M.Y. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

DETOURS AND BUILDING WITH PURPOSE IN MIND

When we began this year, we knew that 2026 would be defined by transition. Making the operational choice to pause our regular intake of new mentees was not easy. It required us to step away from the familiar rhythms of mentorship and career expos to pour 100% of our collective energy into structural fundraising. Specifically, laying the groundwork for our physical container learning center in Ogies.



This quarter has reminded us that building anything lasting requires both the courage to pivot and the resilience to navigate unfamiliar territory. We saw this spirit during our Ziqhenye awards ceremony on 5 July, where we celebrated the growth of our 2025 matriculants. And as the Principal of Ratlhahana Secondary School so beautifully noted that day, that even as our format changes, our connection to our schools remains solid because it is built on a shared purpose.

Amplifying this shared purpose beyond our immediate circles was a major focus this quarter, and we were grateful to take our message back to the airwaves. Following our first feature in a prior quarter, our second live radio interview on Ikwekwezi fm this past quarter allowed us to share more details about our structural infrastructure goals.

Transition is rarely a straight line. For many of the young people we serve, the road after matric brings unexpected detours. In this issue, you will read about Karabo Rankhumise. When university acceptances didn't align with her initial plans, she didn't view her unplanned gap year as a defeat. With the guidance of her mentor, she used the time to slow down, sift through her passions, and realign her future.

Yet, as we work to empower these young women to step into their potential, we are continuously forced to confront the harsh realities of the country they live in. The devastating discovery of 11 women's bodies in Ekurhuleni this past quarter, alongside staggering national GBVF statistics, weighs heavily on our hearts. We cannot talk to girl children about building successful futures if they do not have the basic safety to exist freely.

Safety is one of our Foundation's core values and for us, safety is the true foundation of empowerment. We remain committed to standing for a society where our girls are safe enough to walk through the doors of opportunity we work so hard to open for them.

As we look forward. On Sunday 8 November 2026, we are returning to the trails of the Modderfontein reserve for our 3rd annual Leap for Literacy walkathon to raise funds for the learning center.

Whether you join us on the trails, buy from our new literacy merchandise range, donate books, furniture, structural or digital resources, you are directly placing a building block for the youth of Ogies. Thank you for walking alongside us as we write this next chapter together.

Ntombana Mabena

Founder & Executive Director, Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation

2026 ZIQHENYE AWARDS CEREMONY

HONOURING RESILIENCE



On 5 July 2026, the Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation kicked off the quarter by hosting its annual Ziqhenye Awards Ceremony. The event was graced by our 2025 mentees, dedicated mentors, and our guests, including the Principal and Educator from Ratlhahana Secondary School.

The theme of the day was clear; resilience. As our young matriculants transition into life post high school, a phase where paths are still being figured out, the day served as a reminder to embrace unfamiliar environments and remain open to possibilities. This message was brought to life by our young yet incredibly inspirational keynote speaker, Kamogelo Seakamela, a 2024 Mqhele alumna who took the stage to share her journey of breaking boundaries from the dusty paths of Pankop Village to navigating her second year of Mechanical Engineering at Wits University.



“Throughout my high school journey, university didn’t feel like a possibility for me. I was one of the smartest in my grade, but I still didn’t believe that I would do well post my secondary education. It took having a mentor, sis’ Vuyo, and having her model that reality for me. It was only when I walked onto campus in my first year that I finally realized that my background was never meant to limit where I was going.

We were also honored to welcome back Malebo Rafoneke and Thembelihle Ntandane as our special guests. Both played an instrumental role in these learners' matric journeys in 2025. Malebo through his impactful leadership development workshop and Thembelihle through our HealthyU sexual health education drive. Having them in the room to witness the culmination of their impact added warmth to the celebration.

A deeply moving highlight of the ceremony was a speech by the Principal of Ratlhahana Secondary School. She gracefully acknowledged the changes this year as Mqhele pivots to focus strictly on building the infrastructure for our container learning centers. She emphasized that while our programming format might change, the connection between Mqhele and the school remains because it was built on a solid foundation of shared purpose.



