

**In partnership with Ethekewini Municipality, Corobrik hosts a graduation ceremony for 30 previously disadvantaged individuals who successfully completed a bricklaying course at Corobrik's Avoca training centre**

The conference hall at Durban's popular Botanic Gardens was the setting for the joyful occasion on Wednesday the 19th of September as 30 students were presented with certificates as successful graduates of the bricklaying course facilitated by Corobrik.

The nine week bricklaying course the students completed is one that Corobrik is no stranger in conducting. Corobrik currently has three bricklayer training centres which provide CETA (Construction, Education and Training Authority) accredited certifications in the craft. These centres are not for profit and purely serve to benefit the community and provide a skill to previously unskilled members of society. Not only this but the centres, located in Durban, Gauteng and the Western Cape, provide training that is essential to South Africa's construction industry. Berkley Petty, Human Resources Development Manager at Corobrik explained, "Bricklaying is a scarce skill. Part of why we run these courses at our training centres is to ensure that there are bricklayers in the future."

This sentiment was echoed by Corobrik's Managing Director, Dirk Meyer, in attendance at the event who said, "We've been running these training centres for twenty-five years. They are a key part of Corobrik's sustained and ongoing commitment to the community *and* the industry. The benefit to us is that we see people uplifted and the industry growing at the same time."

To see people 'uplifted' is exactly the reason the BSTMU (Business Support, Tourism and Markets Unit) of Ethekewini Municipality, with whom Corobrik have had a successful five year partnership, approached Corobrik to conduct the course. In doing so, thirty local unemployed individuals were given technical training at the Avoca training centre in Durban in order to empower them and provide access to future employment opportunities through the skills acquired. BSTMU's Programme Director, Siyabonga Luthuli, expressed at the opening of the event which celebrated the graduating students,

"We pride ourselves in this programme for three reasons. Firstly, it speaks of partnership and our partnership with Corobrik is one that has been going for five years and that we are very happy with. Secondly, it gives people the skills that mean they can make a living and thirdly, it empowers Africans to make a meaningful contribution to the economy."

Following this opening by Mr Siyabonga Luthuli, Dirk Meyer addressed the smartly dressed students with an encouraging speech, "We are a proudly South African Company who are even more proud of our transformation activities and our role as a service provider to the Ethekewini Municipality in building a better South Africa. I am humbled to stand before you and also of the talent and determination you have shown in completing the programme."

The conference room was swiftly filled with waves of claps as one by one the students were presented with their certificates, moving from being grandaunts to graduates in one celebratory moment. During the presentation of the certificates, six individuals were gifted awards in recognition of their outstanding performance in particular. Nobuhle Mncube was one of the recipients of the well-considered prize – a Trowel and spirit level – excitably sharing, "I didn't realise I was going to get the award! I am very happy. The course was difficult at first but now I feel confident. This course will help me develop my own business."

The significance of the event was added to by the attendance and key note speech of Councillor Nkosenhle Madlala who said, "our city is proud that this training is targeting unemployed and disadvantaged individuals. We are not only training our young people in bricklaying by running this course with Corobrik; we are training people in running small businesses, in contributing to the economy and in eradicating poverty in our communities."

Mr Madlala's speech was indicative of the event; an encouraging and celebratory day where the successful students left with not only certificates but the support to take their learning's forward. Firstly

there is the option to return to one of Corobrik's training centres and complete further modules which, alongside site experience, will allow them to complete their trade test and become fully qualified in bricklaying. Secondly, BMSTU has committed to supporting the students with further training, beginning with 'Business Start Up' education.

It's clear that the certificates awarded at this special event aren't the end point for these students and their learning but the foundations for them to build upon. With the talent evidenced in the room, we can feel confident that the construction of a better South Africa is in well trained hands.