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Colleagues,

While time is quietly moving and before you know it's December. Well, in preparing for the festive season, a lot needs to be done so that many can be merry too.

Having said that, please receive our monthly publication meant to keep you posted of the news around the complex. We also have movers and shakers as part of acknowledging one another.

May you enjoy it, as it is fresh from the oven packed for your consumption. Don't forget to give us your views of the copy. Your valuable input will help us better ourselves and deliver more quality news and information.

Enjoy!

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ZANDY'S JOURNEY TO COMPLETING THE TWO OCEANS MARATHON

By: Siphosethu Zimba



Zandile Makitiwana, affectionately known as Zandy, is a shining example of a woman who excels in multiple roles with remarkable prowess. As an Administrative Clerk in the IT & Certification Unit under the Assessments and Examinations Office, Zandy juggles her professional responsibilities with fitness. But there's another side to Zandy, she's a passionate and accomplished runner who embodies determination and strength.

By day, Zandy is a dedicated professional contributing to her team; by dawn, she's a force of nature on the running trails, pushing her limits and crushing her goals as a proud member of the Buffalo Runners Athletic Club (BRAC) eQonce. Her impressive accomplishments in ultra-marathons have earned her recognition in the running community. Notably, Zandy has completed the challenging Two Oceans Marathon (56km) an impressive four times in a row from 2022 to 2025 – a testament to her endurance, strength and mental toughness.

Zandy's athletic journey began in her school days with excellence in short-distance events like 100m and 200m sprints and relay races. Her transition to long-distance running, sparked by joining a running club, has been a pathway to discovering her true passion. According to Zandy, her success stems from building a solid foundation of endurance, strength and mental resilience, guided by a structured training plan crafted with her coaches.

For Zandy, running transcends physical challenge "Running helps me manage stress, teaches perseverance and gives me a sense of accomplishment. It fuels my personal growth, tests my limits, courage and will", said Zandy.

Zandy's path hasn't been without hurdles. In 2022, she faced severe cramping during the Two Oceans Marathon but with support from fellow runners, she adjusted her stride and finished the race. Running has taught her invaluable skills like goal-setting, discipline and recovery. "Running has humbled me and shown me the importance of respecting the process. It teaches me to celebrate achievements and never give up", she added.

As an inspiration to the youth, especially women juggling multiple roles, Zandy advises starting slow and setting achievable goals. "Celebrate your progress and love what you're doing. Consistency is key, even if it's just a few minutes a day", encourages Zandy.

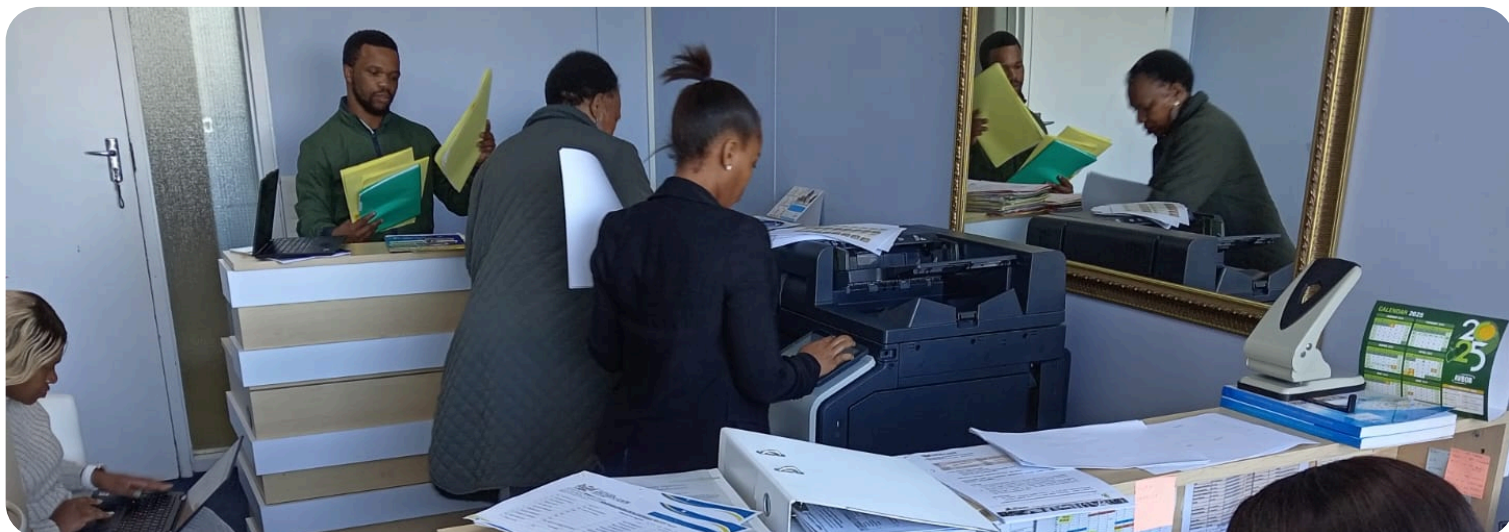
Support from her family, colleagues and friends has been pivotal. "My nephew, son, and colleagues believes in me, tracking my progress and sending congratulatory messages after each race", said Zandy with gratitude.

