



## *Newsletter*

### *Stella Clark Teachers Award*

Since its inception in 2006 the success of the Stella Clark Teachers Award has surpassed our expectations. The variety and large number of exceptional applications we receive all tell inspiring stories about dedicated teachers. The committee has a tough job choosing a finalist. As the initiative is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year, we thought we would take this opportunity to acknowledge your generous donation and reflect on the achievements of the award so far.

To recap, the award was established through donations from Stella's family, friends and colleagues from South Africa, UK, USA and Japan. The fund honours the work of the many unrecognized teachers who go beyond the call of duty to provide excellent education in often difficult circumstances. Annually, registered UCT students are invited to nominate secondary school teachers who have helped to make it possible for them to come to university. Usually they would nominate someone who has inspired them to pursue a particular path of study, or has opened up new intellectual paths for them.

The successful teacher receives a monetary award of R5000 and is delivers a talk at an award ceremony; the school receives R1000 towards educational resources; and the UCT staff member or student who nominates the successful teacher can choose either an ipod or R1500 cash equivalent.

The awards ceremony for 2009 has been scheduled for **Monday 17 August at 12h30** in CHED, and you will receive an invitation. We hope to see many friends and colleagues on the day.

The first three years have brought us into contact with remarkable teachers with growing national reputations. All are active beyond the boundaries of their classrooms.

The recipients have been:

- 2006 – Mr Sibusiso Maseko, Zwelibanzi High School
- 2007 – Mr Phaldie Tregonning, Rocklands Senior Secondary School
- 2008 – Mr December Mpapane

The first winner was Mr Sibusiso Maseko from Zwelibanzi High School outside Durban. He was first nominated by Phumlani Nkontwana. Thereafter nominations from ex Zwelibanzi pupils registered at UCT, in support of Mr Maseko's nomination, flooded in. The Committee were impressed with Mr Maseko's achievements, judged on the basis of the motivations received which all enthusiastically and vividly described his involvement in teaching and encouragement of students both academically and socially. All the supporting motivations attested to his influence in assisting pupils to obtain high grades in physical science and ultimately to register at UCT.

To quote from some of the numerous motivations received:

"I feel that Mr S N Maseko deserves the teacher's award because he has done amazing work to students from Umlazi concerning PHYSICAL SCIENCE. I used to hate physics until I met him. He made me love, enjoy at the

same time pass physics because of the way he taught it. I even have an 'A' for physics on my matric certificate. He used to encourage me to work hard because he believed in me. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him."

"Mr Maseko was my physics teacher in 2005. During that year I was doing my matric & knew nothing about physics because I had fooled around in grade 11. Mr Maseko then taught me the basics of physics which was not part of his job but because he is a very kind hearted teacher with love for his students he did not mind sacrificing his own time for me & my fellow former schoolmates. He also sacrificed his weekends to give us extra lessons to ensure that we understand our school work as much as we could. He was not only our teacher but he was also our father because of the love he had for us his students. Through that whole process I started from knowing physics to almost mastering it & in the end I got myself a symbol B in physics. By this I believe that Mr Maseko deserves the teachers award for all the hard work he has done in ensuring that students develop a love for physics"

Mr Nkontwana's motivation:

I actually started to meet Mr SN Maseko in late January 2002 on the school veranda when he was walking towards to old staff room which is opposite and about 100 meters from the new staff room of Zwelibanzi Secondary. That was a week after the whole KZN secondary schools reopened. It was my first time in Zwelibanzi's premises begging for admission for a place in Grade Eleven. I didn't even know who was in charge of grade eleven then, all I knew was that Mr Maseko was the man to talk to about the academics at Zwelibanzi Secondary. January 2002 was when I met him but knowing him had started long ago when I actually started to be serious about my academics, this was in year 2000 when I was doing my Grade 8 at Dloko High. It was then that I heard everyone talking about his man. Not only did the learners but teachers at Dloko High as well spoke about his dedication, tireless effort and tons and tons of time that he freely and willingly give to his community.