THE AWARD RECIPIENTS

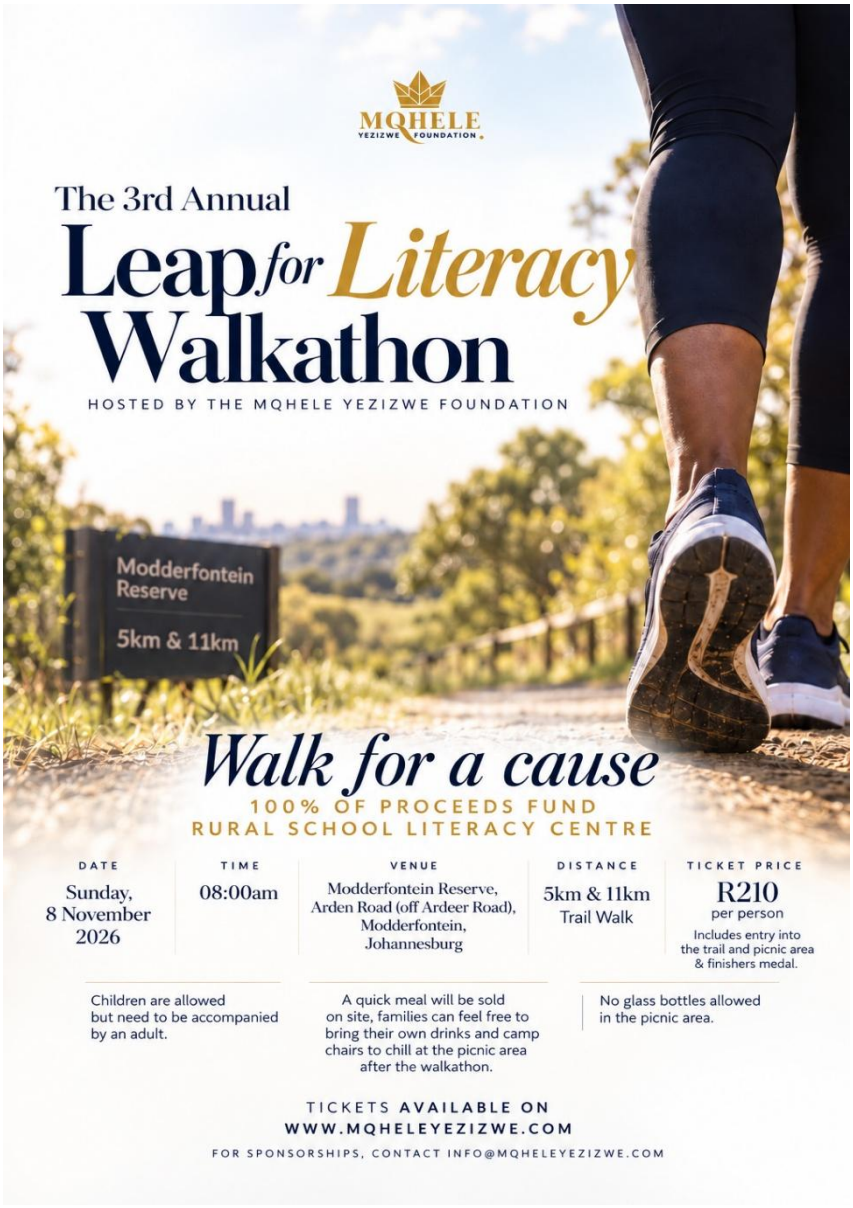
We kicked off the honors by presenting participation awards to every single mentee who completed the curriculum, recognizing their commitment and consistency over the past year. We then moved into our special and academic categories:



Congratulations to all our award recipients for their dedication, and thank you to the entire Mqhele Yezizwe community for walking alongside us as we write the next chapter together.

THE MISSION CONTINUES

REGISTER FOR OUR 3RD ANNUAL WALKATHON



While the matriculants of our country write their futures in the exam rooms, we will be on the ground actively walking towards building the infrastructure those who come after them will need to thrive tomorrow.

Registration is officially open for the 3rd annual Leap for Literacy walkathon! As highlighted throughout this issue, 100% of our focus and structural energy this year is dedicated to raising the necessary funds to construct the physical Ogies container learning center.

We have paused our regular intake to focus on building a facility for digital literacy and education. But we cannot lay the bricks alone, we need our community to walk with us. Every single ticket registered is a direct building block for the youth of Ogies.

