

Careers indaba

JO-ANNE SMETHERHAM

Correspondent

It is rare to see a large crowd of teenagers paying attention to every word a speaker says, then to see hands flying up in enthusiasm, one after the other, during question time.

This was what happened after almost every address at the two-week careers indaba at Masiphumelele Library which, learners said, 'took me from dark to light'.

'It was the best thing I have ever done in my life,' said another in his evaluation.

The indaba, held during the July holidays, aimed to give about 55 of the most motivated learners from Masiphumelele High School a leg-up into the world of tertiary education and work. Like learners across the country, those in Masiphumelele get very little career guidance at school.

'I have never felt such power in one room. I loved every moment,' said Denise, one of the 20 WorldTeach volunteers from America who ran the event.

Sue Alexander, co-ordinator at the Masiphumelele Library, was the chief organiser of the indaba, the second of its kind. The first one was held last year. It is hoped that career indabas will take place in many more communities in years to come.

The first few sessions of the indaba helped the learners explore their own interests and talents. This was followed by a host of speakers - from a computer programmer to a nurse, doctor, environmentalist, actor, artist, fireman, engineer and several entrepreneurs - explaining the nature of their work.

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Captain Vusi Khumalo from SAA



Derrick Fine and Elaine Maane from Openly Positive



Collage workshop

There were workshops on how to use a computer; the Internet and e-mail, as well as how to draw up CVs and apply to universities and colleges and for bursaries. Universities and colleges held expos during a special open day and the learners also visited Tsiba, a free business university in Thornton, to find out about opportunities there.

Alexander and the other organisers linked up with IkamvaYouth, and the learners are now all part of an IkamvaYouth tutoring programme, which will last until their final year of school. They will attend extra tutoring classes several times a week to help them get the best possible Senior Certificate result.

About 70% of participants who have taken part in these IkamvaYouth programmes in other parts of Cape Town have gained university entrance with a full scholarship.

In the second week of the indaba three young residents of Masiphumelele described how the indaba last year had changed their lives.

'I am thankful to this course. I came last year and I managed to get a scholarship.'



Last year's career indaba successes Surprise Bontshi and Ziya

Then I registered at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and got another bursary - not an easy thing to do,' said Seni Nqindi, who is now studying to be a teacher at CPUT.

Surprise Bontshi is now studying Construction and Engineering Drafting at Rosebank College. 'I got a bursary from the WorldTeach volunteers who were helping with the programme,' she said. 'But that is not enough to pay my fees, so I am also working part-time. I have to travel to town every day - it's three hours there and back. But it's all about taking responsibility at a

'You guys are crude oil. You have no idea how rich you really are'

young age.

'Our parents work hard to put food on the table, so the best gift you guys could give back to them is to let them see you blossoming into the person you really want to be.'

'You guys are crude oil. You have no idea how rich you really are,' Ziyanda Mwanda told the learners, referring to the opportunities available. Ziyanda who also attended last year is now studying biotechnology at UWC.

The WorldTeach volunteers told the learners they could apply to study in the United States, as well as South Africa.

The participants this year were in Grades 9 and 10, but several youths who left school and could not find a place at university or college also attended.

English teacher Patrick Jordi gave a lecture about a career in teaching. 'Career fairs of this kind are a vital link, informing young people of study and career possibilities,' he said. 'There is a continuing need for this on a wider scale.'

Acting provincial head of education Sindi Lingela gave a fiery talk in which she exhorted the learners to 'rise above where you come from'.

She told her own story - of watching all her brothers drop out of school, while her mother struggled to feed them all. Her physical hunger gave rise to a hunger for knowledge, she said. 'Show the world that even in Masiphumelele, we have geniuses,' she said to cheers of approval.

Afterwards the learners flocked to her to



A talk by acting provincial head of education Sindi Lingela



Nick Hart discussing IT careers



Kat Boisvert with Zintle Mtakati and Sikelelwa Mashiya

'...physical hunger gave rise to a hunger for knowledge'



Zoe Barnardo, fashion design student



Luyanda Kota from IkamvaYouth and Anathi Skeyi



Careers Planet expo

thank her and ask for advice.

The indaba had done wonders for them, she said. 'They are so confident and ask so many good questions. I am quite sure they were not this way when they first arrived here.'