He ran afternoon classes whereby he helped learners with problems in Physical Science. The Zwelibanzi learners and teachers idolized him and still do today. Just from my personal assessment he deserves such an honor. He carried himself with dignity and respect but incredibly down to earth. Mr Maseko did not only help Zwelibanzi Secondary School learners but he whole of Umlazi matriculants who did Physical Science and wanted to get straight A's in it. He would schedule convenient time with them. Daily after the school was dismissed at 16h00 he would teach the outside learners until 17h30 after which he continued with his fellow Zwelibanzi learners from 18h00 to 20h00. Critics would name Zwelibanzi Secondary a "firm", so all matriculants were called "workers". The "firm-worker" concept came from the fact that the school started at 06h30 in the morning till 16h00 after which the matriculants proceeded till 20h00. Mr Maseko is the reason for the "firm-worker" nonsense; he was after all the only teacher at school at 20h00.

After eight o'clock he would go straight to one of the biggest and supported SABC radio stations, Ukhozi FM Stereo where he had his session that took about thirty to forty five minutes live. In this session he continued to help learners with skills, some questions they had and the actual material of Physical Science. He also ran and still runs winter school where he helps learners from almost all KZN schools with problems in Physical Science. Each and every Zwelibanzi matriculant has to attend each and every session. Summer school is no exception to all Grade Eleven learners from outside and inside Zwelibanzi High.

He produced and still does today produce work of an excellent standard. Most of the matriculants he taught got straight A's in Physical Science and automatically in other subjects as well in matric. In his classes he did not only focus on academics. He would go "outside of the box" of stereotypism that lots of teachers and lecturers (now that I know them) suffer from. His classes were fun but very motivational and encouraging. He would say profound and life-changing statements like "a journey of thousand miles begins with one step; it does not have to be a stride, so make that slightest effort (to your books) step forward". He constantly told us stories that were motivational in a fun and creative way that most of my fellows and I enjoyed and still and will always cherish for life.

I truly believe that he deserves this prestigious honour from an organization of your profile. I therefore think he is a perfect candidate not to get but to earn such recognition."

The committee agreed with this last statement.

The award had clear benefits for Mr Maseko and the school. After hearing him speak at the award ceremony in 2006, the Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, invited him to share his experiences at York University in the UK.

In a letter received from Mr Maseko and Zwelibanzi High School it was a pleasure to read:

"We wish to send our sincerest word of gratitude to you and your institution for the enormous contribution that you have made to our school.

Our school has over the years been struggling to set up a well functioning science laboratory due to financial constraints and lack of sponsorships. Despite this, we have managed to maintain a very good record as far as the results are concerned.

I would like you to know that the nomination of Mr SN Maseko for the Stella Clark Award is beginning to bear fruits for the school and this deserves accreditation to you. Mr Maseko has now been selected by the Minister of Education to go and represent the country at York University in the United Kingdom.

Your contribution to our school is without any doubt going to make a tremendous improvement in our attempts to make our learners more literate in Physics and Chemistry.

We wish to again say thank you very much for your contribution and we pray that God showers you and your institution with lots of blessings."

The award also attracted the attention of the local press and Brett Horner's article is attached at the end of this newsletter.

In 2007 CHED was honoured to present the award to Mr Phaldie Tregonning from Rocklands Senior School, who was nominated by Mr Dulan Simons, a second year student registered for B Sc in Chemical Engineering.

In his nomination Mr Simons wrote:

Mr Tregonning has been my inspiration throughout my school career. He has come from bad circumstances and is now standing up to the challenge of not only improving maths and science education in the community, but also in the country. He has shown a lot of dedication to his job. He spent many Saturdays at the school helping learners improve their maths skills. Through this he got involved in the Dinaledi project, which is committed to improving maths and science education in our country. Through this project, he was sent on a 3 month trip to the USA to gain international experience in maths. When he returned, he held a week long winter school for the matriculants in order to improve our understanding of maths. He has really shown a lot of dedication towards the school and the learners.