Head directly to www.mqheleyezizwe.com/fundraiserevents to secure your walkathon tickets and challenge your running clubs, your families and your colleagues to do the same.

THE COURAGE TO PAUSE

HOW KARABO RANKHUMISE EMBRACED UNCERTAINTY TO FIND HER TRUE PATH



At just 19 years old, Karabo Rankhumise, born and raised in Pankop, is rewriting the narrative of what it means to face disappointment. When life didn't go according to her initial plan, Karabo's journey with the Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation transformed into a profound testament to the power of resilience, embracing uncertainty and having the courage to turn an unexpected gap year into a launching pad for her true calling.

Before joining the organization, Karabo faced challenges familiar to many young people finishing matric. As a multifaceted learner, she possessed a wide range of interests ranging from Media and Psychology to a love for Agriculture that first sparked in her heart back in Grade 10. However, having so many passions left her uncertain about which specific career path truly aligned with her strengths. She struggled to set clear long-term goals and often felt the overwhelming pressure that so many young people experience when entering life post secondary school.

Recognizing that she needed structure and a safe space to untangle her thoughts, Karabo was pleased to be selected to join Mqhele Yezizwe through the recommendation of her former school principal in her matric year.

Through the Girl in the mirror mentorship programme, Karabo committed herself to the mentorship activities, and was exposed to multiple tools such as the Johari window framework, learning style assessments and other leadership development tools. These analytical tools forced her to look inward and understand her multi layered potential.

"Mqhele helped me see myself differently. It helped me regain my confidence, my strength and my academic spark." she reflects.

A pivotal anchor in Karabo's journey has been her relationship with her mentor, Ntombana Mabena. For Karabo, this mentorship evolved past simple academic advice into a source of accountability, emotional safety, and raw encouragement.

"She encouraged me, disciplined me, supported me," Karabo says.



The safe environment created by the program, the laughter, tears and reciting the Girl in the mirror pledge without judgement, allowed Karabo to conquer procrastination and self-doubt.

It gave her the emotional resilience to make a highly mature, courageous decision upon completing her matric: to utilize the unplanned gap year to give her clarity on her career path.

While society often pressures school leavers to rush immediately into tertiary studies, Karabo had the rare confidence to use this year to actively realign her career goals, sift through her multifaceted interests and listen to what her heart had been saying since Grade 10.

Agriculture, the passion that had remained in her heart for years, narrowed down into a definitive career path: Nature conservation. Karabo is no longer intimidated by the unknown. She enters the next phase of her life focused on deepening her knowledge, developing her critical thinking skills, and preparing herself for professional success.

Her story serves as a beautiful reminder that clarity cannot be rushed, and that taking a gap year to establish one's path is not a delay, but a powerful strategy. It proves that with the right guidance and support, young people can find the confidence to embrace uncertainty and step boldly onto the path meant just for them.

Karabo's message to other matriculants facing the daunting question of "what next?" is simple: do not compare your timeline to anyone else's. We are operating on different clocks. Take the leap but give yourself permission to breathe. Having the right guidance and support around you can make the journey forward feel possible.

THE MQHELE SHOP

GEAR UP FOR LITERACY

2026 has been a pivotal transition year for the Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation. We paused our regular intake of mentees to pour 100% of our energy into fundraising for structural infrastructure, specifically building our first physical container learning center for the youth of Ogies. We thus launched the literacy range as one of our initiatives.

Every single t-shirt, cap or sweater in our literacy collection was designed with a dual purpose: to look and feel comfortable while contributing towards bright futures. 100% of the proceeds from your purchases go directly into our infrastructure fund.

When you wear our brand, you aren't just wearing merchandise, you are funding a safe space where a learner will acquire digital skills, adopt a habit of reading and access the internet.





How to order

Have a look at our curated collection and pricing on this page. Whether you are buying a water bottle for your daily water intake or a t-shirt to wear proudly, every cent contributes positively to our cause.

Head directly to www.mqheleyezizwe.com/shop to secure your favorite items today. We deliver nationwide!

COMPLIANCE CORNER

IS YOUR NGO POPIA COMPLIANT?

Did you know that your NGO may be processing personal information every day without even realizing it?

