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Nyameka Mgijima
A/DIR: Communications & Events Management

CONTENTS

Editors Note.....02

Bhut’Billy retires after 38 years of service03

Head office motorists accessing the department at a cost04

Interns transition to permanent positions.....05

Mfundo “MR B” Bekelepi: community champion.....06

Woman taking up space in Education leadership positions.....08

Editor’s Note

As the 2024/25 financial year comes to an end, the Communications team has been up and about getting stories that will inspire all of us to prepare and be ready for the coming financial year in April 2025.

We may remember that we are still finalizing the 6th administration priorities whilst preparing and implementing ones for the new administration, education remains number one priority in the government sector.

We do all this cognizant of the efforts, dedication and commitment shown by employees towards the work of the department.

Critically, it is to recognize those that have reached their tenure and are now leaving the department to focus more on their families and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Indeed, their toils will never be forgotten as they spent most of their youthful years in the department.

With this edition, we would like to showcase both the fully developed and young talents that the department possess, Combination of the young creatives and maturity leads to positive outcomes and opportunities that bring about change in the education sector.

We continue to appreciate your openness and willingness to share your stories with us.

Enjoy.

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BHUT'BILLY RETIRES AFTER 38 YEARS OF SERVICE

By Lonwabo Tube

A former professional boxer, Eric Billy Mkhencele, affectionately known as Bhut'Billy at Head office, has officially retired after a sterling service of 38 years.

Bhut'Billy started his journey with the department under the leadership of Dr Lenox Langa Sebe, while the Department was still operating in Bhisho as a Labor Relations Officer (LRO) in May 1987.

During his time in the department, Mnune as other colleagues usually referred to him, played a critical role in maintaining positive employer-employee relationships, ensuring compliance with labour laws, resolving conflicts and disputes.

According to Zukile Dibiya who is a labour relations officer supervised by Mkhencele, working closely together with Bhut'Billy was a blessing and an honour. "Mnune thoroughly mentored me from way back when I was still an intern with grace and humility.

He is a flexible, punctual and dedicated person and makes sure that he shares his experiences with everyone around him" said Dibiya.

Dibiya added that when he started working on a permanent basis for the Department he was 'clueless' of how things were done but with Mnune's help he is now a confident young man who handles sensitive cases of the Department.

Thumeka Nkwatheni who is a Senior state accountant from the Payments unit, sang Bhut'Billy's praises saying that he was a very kind and considerate person. "He loved people and his union Nehawu and was an active member for as long as I can remember. He worked so hard, not only for himself but for all the employees of the Department fighting for employees' rights" said Nkwatheni. She added that Mnune would listen to people with grievances and make sure that those grievances are escalated to the leadership of the Union to resolve..

Besides his passion for work and politics which saw him helping and taking a stand for his fellow employees, Bhut Billy was also a professional boxer inspired by his then Head of Department, Dr Lenox Langa Sebe. According to Bhut'Billy love and loyalty to people around him were the key principles that he has lived and stood by until his last day at work.

"My work required me to deal with sensitive information as such I had to make sure that confidentiality is my middle name. I learnt a lot from the people I worked with and the Department has given me so many opportunities to help me grow in all aspects of life" said an emotional Mkhencele.

"The Department has been my home for so many year as a result the fact that am leaving is still surreal but it is time for me to go and allow young blood to come in and take the Department to greater heights" concluded Bhut'Billy.

"He is a flexible, punctual and dedicated person and makes sure that he shares his experiences with everyone around him"



HEAD OFFICE MOTORISTS ACCESSING THE DEPARTMENT AT A COST

By: Bongani Mziba

It is always a proactive move to anticipate disasters before they happen, which then led to the department opting for a trench in an attempt to avoid flooding by the main entrance of the Eastern Cape Department of Education head office.

As much as it helps paving the way for rain water to pass through, it is not as rosy for most employees as it poses a major threat to their cars in terms of maintenance and well-being. Employees have voiced their frustrations and concerns that come with the entrance situation.

Ncebakazi Mbaliso who is a Supply Chain Management Officer voiced her frustration concerning the main entrance highlighting the inconvenience it causes for her to access the workplace as the ditch (water passage) is so deep, resulting to her car hitting the bumper in the process.

"The main entrance is inconvenient for me, I remember when I bought my car and still a learner driver, I had to park the car outside for sometime while I had to come up with a strategy to get inside without bumping my car" said Mbaliso.

