

*Press release from Jan de Beer, cell 082 456 3677:*

## A.B.E. Plays Host To New Government Initiative To Stimulate Female Interest In Technological Careers

a.b.e. Construction Chemicals recently hosted a visit by a group of Rondebult Secondary School girls as part of the SA Government's TechnoGirl "job shadowing" programme.

The pupils' in-depth introduction to the operations of a.b.e. - which is part of the Chryso Southern Africa Group of companies - took place at the a.b.e. Boksburg plant.

Brian Matthee, Chryso Southern Africa's General Manager: Human Resources and Organisation, says the four Grade 9 girls, from disadvantaged backgrounds attending the school in Germiston, spent five days of their winter school holidays at the a.b.e. plant in terms of the new TechnoGirl programme which aims to increase and enhance the participation of young women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers.

"Many secondary school pupils struggle with maths and science studies. For girls, the situation is even more challenging with less than a third taking maths and science at secondary school. Consequently, young girls leave school and higher institutions without the competencies required for technical careers in STEM fields.

"To ensure that women have an equal opportunity to excel in fields that the economy requires, the Government decided that high school girls who do well in STEM subjects need to be practically exposed to opportunities, and helped with subject choices to steer them in the correct direction when selecting tertiary education. a.b.e. was approached to participate in this commendable TechnoGirl programme and we immediately agreed as this is in line with Chryso SA's strategy to assist in worthy socio-economic projects and also identify talent at an early stage," Matthee explained.

He says TechnoGirl is a flagship programme of the Department for Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD), in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department of Basic Education (DBE), private company Uwesio Consulting, and the State Information Technology Agency (SITA). "It is based on the understanding that structured exposure to the workplace can significantly contribute towards motivating disadvantaged senior schoolgirls to take up careers that are in demand in the economy and where women are under-represented. The Government believes that the programme will lead to sustained employment and break the cycle of poverty for these young women. The programme, importantly, covers two of South Africa's key national priorities: education and job creation," Matthee added.

The TechnoGirl programme entails selected schoolgirls following a structured job-shadowing programme at selected workplaces on a long-term, structured and systematic basis, where they will

spend time during school holidays at the host company for five days, three times per year over a three-year period.

Participating companies earn enhanced BBBEE scorecard status while partnering with the Government in addressing socio-economic challenges, and participating in the development of human capital.

During their five-day stay at a.b.e. in Boksburg, the Rondebult Secondary School girls were mentored by Barbara Meyer, a.b.e. Payroll & Human Resources Administrator, who described the interaction with the pupils as "highly rewarding and inspirational".

"The girls' five days at a.b.e. was an intensive, fact-finding visit - by no means a factory tour. Detailed information dissemination was the order of the day right from their arrival and written summaries on what they had learnt were required right from Day One. After a detailed briefing on the company and its operations and products, I escorted the girls as they 'shadowed' a.b.e. jobs with career potential such as Human Resources, Health and Safety, Sales Representation, Analytical Chemical Engineering, Chartered Accountancy, Primary Batching, and Computer Science. They even had the opportunity to learn what it takes to reach the highest pinnacle: Chief Executive Officer. At the end of their stay, the girls presented impressive summaries of their experiences and overviews of the training received at a.b.e.," Meyer states.

Recalling the girls' final presentations, Brian Matthee comments: "The enthusiasm and keen interest in learning more about potential future careers shown by the young girls clearly showed that women - even those who grow up poor - can play an important role in the future S.A. economy. It also underlined that practical experience is vital to complement theoretical career guidance. a.b.e. looks forward to continuing to participate in the TechnoGirl programme."

Meyer says the career interests that seemed to be particularly popular were Analytical Chemical Engineering, Human Resources, Computer Science and Chartered Accountancy. She sent the school girls on their way with the message: "To achieve your goals, you must expect challenges. But never be negative about setbacks. Failure is not success denied, but success delayed."

As part of the TechnoGirl, a.b.e. will again host the same four Rondebult school girls during the next three school holidays, but in the Easter school holidays next year they will spend all of the five days at a.b.e. in a specific department for which they had shown particular interest and aptitude.

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**Caption:**

The four TechnoGirls who were exposed to the business world at a.b.e. Construction Chemicals recently were pictured in the company's Research & Development laboratory with France Nkadameng, a.b.e. R&D Manager. The Rondebult Secondary pupils are (from left) [Asiphe Gidigidi](#), [Alicia Gidimisana](#), [Noluthando Skosana](#), and [Alizwa Marais](#).

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*Issued for a.b.e. Constructioin Chemicals, Boksburg / Further info: Brian Matthee, tel 011 306 9000/  
[www.abec.co.za](http://www.abec.co.za)*