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# Nasi iSpani helps Neo, a school dropout, find her passion in agriculture

She left school as she struggled with maths literacy but now she has a bright future ahead of her

**F**or Neo Olifant, who dropped out of school in Grade 10, a bleak future awaited. The 21-year-old from Mohlakeng on the West Rand, struggled academically and did not see a good future for herself without any formal education.

Thanks to the Nasi iSpani employment drive, Olifant has not only found employment but has discovered her talent and passion.

She was appointed as part of the Gauteng Provincial Government's Greening Army, an agriculture programme that grows vegetables and sells them to vendors and supplies indigent families.

Not only does Olifant have green fingers but she has found a career path that she would like to pursue when her contract ends in May next year.

"I love gardening. I enjoy the sowing process; it requires great care and patience. I want to do a course in agriculture at a TVET (technical and vocational education and training) college so that I can pursue a career in agriculture," she said.

Olifant said her worst nightmare at school was maths literacy.

"I struggled so much that I decided to

drop out. Even the teachers were not patient with me because of how much I failed the subject.

"My heart would even race before class. Maths literacy brought me great anxiety," she said.

Not only has her job at the You Reap What You Sow farm encouraged Olifant to go back to school and study agriculture, it has made her a good role model to her siblings who are eight and five years old.

"With the R2 830 salary that I get each month I'm able to help my mother with groceries. I can buy toiletries. I'm able to do my hair so that I look good. I sometimes take my siblings out. It is such a nice feeling to be able to help my mother," she said.

Her new-found passion in agriculture has also changed her perceptions about maths literacy.

"I will persevere. I love agriculture and I will do whatever I can do succeed at it."

Olifant walks to work and enjoys her working environment. "I didn't think I will find work that I look forward to doing each day," she said.

Olifant was one of 6 000 young people who were recruited as part of the Green



**Neo Olifant works as part of the Green Army and wants to study agriculture at a technical and vocational education and training college**

Army through the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment and Expanded Public Works Programme

The Green Army not only addresses food insecurity challenges at the household level and rising unemployment in the province, but also focuses on waste management and greening through clean-ups of illegal dumping and litter-picking in communities, main roads, and open spaces.

Waste pickers who are already oper-

ational in the communities have been integrated into the Green Army.

The Gauteng provincial government said the programme is also a response to littering and illegal dumping across Gauteng, particularly in townships, informal settlements, and hostels, which is harmful to the environment.

The positions were open to unemployed South Africans, particularly those that reside in the townships, informal settlements and hostels across Gauteng.