A highlight of Zandy's running career includes her remarkable completion of the 2025 Comrades Marathon, finishing her 4th Comrades Marathon. "This accomplishment stands as a testament to my commitment and love for running", concluded Zandy.



TWO OCEANS RUNNER ZANDILE MAKITIWANA

EC EDUCATION OFFICE SPACE PLANNING PROJECT ON TRACK



ECDOE STAFF IN ACTION DURING THE OFFICE HOURS

A NEW ERA FOR EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY --- Adhering to office ergonomics, the science of designing workspaces, equipment, and tasks to fit the worker, promoting comfort, reducing strain, and preventing injuries like musculoskeletal disorders is on track in the Eastern Cape Department of Education. writes **Thando Ngcume**.

The Department at the Head Office has launched a game-changing office planning project that is set to revolutionize the way employees work. This ambitious initiative is aimed at boosting employee well-being, productivity, and efficiency to unprecedented levels.

According to Tsepo Pefole, Director for Infrastructure Management, the project has groundbreaking objectives that will transform the workspace, including:

- Drafting optimized office floor layouts featuring open-plan designs that foster collaboration, creativity, and innovation
- Upgrading electrical, fire, and air conditioning systems to create a cutting-edge, safe, and comfortable environment
- Repairing critical building elements to ensure a modern, functional, and state-of-the-art workspace
- Rearranging work units based on space planning standards through stakeholder engagement and expert design
- Exploring alternative space allocation options to maximize space usage and take productivity to new heights

The Head Office, which has been experiencing overcrowding, is about to become a vibrant, inspiring, and world-class workplace. Pefole assures staff that the department is committed to creating a workspace that supports employee success and propels the department forward.

"We are beyond excited to tackle the challenges caused by overcrowding and outdated infrastructure, and create a workspace that unleashes productivity, reduces stress, and enhances employee well-being," said Pefole.

The EC Education workers are ecstatic about the launch of the office planning project, and for good reason it is about to transform their working lives in ways they have never imagined.

School Financial Management Assistant Director, Nceba Dlamini, can not wait to get started. "This initiative is a dream come true!" he said. "We are on the cusp of a major breakthrough, and I can already see the positive impact it will have on our working lives."

Assistant finance Officer, Siyamamkela Charlie is equally thrilled: "I am counting down the days until this project is complete. A safer, more conducive work environment will be a game-changer for us all."

Wellness practitioner Somila Kiva sums it up: "This project is a giant leap forward for employee well-being. We are creating a workspace that is not just functional, but inspiring, and that is going to take our productivity and job satisfaction to stratospheric levels," he said.



ECDOE STAFF IN ACTION DURING THE OFFICE HOURS

HARMONY IN THE HALLWAYS



EC EDUCATION CHOIRS MEMBERS AS SEEN DURING THE LAUNCH OF AVIATION SCHOOL IN PORT ALFRED

By Asemahle Jiba

In a heartwarming display of unity and creativity, the Eastern Cape Education Department's choir has grown from a small group of music lovers into a vibrant group of over 50 members showcasing how music can bring people together in the workplace.

