

106 township mechanics get lifeline

Nelson Mandela Bay's township economy is set for a major boost with 106 mechanics inducted for the two-year Informal Automotive Service Centres Development Programme today.

An initiative of the Uitenhage Despatch Development Initiative (UDDI) in partnership with Filpro, an enterprise development company established to empower informal automotive entrepreneurs in South Africa, the programme is the first of its kind for the Eastern Cape.

The group of generalist mechanics, tyre repairs and panel beaters from KwaNobuhle, Khayamnandi and KwaLanga are the first beneficiaries of the programme in the region.

Also running in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Free State, Northern Cape, Western Cape, Mpumalanga and North West; the programme covers theoretical and practical training through key skills development channels.

"Bringing the programme to Nelson Mandela Bay is Filpro's way of giving back to the region as township automotive businesses in the area regularly make use of products manufactured by our parent company, G.U.D. Holdings," explains Mduduzi Mahlalela, Filpro's project co-ordinator.

An induction workshop held at the Nelson Mandela Bay Science and Technology (Uitenhage) today marks the official kick-start of the two-year programme.

The workshops are set to continue at Khayamnandi Hall (Despatch), Babs Madlakane Hall (KwaNobuhle) and Langa Hall (KwaLanga).

Acting UDDI Enterprise Development Manager, Wandisiwe Nondlazi says: "Mechanics from the area are certainly capable of repairing cars but they do not have formal qualifications or training to professionally conduct these services."

"Hence, we [as the UDDI] approached Filpro as an implementing partner as its core mandate looks to develop 100% black-owned small businesses in the automotive sector," explains Nondlazi.

"Our partnership with Filpro is therefore founded on a shared vision for empowering township-based businesses as a way of accelerating economic activity and employment opportunities," adds UDDI Chief

Executive Officer Patricia Dlamini.

“At the heart of the programme is supplier development and market linkages which have proven to be a challenge for many small businesses. This makes us optimistic that upon completion of the programme, these entrepreneurs will not only offer a professional service, but will create sustainable job opportunities and thus uplift the local community,” Dlamini says.

The initial phase of the programme will be on basic business management and entrepreneurial skills development such as financial administration, customer care, sales and marketing.

The next phase will be hands-on and cover product training on automotive filters, brake pads, lubricants and spark plugs.

Entrepreneurs will also learn the importance of using genuine automotive parts, laws of product, the Consumer Protection Act, as well as environmentally-friendly methods for recycling used car parts and oil.

All participants are running operational automotive-related ventures and were selected at UDDI and Filpro roadshows held in Uitenhage and Despatch.

Owner of Kwano Auto Repairs in KwaNobuhle, Sipho Mkayo (29), is elated to have made it to the initial intake. With no formal training since he started working on cars 14 years ago, he managed to establish his business in 2013 and today employs eight people.

Mkayo says, “You can never stop learning! With this opportunity, my employees and I will be professionally trained in dealing with motor vehicles. I am also looking forward to learning ways to effectively market my business.”