

MEDIA RELEASE

From the Drakensberg Mountains to the Cape of Good Hope

[Cape Town, South Africa, 10/12/2015] Four young people from the Clouds of Hope Children's Care Centre in Underberg, KwaZulu-Natal have been granted an opportunity to break the shackles of poverty and pursue potential careers in the maritime sector, thanks to a bursary provided by Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA).

Three of the four – Tsepang Mhlakoana (19), Bongane Mhlakoana (19) and Ntsidiseng Jama (17), who are orphaned girls – have been at Lawhill Maritime Centre for three years, and are presently awaiting their Matric results. They hope to be able to get further support from TNPA to attend the Cape Peninsula University of Technology at Granger Bay to further their Maritime Studies, or possibly to apply for Maritime-related Internships with Transnet to combine work and study through on-the-job training.

In 2015 another Clouds child, Lungisa Zondi (15), also received a Transnet bursary and started at Lawhill in Grade 10.

The relationship between TNPA, Lawhill and the children's care centre began when Clouds volunteer fundraiser Jenny Rogers came to learn from Capt Keith Burchell, retired from Transnet, about an opportunity for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply for a bursary to attend Lawhill Maritime Centre in Simons Town. She quickly identified three young women who met the academic criteria and applied on their behalf.

Unlike many girls in rural schools in South Africa, these three had the support at Clouds of Hope that enabled them to continue studying maths and science, and were achieving the required minimum in these subjects.

TNPA offered them a bursary to study at Lawhill Maritime Centre, to complete grades 10 through 12 of High School in this specialist maritime academy, including instruction in maritime economics and nautical science.

Rogers said: "This course presents an amazing opportunity for these girls from a landlocked town in KZN to pursue a career in the maritime industry. Before they set off a well-wisher arranged a hasty trip to Durban harbour, 200 kms away, so the girls could at least see a ship before their departure.

"In January 2013 they set off on a 24 hour bus ride from Kokstad, 120 kms from Underberg, bound for Cape Town, a city they had only heard of, and an ocean that they had only glimpsed, but which they would soon be learning to sail on, navigate through and conquer on their way to a new future."

Rogers said Clouds of Hope Children's Care Centre is home to 70 orphaned, abandoned or vulnerable children. It is based in a deep rural farming community near the KwaZulu Natal town of Underberg in the Drakensberg Mountains, near the South African border with Lesotho. Clouds was started in 2002, and has grown to employ 14 caregivers and many volunteer support staff.

She added: "These are young people who have had an unfortunate start in life. They are now young people with hope, with education, training and ability, going steadily forward with the prospect of decent jobs to support themselves and their future families, and contribute to our economy."

Image Gallery

Right: Left to right: Lungisa Zondi, Ntsidiseng Jama, Clouds of Hope volunteer fundraiser Jenny Rogers, Bongane Mhlakoana and Tsepang Mhlakoana.



Right: Left to right: Lawhill Maritime Centre matriculants Tsepang Mhlakoana, Bongane Mhlakoana and Ntsidiseng Jama, who hail from Clouds of Hope Children's Care Centre in Underberg, KwaZulu Natal and are presently awaiting their matric results.



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