After hours he also gave extra classes in the Khayelitsha and Gugulethu areas. His dedication is also shown through the fact that he has a wife and 2 children, for whom he makes a lot of effort to spend time with. He was also asked to be one of the head markers in the final matric exam and later asked to be one of the examiners setting up the question papers. He is very enthusiastic about maths and it is his passion for the subject that keeps him going. He has instilled in me a die hard attitude for which I am very grateful.

Mr Tregonning has a great willingness to help others with their problems. It is his unpredictable and flexible way of teaching that is his greatest asset. He goes down to the particular level of each learner, assesses their needs, but most importantly understands their situations, in order for him to help them. He is one of the best mentors that I have ever had. However, at the same time he enjoys maintaining discipline in every aspect.

Mr Tregonning has a knowledge that can take him anywhere in the world. He does not need to be teaching in an area such as Mitchell's Plain, yet alone teaching anywhere in SA. The reason that he continues doing it is because he enjoys teaching there and that is something no-one can ever take away from him. I believe he is one of the greatest assets that this country can ever have and if he continues this outstanding work, we will reach our common goals even faster than we expected.

Mr Tregonning makes maths the most fun subject on the planet. He will always be loved by past and present students and the whole Mitchell's Plain community. He encourages learners to enrol at UCT as it is the best university on the continent. He surely is the best educator that I have ever come across in my life.

In his seminar Mr Tregonning's passion and activism for quality maths and science teaching was very apparent. He plays a key role in schools' development through the Dinaledi Schools' Project and is regarded as a regional resource. He was present at the award ceremony in 2009, at which he told us how the award has helped him to build links with other individuals and organisations in the field. Mr Tregonning has subsequently played a key role in a Mathematics workshop organised by the UCT Science Faculty to facilitate dialogue between UCT and schools on the new Mathematics curriculum.



*Mr Tregonning receiving his award from the then Vice Chancellor, Professor NS Ndebele*

The most recent recipient of the Stella Clark Teachers Award is Mr December Mpapane, a mathematics teacher from Inkomazi High School in Mpumalanga. He has achieved outstanding results (including 175 distinctions, and not a single failure in the 13 years he has been at Inkomazi). The student who nominated him, Nhanhla Nkuna, said at the award ceremony:

'He has won the award for best maths teacher in the Mpumalanga Education Department's Ehlanzeni region every year since 1996. His passion, dedication and love for what he does are the things that motivate me every time I meet a challenge.'

Mr Mpapane, addressing faculty and staff at the award seminar in CHED said:

"My name is Mpapane December Mandla and I was born in the sixties. Considering the area where I come from, one wouldn't even think there is some form of existence there. I am from Mangweni, one of the most remote, rural villages bordering Mozambique and Swaziland.

I have never really envisaged myself in a situation like this, where honour is bestowed upon me as a result of my contribution towards the success of my learners. I may as well die in peace now for I know, because of this experience, that most of my learners' hearts are full of unrecognized, unacknowledged, unsung, to be more precise, unvoiced thanks for what I have been in their lives.

I therefore rejoice so much for the initiation of the Stella Clark Teachers Award for giving people like us an opportunity to shine. It is not for the money that I'm grateful, because even the government fails to recognise through incentives the extra work we put in, but I strongly commend the Stella Clark Teachers Awards for the thought or the idea of Recognition.

Many see me as a Mathemagician, but I see myself as a committed Maths teacher. I am convinced that committed breed success. Most of the achievements I acquired in life were through my struggles.

I come from a family of more than 60 children, my late father had 20 wives. Because of my family structure our father's best was to see us through matric. Though the problem was lack of resources but through perseverance, patience and determination I managed to survive.

I started my schooling at Mbuzini primary school and proceeded to Mbhudula secondary school where I passed my grade 10. I then proceeded to Sidlamafa secondary school and passed my grade 11 and then went to Inkomazi High School where I obtained my grade 12 in 1989. A mention must be made that in 1988 my matric results were withheld for one stupid reason: the apartheid regime did not expect an African child to pass matric with flying colours, more especially in maths and science.