From collecting the names and contact details of beneficiaries to maintaining employee records, receiving donor information and taking photographs at community programs, NGOs regularly handle personal information.

In South Africa, the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA) establishes requirements for the lawful processing of personal information by public and private bodies. For NGOs, POPIA compliance is particularly important because organizations often work with children, families and other vulnerable communities. Protecting their personal information is not simply a legal responsibility, it is also about protecting their dignity, privacy, safety and trust.

What should an NGO be doing?

1. Know what information you collect

An organization should know what personal information it collects, who it collects it from, why it is needed, where it is stored and who can access it. Information should not be collected simply because it might be useful in the future.

2. Have a lawful reason for collecting and using information

NGOs should understand why they are collecting personal information and ensure that there is a lawful basis for processing it. Depending on the circumstances, this may include consent, fulfilling a contract or another lawful basis recognized by POPIA.

3. Be transparent

Beneficiaries, employees, volunteers and donors should understand what information is being collected, why it is being collected and how it will be used or shared. A clear privacy notice can help organizations communicate this information.

4. Keep information secure

NGOs should have appropriate technical and organizational measures in place to protect personal information against loss, damage, unauthorized access or unlawful processing. Practical measures can include restricting access to beneficiary files, using passwords and access controls, securely storing physical documents, protecting laptops and devices, and training staff and volunteers on confidentiality.

5. Be careful when sharing information

NGOs often work with funders, consultants, service providers and cloud-storage providers. Where another organization processes personal information on behalf of the NGO, appropriate contractual arrangements should be in place to protect that information.

6. Have a data breach plan

What happens if a beneficiary database is accidentally emailed to the wrong person? Or if a laptop containing confidential information is stolen? NGOs should have a process for identifying, responding to and reporting security compromises. POPIA provides for notification of security compromises to the Information Regulator and, where appropriate, affected data subjects.

7. Ensure your Information Officer is registered

NGOs should also understand their responsibilities regarding an Information Officer. The Information Regulator states that Information Officers must be registered before assuming their duties, with registration facilitated through the Regulator's eServices platform.



POPIA compliance is about more than avoiding penalties. It is about respecting the people who place their information and trust in your organization.

For NGOs serving communities, responsible data protection should be part of everyday organizational practice from the information collected at registration to the photographs shared on social media and the records stored electronically or physically.

WHY SAFETY IS THE TRUE FOUNDATION OF EMPOWERMENT

ADDRESSING THE GBVF CRISIS AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA'S GIRL CHILDREN

For the Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation, whose core mission centers on nurturing and empowering the girl child, the escalating crisis of Gender based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa is an unavoidable reality. We cannot speak to young girls about building successful futures without directly confronting the violence and fear that threaten their very existence.

Education gives a girl knowledge; mentorship gives her confidence. But safety gives her the freedom to pursue both.



The urgent necessity of this conversation was starkly highlighted in the past quarter, with the harrowing discovery of 11 women's bodies found in and around Ekurhuleni since July 2026. This local tragedy mirrors a staggering national crisis, with the South African Police Service registering over 50 000 GBVF related cases between April and June 2026 alone. Behind these incomprehensible statistics are broken families and children left without mothers.

True empowerment cannot simply mean telling young girls to be resilient or burdening them with a checklist of rules to survive their daily commutes. The responsibility for ending GBVF must be stripped away from the victims and placed squarely on systemic accountability. Families, schools, and local institutions must collectively refuse to normalize abuse, teach active consent, and firmly hold perpetrators accountable.

Our vision extends far beyond helping our beneficiaries merely survive their circumstances. We want them to become leaders, entrepreneurs, and changemakers who enter professional spaces knowing their voices matter.

CAREER SPOTLIGHT

TECHNOLOGY

From coding the next big app to protecting South Africa's digital world, technology is opening new career opportunities for today's learners.

Technology is changing the way South Africans learn, work and do business. As the country becomes increasingly digital, the demand for people with technology skills is growing across industries such as banking, healthcare, education, telecommunications, retail and government.

For today's learners, this means that a career in technology can offer more than a job, it can provide an opportunity to solve real problems and create new ideas.



Here are three exciting technology careers that learners can start preparing for while they are still at school.