She added that the water trench almost caused an accident back in 2023 when she almost hit a colleague's car thinking that he was turning right to the HOD's entrance direction, only to find that it was his way of entering the gate to avoid hitting his bumper.



"The main entrance was assessed by our office and a plan is in place to mitigate the problem caused by the deep trench."

Sonwabile Ntloko who is a Senior Personnel Officer also shared the dangers that can be posed by the trench to motorists, stating that cars are in danger of hitting the oil containers underneath the engine which can result in financial implications associated with fixing their cars. "There are very sensitive parts inside the engine which at all times need to be protected. Therefore, should anything happen to these parts it's game over" added Ntloko.

The Works Inspector for Facilities Management Sibongile Ngxata offered calming words and assurance to all workers, particularly motorists ensuring them that a plan for the main entrance situation is in the pipeline and the design is ready.

"The main entrance was assessed by our office and a plan is in place to mitigate the problem caused by the deep trench. We are at the moment waiting for the availability of budget to get it done" assured Ngxata.



INTERNS TRANSITION TO PERMANENT POSITIONS

By Asemahle Jiba

In September 2024, the lives of two Head Office Interns changed for the better when they scored themselves permanent employment as Human Resource Administration (HRA) Clerks.

The employment of these interns proves the commitment of the Department in providing long-term career growth for interns while contributing to the overall success of the youth. According to Renique Smiles, one of the newly appointed HRA clerks said that securing a permanent position has been a dream come true, especially after having spent six years as an intern. She expressed how this achievement marks a significant milestone in her career and provides her with stability. "I've had such a positive experience during my time as an intern since 2018 and I gained invaluable experience working alongside amazing colleagues. The entire experience was rewarding, as it not only provided me with essential skills but also helped me grow professionally," said Smiles.

Smiles added that with the permanent job she can already feel the excitement building inside her, realising that she is no longer an intern. "I feel like a door has been unlocked into a future full of possibilities. I will now be able to give my family the life they truly deserve, filled with stability and comfort" said Smiles. She also said that her dream of buying her own car and even a house are no longer distant fantasies but are the things that she can see on the horizon just waiting to become reality. "It's not just a job, it is the foundation of everything I have hoped for."



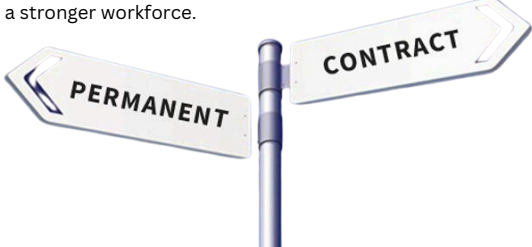
Andiswa Mceleni, also shared her joy and gratitude saying that she is truly thankful for the opportunity to showcase her abilities. "It is not every day that someone transitions from an internship to a permanent role and I feel incredibly lucky to have received this opportunity" said Mceleni.

Reflecting on her journey Mceleni said that she started working in the Department as an intern in 2021 and that her experience has been a beautiful one as she used that time to develop herself and her skills. However, the uncertainty of not knowing whether her contract would end every year was unsettling. "This uncertainty creates a sense of instability as one can never be sure if the contract will be renewed or not. This uncertainty complicates planning and makes it difficult to have long-term commitments in both my professional and personal life but with being permanent, comes stability" added Mceleni.

"I am beyond being excited for what the future holds and ready to take on new challenges, contribute to meaningful projects and continue developing my skills. My confidence has gone through the roof and I know that this is just the beginning of an even more fulfilling journey," said Mceleni.

It is therefore evident that when you work hard and dedicate yourself to your work, opportunities like these will come by and all one needs to do is to grab them as Smiles and Mceleni did. chances like these are not only benefitting those employed but the Department in general as it retains skilled individuals and create a stronger workforce.

"It is therefore evident that when you work hard and dedicate yourself to your work opportunities like these will come by and all one needs to do is to grab them"



MFUNDO “MR B” BEKELEPI: A TRUE COMMUNITY CHAMPION



By: Siphosethu Zimba

By day, Mfundo Bekelepi works as an Accounting Clerk in the Internal Control Unit, but in the afternoons, he transforms into a passionate teacher dedicating his time to tutoring high school learners in Maths, Accounting and Business Studies.