In 1990, I started teaching at Inkomazi High School as a private teacher teaching grade 10s and proceeded with this group of Mathematics learners and produce good results in 1992. In 1993, Patrick Lushaba was my first student to obtain symbol A in maths HG. This made me realize that every learner has an ability to achieve good marks and I then made a personal pledge of unlocking and stretching each child's potential.

I registered part-time and I only got my Primary Teacher's Diploma in 2002. I introduced extra classes as in afternoon, Saturday and even Sunday classes. Some community members strongly challenged the issue of Sunday classes, I did not give up. The Sunday classes are only meant for tests purposes. For me everyday of the week is a school day. To date I have produced 175 Distinctions. For the past 13 years every single child taught by me has passed, and many have become engineers, doctors and accountants, the list is endless.....

In 2007 Amanda Zibuyile Mdakana, a first year Chemical Engineering student at UCT, got a 99% in Maths HG.

In 2004, Dlamini Lwazi Bekezela was my first learner to obtain 100% in Maths SG, followed by Ngcane Jabulane who obtained a 100% Maths HG in 2006. My way of teaching has become a benchmark against which other educators can judge their performance in the school, this has become a trend in that Inkomazi High School was among the first 101 school to acquire the Dinaledi school status because of the school's academic performance.

## **Challenges**

I teach in a deep rural school in an area known as Mangweni, one of the villages bordering Swaziland and Mozambique in Mpumalanga. The area is regarded as one of the poverty pockets in the province with no chief economic activities.

My teaching time is very inconsistent, some days when learners write tests, they finish off at 21h00-22h00. It becomes then my financial responsibility to call the parents who are mobile to collect their kids and to those who are immobile a transport (minibus) has to be arranged for safe home delivery and I have to be financially liable.

Because of the socio-economic situation of the area and the time span spent at school by learners during teaching and learning, it remains a personal obligation to buy my learners soup and bread as well as juice for survival and concentration especially on these days. The little that I'm paid I have to share it with my family and my learners and I'm not complaining.

As a Dinaledi school, one of the governing principles is that the number of girls enrolled in the school should gradually increase, as well as the overall number of learners registered for maths. Because of the results achieved at the school, all neighbouring villages would like their learners to be enrolled at Inkomazi. To be precise, the number of learners that I teach this year is:

Grade 12:	170
Grade 11:	344
Grade 10:	328

Yes, I teach on weekends, I teach on holidays, I teach at night, I have to pay for my weekends, holidays and night transport. I have to feed myself and my learners too. And the joy lies at the end of the year when I see the smile of happiness on my learners' faces.

My appeal to the corporate world is to help the school in providing critical infrastructure so as to enhance teaching and learning.

All I need is an ordinary hall fully furnished, e.g. tables, chairs and chalkboard. An air-conditioned hall would be an added advantage owing to the high temperature which goes as high as 37°C in our area. An because of my inconsistent long working hours I have a problem of accessing equipments (photocopiers) and other materials from the main office. If the school can be donated with such a well equipped hall, the rest will automatically take care of itself.

My salute goes to Nhlanhla Nkuna, a former learner at Inkomazi High School and current 1<sup>st</sup> year BSc Geology student at UCT who nominated me for the Stella Clark Award and to the UCT committee members who are impressed with my involvement in teaching. I wish my former learners who are occupying higher positions could follow suit and start ploughing back for the upliftment of Inkomazi High School."

CHED is delighted with the impact the Stella Clark Teachers Award has had, and looks forward to the growing influence it will have in future years. It is a tribute to the insight and purposefulness of Stella Clark and her husband Kevin Naidoo and sons Jesse and Eamonn. Recognising, honouring and encouraging good teachers can make a vital contribution to addressing the needs of the South African schooling system. The award has also played an important part in widening access to UCT, and in forging links with schools in townships and rural areas.

As the funds available for the Stella Clark Teachers Award are limited, we are approaching corporations and potential funders who may be interested in making a donation. If you know of any potential donors who would like to contribute to develop this award further, or to help commemorate the work and life of Stella Clark and the impact she has made on her colleagues, students and teachers, we would be grateful if you would let us have their details or forward this newsletter. Individual contributions are also welcome (however small or large). The donation form is attached.