According to Okuhle Lulonke Mbangeni who is the Deputy choir chairperson, the choir has already reached several milestones including performing at the Department's Easter celebrations, the launch of Aviation School in Port Alfred and a special event to welcome MEC Fundile Gade into the 7th Administration at the Head Office.

Mbangeni said that by being given a chance to perform in Departmental big events means that their talent as a choir is recognised and appreciated. "We are so proud of representing our Department when it comes to music and getting the applause after our performance everytime after performing means that we are doing something right" said a proud Mbangeni.



Sandile Mwanda an Expenditure Management Officer who is also a member of the choir said that being part of the choir has had a positive effect to his personal and professional growth. "I have formed lasting friendships across Departments and I have come to realise that music is also a great stress reliever that lifts my mood and energizes me at work" said Mwanda.

EC EDUCATION CHOIR UNITES STAFF THROUGH MUSIC

He also added that with more support and performance opportunities the choir could reach greater audiences and greater heights.

Assessment and Examinations Officer Nozuko Mndleleni also recognised the choir's impact in her performance at work saying that it has offered her a way to explore her creative side and a way to manage stress that comes with her duties at work.

"Attending choir practice is rejuvenating it helps me regain strength and motivation to do more but unfortunately the choir's growth is being held back by lack of support and resources" said Mndleleni.

With continued support from the Management and fellow colleagues the choir according to Mndleleni has a potential to inspire more people, build a culture of creativity and collaboration that will help create a more joyful and pleasant workplace.



DEPARTMENTAL MOVERS AND SHAKERS

ANOTHER YOUNGSTER BRIGHTENS ECDOE TOP ECHELONS, WRITES **BONGANI MZIBA**

The Eastern Cape Department of Education has made significant strides in appointing competent managers prioritizing inclusivity by bringing in young and predominantly black female leaders.

This strategic approach has yielded notable results marked by increased accountability, effective teamwork and resilience. These managers tackle each task with a growth mindset leading with purpose and driving the department's mission and vision forward.

The approach of the Department which has seen significant benefits from appointing young managers to serve in senior leadership, these roles have made sure that fresh perspectives and innovative thinking is constantly injected into the system. Newly appointed 40 year old Director for Statutory Audit, Pheleka Silolo, serving in the top management has empowered her.

According to Silolo, the journey has not been easy as she started small. 2024 gave her a breakthrough as she was selected to join the International Women's Forum South Africa (IWFSA) Executive Development Programme. The initiative was funded by Phenomenal Women in Leadership and supported by the Zanele Mbeki Foundation.

"The programme is in partnership with the Duke University in the United States of America including the Finance and Accounting Services Sector, Education and Training Authority (FASSET). The programme equip participants with global leadership and governance skills. Furthermore, traveling to USA in January this year was a dream come true," said a beaming Silolo.

She pledges her gratitude and promise to uphold her dedication to serve the Department with humility. "As a young senior manager, one needs to emulate service leadership to your team. is not just about personal achievement, It is about lifting others, mentoring future leaders and contributing to lasting change. Therefore, I am grateful to be part of a Department that believes in growth and supports every potential individual. Consequently and I'm committed to doing the same for others" added Silolo.

Deputy Director General Corporate Management Branch, Qaphela Luthuli, believes that young managers in leadership roles will definitely influence new energy, fresh ideas and digital skills. 'The modernising of the public sector serves as a true reflection of the inclusion of another young person in the senior management role by the department', emphasized Luthuli

Additionally, Luthuli shared the same sentiments of humility, honour and gratitude to be afforded such an opportunity to represent young people like himself at the age of 41.

"The position has afforded me a huge responsibility, and I feel fortunate and privileged to serve. I believe that young people taking up space is a step in the right direction. It brings forward diversity, innovation and new perspectives and also a challenge to the status quo that most departments are believed to represent" concluded Luthuli.



