions in life sciences and English while physical sciences were levelled 6.

Encouraging other pupils aiming for bursaries, Gumede said minimising usage of social media as it is addictive and to stop procrastinating was the first step.

"The sooner you get into the habit of getting things done as soon as they arise with a sense of urgency is a good quality. It will help you become more productive."

Meanwhile, a 17-year-old from Ulundi, who achieved three distinctions at Zwelonke High School, said growing up in an area where everyone was making a living by becoming Maskandi musicians encouraged him to study hard.

Simo Mlaba said he considers himself different from the rest as he was academically gifted and was looking forward to succeed and improve his family's living conditions. He did not have much assistance on homework, but his family was supportive, he said.

"I only had access to my teachers during school hours. Despite such challenges, I managed to make myself proud with the matric results," said Mlaba.

He said he was not particularly surprised when he was told that he had been awarded the bursary because he knew that he had met all the requirements.

Mlaba said he hopes to own a business that would remind him of the sacrifices he has made throughout the years to get to where he is right now in the next five years.

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