The call for nominations for 2009 has been circulated to all students and we look forward to receiving another round of excellent submissions.

*Thank you once again for your generous donation which has enabled the establishment of such an innovative and exciting and far reaching award.*

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**CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT**

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**Donations** to the Stella Clark Teachers' Award can be made by either:

- **Electronic Transfer**

Bank: Standard Bank  
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Account Number: 07 152 2387  
Branch: Rondebosch  
Branch Code 025009  
Narration: Stella Clark Award Fund 231629 CHD1278  
Please send copy of deposit slip to CHED, see contact details below

- **Cheque**

Made payable to the University of Cape Town and sent to:  
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## A teacher in a class of his own

Science master lauded for creativity and passion despite no labs or equipment

**'The day I became a teacher, I vowed to prove that success in this subject was not race-based'**

*BRETT HORNER*

WHEN Sibusiso Maseko gives lessons, he taps a foot and raps out questions to a swaying rhythm.

The crowded classroom joins in and, like a maestro conducting a choir, Maseko raises their chanting teenage voices to a peak.

Then at a swift show of his hand they all stop. Silence is restored.

Maseko's method of dictation is born out of necessity more than entertainment — the 44-year-old science teacher at Zwelibanzi Senior Secondary School in Durban's Umlazi township has only two textbooks for the class of 206 Grade 12 pupils.

The school's lack of facilities — it has no laboratory or equipment — has not stopped Maseko from inspiring a new generation of scientists. So successful has he been that when the University of Cape Town (UCT) called for its students to nominate their most influential teacher, Maseko's name came out tops.

Last week he received the institution's inaugural Stella Clark Teacher's Award at a function attended by Education Minister Naledi Pandor — and about 30 of Maseko's former pupils.

"It's very rewarding for me when someone tells me, 'Through your efforts I am where I am today,'" said Maseko.

His dedication has produced doctors and engineers who acknowledge their debt to him.

Dr Sifiso Mazibuko, a 36-year-old GP who runs a practice in Ngwelezane outside Empangeni, was taught by Maseko.

Doffing his cap to his former teacher this week, Mazibuko said without science under his belt he would never have entered medical school.

"He's a very passionate teacher. There was lots of humour in his lessons, he got people involved like it was a game. When he was teaching everyone was excited, they were completely absorbed."

An electrical engineer with Eskom, Sibusiso Mbatha, is another protégé whose affections for Maseko run deep.

"He was more than a teacher to me; he was like a father," said Mbatha. "Thanks to him, I was one of four pupils from Zwelibanzi who were the first to study engineering at UCT."

Mazibuko and Mbatha could have been lost to the system but for Maseko's role in creating a science department at the school.

He arrived at the school as a student teacher in 1988 with no permanent science post available at the school, but his dedication to the job quickly changed that.

"When I was doing my Bachelor of Science degree there was this perception that [Africans] could not make it," he says. "The day I became a teacher I vowed to prove that success in this subject was not race-based."

Maseko's school has been nicknamed "The Firm" by the community because his school day begins with a study period at 6.30am and ends at 8pm.

Matric pupils may also attend a voluntary class at 7am on Sundays.

In addition, Maseko teaches 142 other youngsters from around Durban while tutoring at the nearby Umlazi Commercial Centre.

His influence has carried beyond the classroom walls. For seven years he has held regular educational slots on uKhozi FM.

"Not only the learners but also the teachers at Dloko High spoke about his dedication, tireless effort and tons and tons of time that he freely and willingly gives to his community," said Phumlani Nkontwana, a former pupil from nearby Dloko High School in Umlazi, who nominated Maseko for the UCT award.

It was the repeated mention of his dedication that convinced UCT to recognise Maseko for his "success in encouraging pupils to achieve high grades in physical science, enabling them to progress to university studies".



*Mr Maseko and students at the award ceremony*