1. Software Developer - Turn ideas into technology

Have you ever wondered who creates the apps on your phone, websites you visit or the software businesses use every day? Software developers are behind many of these digital solutions.
They design, write and test computer programs and applications. A software developer could create an educational app for learners, a banking platform, a business management system or even the technology behind a game.

Why is it exciting?
Software development allows you to create something from an idea. It combines technology, creativity and problem solving, and developers can work in almost any industry. It is also a career where you can continue learning new programming languages and technologies throughout your career.

What subjects should learners take?
Learners interested in becoming software developers should consider:

- Mathematics - important for logical and analytical thinking.
- Physical sciences - can strengthen problem-solving and analytical skills.
- Information technology (IT) - particularly useful for developing programming and computer skills.

2. Data Analyst - Turn information into insights

Every day, businesses, schools, hospitals, banks and government departments generate enormous amounts of data. But data is only useful when someone can understand it. That is where data analysts come in.

Data analysts collect, organize and examine information to identify patterns and trends. They then communicate their findings to help organizations make informed decisions. For example, a data analyst could examine school performance information to identify areas where learners need additional support or analyze business information to understand customer behavior.

Why is it exciting?
Data analysis combines numbers, technology and problem solving. It is also a career that can be applied across many different industries. Someone who starts as a data analyst could eventually explore careers in areas such as business intelligence, data science, finance or technology.

What subjects should learners take?
Learners interested in data analysis should consider:

- Mathematics - particularly important for statistics and analytical thinking.
- Information Technology (IT) - useful for learning how technology and data systems work.
- Accounting or Business Studies - can provide useful knowledge of how organizations use information to make business decisions.

3. Cybersecurity Specialist - Protecting South Africa's digital world

As more people and organizations move online, protecting digital information has become increasingly important.
Cybersecurity specialists help protect computer systems, networks and information from cyber threats. Their work can involve identifying security weaknesses, monitoring systems, responding to security incidents and helping organizations protect sensitive information. Cybersecurity is relevant to almost every modern organization - from banks and telecommunications companies to schools, businesses and government departments.

Why is it exciting?
Cybersecurity is a constantly changing field. New technologies bring new opportunities, but they can also introduce new security challenges. For someone who enjoys technology, investigation, problem solving and thinking strategically, cybersecurity can provide a challenging and rewarding career.
It is also a field where professionals need to keep learning because the digital environment continues to change.

What subjects should learners take?
Learners interested in cybersecurity should consider:

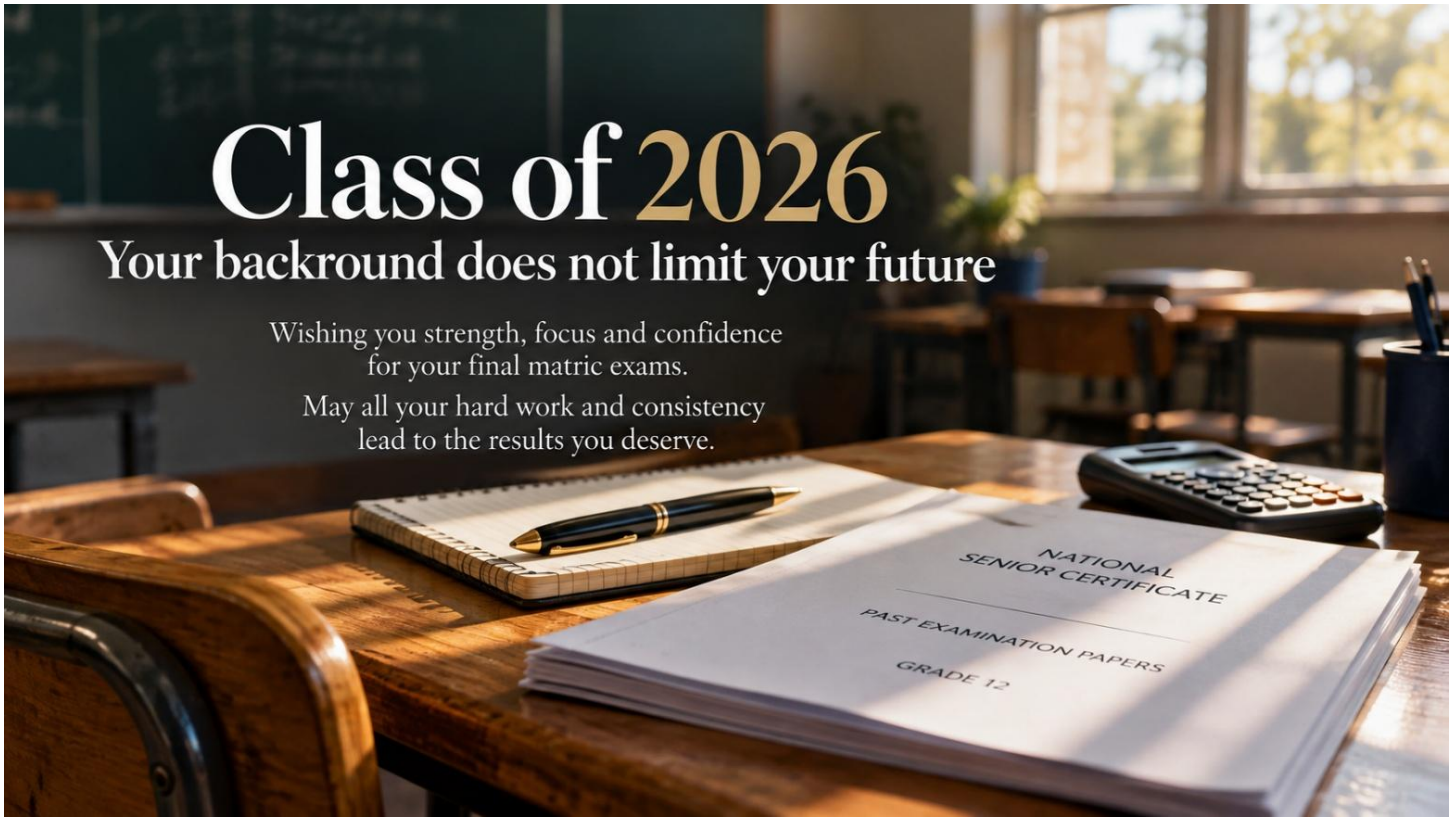
- Mathematics - develops logical and analytical thinking.
- Information Technology (IT) - provides a useful foundation in computer systems and programming.
- Physical Sciences - can strengthen analytical and problem-solving skills.

South Africa faces challenges that require innovative thinking, from improving education and access to information to supporting businesses, strengthening digital security and expanding economic opportunities. These careers are not only about working with computers. They are about using technology to solve real world problems.

However, opportunity is highly reliant on access. Learners need access to quality education, digital devices, reliable connectivity and opportunities to develop practical technology skills.
This is particularly important for learners in rural and underserved communities. At Mqhele Yezizwe Foundation, we are committed to ensuring that young people have opportunities to explore technology careers, this can help broaden their career choices and enable more young South Africans to participate in the digital economy.

The future is digital
For learners choosing their subjects today, the technology industry offers many possibilities. Software development, data analysis and cybersecurity are just three examples of the careers available in a much larger technology ecosystem.

The most important step is to start early. Ask questions, explore technology, develop your skills and research the subjects and qualifications required for the career you want. South Africa's future will need young people who can not only use technology, but create it, understand it and use it to solve problems. Your future career could be one of the technologies that shape South Africa's tomorrow.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE M.Y. COMMUNITY MISSION?

DONATE

Our literacy initiatives rely on the support of individuals, organizations and partners who believe that reading is the foundation of education.

Your contribution will directly support:

- The provision of books to schools and learners
- The furnishing of library and reading spaces
- Access to digital learning equipment and tools

Every donation helps us bring books closer to learners and learners closer to opportunity.

VOLUNTEER

We are looking for passionate individuals who want to play a hands-on role in building a culture of reading and learning in schools.

As a volunteer, you can:

- Support school-based literacy activations and reading sessions
- Help set up and organize reading corners, mini libraries, and learning spaces
- Assist in sorting, cataloguing, and distributing books to partner schools

GET IN TOUCH

Whether it's an inspiring story, a shout-out, finishing a book or a personal or educational milestone you or a colleague has achieved, we'd love to hear about it and share your news to highlight the positive impact within our community.

Email	info@mqheleyezizwe.com
Contact	Phindi on 082 882 1704