This soccer team captain with a decade-long career in the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) has a true passion for teaching and giving back to his community. Since 2006, Bekelepi has been offering extra lessons to learners in need. He first started providing these lessons in East London's 'Needs Camp' community and now he is offering lessons in Zwelitsha.

"Growing up I always saw myself as a teacher but my career took a different path. My passion for teaching has allowed me to take time off my busy schedule to offer extra lessons to learners around Zwelitsha and Qonce communities to ensure that they receive the extra help they need to excel in these critical subjects" explained Bekelepi.

Currently, Bekelepi tutors 13 Grade 12 learners from different schools around Qonce at Nomvume Exams and Project Centres in Zwelitsha in the afternoons on weekdays and Saturday mornings.

He also added that balancing work, tutoring and leading the ECDoE's soccer team requires a lot of dedication, focus and a little creativity in setting your priorities straight.

Bekelepi's dedication has not gone unnoticed as Nomasonto Mzimela an Administrative Clerk in the Examinations and Assessments section who is a parent to one of his learners expressed her gratitude for Bekelepi's impact on her daughter's academic journey. "My daughter passed her matric in 2024, but unfortunately she was not satisfied with her results and then a friend recommended Mr. B's extra classes which have been a game-changer for my daughter. She is now more confident, motivated and we are looking forward to improved results" added Mzimela.

Bekelepi's ultimate dream is to establish his own registered institution one day which will provide extra lessons to learners and help them excel in their studies. With his unwavering commitment to teaching and community development, 'Mr. B' is a true inspiration and a shining example of selflessness and dedication.

"My passion for teaching has allowed me to take time off my busy schedule to offer extra lessons to learners"

WOMEN TAKING UP SPACE IN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

By Thando Ngcume

The Department has over the years employed many women to its leadership positions, giving them a fair chance on partaking in decision making and critical positions at Head Office and District level.

One of the women enjoying that opportunity is Pumla Gxuluwe who due to her leadership, dedication and expertise was appointed last year as the Director for School Health, Safety and Learner Enrichment Directorate. With a distinguished career spanning over three decades, Gxuluwe has established herself as a shining example of women's excellence in education. She began her journey as a teacher at Toise Senior Secondary School in 1991 then went on to JA Calata High School and Bhisho High School. During her time as a teacher she earned a recognition from Rhodes University for exceptional Science Laboratory Management. "I have worked so hard over the years as a woman to be recognised and considered for such positions and to finally be recognised is such an honour to me. Being persistent, focused and never giving up on my dreams contributed a great deal to who and what I am today" said Gxuluwe.

Nomaxabiso Gqomo who is a Basic Education Adolescent and Young people' program has firsthand experience of working alongside Gxuluwe and under her leadership. Gqomo sang Gxuluwe's praises of being the most dedicated person when it comes to health and life skills programs in particular peer education initiatives that seek to empower learners on how to deal with psychosocial challenges.



"I have been working with Gxuluwe for quite some time and there is a saying that she never fails to communicate with all of us that 'seeing you in the office makes me unhappy because I believe that you should be where the learners are' and indeed we work with learners and that requires us to be closer to where they are in schools not in offices" said Gqomo.

Milisa Mtoto who is Gxuluwe's Personal Assistant considers herself lucky to be afforded an opportunity to work closely with Gxuluwe. "Working with her has been an eye opener and a learning curve for me in all aspects of life, her approach when faced with challenges and her calm demeanour is exceptional. She has an open door policy that fosters transparency, trust across the board whether you are an intern or a senior manager in the Directorate" added Mtoto.

According to the EC Education Special Programmes Unit Acting Deputy Director, Nobuhle Kupa, the Department is working hard on establishing a supportive environment where women can excel and get recognition for their achievements. Kupa went on to say that her Directorate is happy that the Department is slowly transforming and empowering women for management positions with the hope that it will continue for years to come.



"I have worked so hard over the years as a woman to be recognised and considered for such positions and to finally be recognised is such an honour to me."



Province of the

EASTERN CAPE

EDUCATION

VISION

All learners provided with opportunities to become productive, responsible, and competitive citizens through an inclusive quality basic education system.

MISSION

To achieve the vision, we will:

- Implement appropriate and relevant educational programmes through quality teaching and learning
- Mobilise community and stakeholder support through participation;
- Institutionalise a culture of accountability at all levels of the Department.

VALUES

High Performance
Responsiveness
Accountability Empathy
Access Equity Integrity

building blocks for

growth

department of
education

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