Director for Statutory Audit, Pheleka Silolo

ECDOE ENCOURAGES STAFF TO GUARD AGAINST FLU

By Lonwabo Tube

Education's Wellness Services Unit urges ECDOE staff to protect themselves against respiratory infections associated with winter season by taking preventative measures such as getting flu vaccines.

Assistant Director, Wellness Services Bongiwe Godloza stated that last month the Department collaborated with trained pharmacists to administer the vaccination of employees at its Head Office.

"The primary aim of the vaccination was to help minimize the number of employees who are absent due to flu infections. Additionally, these infection can easily spread from one person to the other in the workplace. We believe that by proactively addressing these issues, we will help maintain a healthier work environment for everyone," said Godloza.

Additionally, Godloza encourages employees who did not take part on the day of the vaccination to go to the nearest clinics, pharmacies and private Doctors to get vaccinated.

School health Social-Worker, Yolanda Blankethe, highlighted valuable insight about the flu vaccination and its benefits. "The vaccine is a 'prescribed injection designed to prevent illnesses associated with the winter season,' a time when many people tend to get sick."

"Individuals with underlying health conditions can greatly benefit from this vaccination. It also saves our colleagues much time because instead of waiting in line at hospitals and clinics, they can use that time to focus on their health and well-being," said Blankethe.

Labour Relations Officer Zukile Dibiya believes that getting the flu vaccination is vital, since COVID-19 still lurks around.

"I believe that prevention is better than cure, especially for your loved ones. Getting vaccinated reduces the chances of getting flue and spreading it at work." concluded Dibiya



ECDOE staff being vaccinated at the Zwelitsha (Head office) complex

BUNTU: THE MAN BEHIND MEC GADE

By: Dineo Matroko

From the humble beginnings of the dusty Stutterheim streets immerse the executive support secretary of MEC Fundile Gade, Buntu Faku.

The 45-year-old activist and community builder, affectionately known as 'Big O' still believes community experiences moulded his character. To Buntu, the Provision of Administrative and political support to the political office demands a devoted individual who is able to interface both politics and administration.

"Managing the office of the MEC' in any Department is no child's play as it takes dedication, resilience and humility. Adjusting in the position has been a smooth transition thanks to my skills and background. explains Faku.

Being born in Stutterheim, didn't deter the young Faku from persuading his dream. His academic journey started with the Walter Sisulu University where he obtained Broadcast Certificate. Buntu's eagerness to further his studies landed him at the University of Fort Hare where he obtained his Bachelor of Social Sciences in Communications.

"I have a passion for Education and prioritising myself helped me archive my goals. As an activist, I am involved in community building projects especially sport. In addition, as a former Provincial and now the Deputy President of Border Rugby Referees and the secretary of King William's Town Rugby Referees, drives me to help young people who are interested in sport to reach their full potential". added Faku.

Buntu, is also involved in charity work such as donating sanitary towels, school uniforms including shoes, stationery and food parcels to the needy.

Faku joined the Department as an intern at the Document centre in 2012, and later the office of the MEC, a move he never anticipated. "Being the MEC's right-hand man is one of most challenging jobs that I have ever done in my career".

"Mental stability and focus while managing the MEC's diary are a must. Therefore his movements and security are the most crucial elements of my job. With experience and the skills that I have acquired over the years in the public sector, my goal is to be a senior manager one day" emphasized Faku.

Faku's experience in the public and private sector shaped him to be a better a civil servant. "The experience that I have acquired in the public sector and the name I have made for myself would not be traded for any amount of money in the world." said Faku.



MEC's executive PA Buntu Faku



Picture Gallery



VISION

All learners provided equal opportunities to become productive skilled and globally competitive citizens through and inclusive innovative quality basic education.

MISSION

To achieve this vision, The Department will:

- Implement appropriate and relevant educational programme through inclusive, innovative quality teaching and learning.
- strengthen social cohesion through mobilisation of communities and stakeholders support and participation.
- institutionalise a culture of accountability at all levels of the of the department.
- eliminate digital divide by providing equitable access to connectivity.

VALUES

- High Performance
- responsiveness
- Accountability
- Equity
- Integrity
- value for Money
- Inclusivity
- Innovation
- Professionalism
- Courtesy

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