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# EDITOR'S NOTE

A warm welcome to all of you colleagues in this first 2025 edition of Communique newsletter. We would like to thank you all for your contribution in this edition as you are the sole custodians of the newsletter. We appreciate all the individuals who are featured in this edition, making it so easy for our team to put together this interesting piece of work. We trust that you will continue to work with us in the coming ones as it is always a privilege to engage with you.

In this edition we will take you through the journey of three (3) employees who are juggling work, music, studies and sports. These individuals will share how they manage their everyday lives as they aim to achieve their personal goals.

Please take a few tips on how to look after your well being by keeping fit and healthy. We will also be looking at the impact that the placement process has had to employees' lives and the organogram review that is looming.

As we celebrate Valentines Day this month, find out how employees have planned to celebrate this day with their loved ones and colleagues seeing that it falls on PAY DAY.

We would also like to extend an invitation to you to join our conversations through constructive writing and telling us what your thoughts are of the content of this issue.

Enjoy

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# STRIKING A CHORD: BALANCING CAREER, MUSIC, STUDIES AND SPORT

By Zinceba Kunene

Balancing a career in education with a passion for music, studies, and personal growth is not everyone's cup of tea but for a young woman from a rural Emantlaneni Village in Lusikisiki, this is done with such ease.

Ntombifuthi Nontsasa who works as a LAN Technician at Head Office, regards her journey as more than just a pursuit of multiple passions as it reflects determination, time management, and creativity.

Nontsasa, who goes by the name 'Peggy N ka Nontsasa' was born EmaMpondweni under the jurisdiction of Ingquza Municipality then later relocated to East London's Mdantsane after completing her studies.

Her musical journey began at a very young age, singing during school assembly in the mornings and during family prayers before bedtime. Upon realizing what she can do with the anointing in her voice she joined a church worship team where her talent was discovered by the founder of Mdantsane Gospel Choir. This led to her backing well-known gospel artists such as Dr. Khanyisa Sabuka and Lusizo Kango before releasing her first single, 'Ah Nkosi Yezulu'.

"I don't just work and sing, I am a very passionate person about everything that I do. I have performed on big stages and shared platforms with international artists such as Bethusile Mcinga, Mahalia, and Ntokozo Mbambo. However, on Monday morning, I need to be at work on time and be productive and ready to serve the my fellow Head Office employees with a smile" said Nontsasa.



She emphasizes the deep satisfaction she finds in her profession saying that the love she has for her job makes it easy for other areas of her life but mostly draws her strength from her music. "I find satisfaction in helping others and when someone says 'thank you' for my service, it means the world to me".

Luvuyo Matewu, who works at the HODs office shares similar sentiments about balancing multiple responsibilities. "It is a tough journey for me as I must balance career, studies, and sport. They are all a priority to me because I am solely dependent on them. For me to put food on the table, I must work. School is a must because my future and finding a decent position at work depends on my qualifications. At the same time I cannot live without sporting activity because I have played from a very young age, making it a part of my daily life routine," he explains.

Asanda Xaso, from the School Health Safety and Learner Enrichment unit further highlights the importance of time management when juggling career and education. "Well, doing my master's degree helps me manage my time better because I must juggle both my studies and career. It teaches me discipline and how to prioritize important tasks. Also, my studies directly improve my skills in my field making it easier to apply what I learn in real-life work situations" said Xaso.

She added that believing in herself has helped her realise that studying while working also helps her to stay updated with industry trends which are important in her career.

"I do what I do not just to study and get a master's degree but also about becoming more confident and skilled in my field. Even though it is challenging, I think it makes me more organized, focused, and prepared for what lies ahead in the future" said Xaso.

The experiences of Ntombifuthi, Luvuyo, and Asanda highlight the evolving perspective of professionals who refuse to be limited by traditional career boundaries, in a world where stability often comes before passion, individuals like them challenge the norms by bringing their personal ambitions into their daily lives. They manage to balance their roles in the Eastern Cape Department of Education while embracing their creativity and academic growth, reflecting a growing trend of multi-talented individuals redefining success.

Nontsasa's music is available on all music platforms.



# CUPID IS IN THE BUILDING

By: Asemahle Jiba

Officials at the Head Office are all set and ready to celebrate Valentine's Day in a special way this year even more so as the day fall on pay day.

The atmosphere is filled with love, gratitude and kindness as the staff are already making plans with colleagues and their loved ones. While Valentine's Day is seen as a day for romantic relationships, for colleagues Valentine's Day is more about nurturing positive and friendly connections in the workplace and a chance to show appreciation and goodwill in a fun and non-romantic manner.

Khaya Nakani affectionately known as Bhut'Khaya from the Special Programmes Unit who recently got married, said that Valentine's Day is a meaningful occasion to express love and appreciation to his wife.

"My wife and I enjoy celebrating even the smallest moments, including birthdays and anniversaries. It's our way of showing love and affection," shared Bhut'Khaya. He also mentioned that the day serves as a reminder of the vows and promises they've made to each other offering a chance to reaffirm their commitment. "I plan to surprise my wife with flowers and chocolates in the morning, followed by a romantic evening with a home-cooked meal complete with a selection of aphrodisiacs," added a beaming Nakani.



Also pointing out the prominence of the Day is Lwazi Cenge from Human Resource Administration (HRA) who said that for him the day is meant to celebrate the bonds that bring joy and connection in life whether it's through 'grand gestures or small meaningful acts'. "Valentine's Day is about spreading love in all its forms as a result my partner and I love to spend quality time together, like watching our favorite movie, playing games" said Cenge. He added that this year, they are changing things up as they are planning to do something adventurous and going on a day trip to somewhere scenic or going on a hike together.

Hoping to have a different experience at work on Valentine's Day is Cwenga Nxala from School Health, Safety and Learner Enrichment. "It would be wonderful if the Department can consider ways for staff to celebrate the day by showing appreciation through sending employees heartfelt love letters, sweet treats like chocolates, cupcakes and considering recognizing and rewarding employees who will be the best dressed for the day. This can boost morale, motivate and instil healthy competition among the staff" said Nxala.

As a single lady Nxala shared that she sees Valentines Day as a day to celebrate self love and a chance to enjoy her own company. "This year I will start by treating myself to a solo dinner at my favorite restaurant using that time to think about my personal growth and pamper myself. We also need to remember that this day is all about love and that includes the love I have for myself" added Nxala.

It seems like it is going to be a day filled with love, peace and joy all around the Head Office on this Valentines Day, people have made plans, what about you?  
plans have been made

# NEW YEAR, NEW ME: THE ANNUAL QUEST FOR A SUMMER BODY

By: Siphosethu Zimba

The new year has arrived, and with it, the familiar rush of enthusiasm for getting fit and healthy. Gyms are flooded with new members, social media is filled with #fitnessmotivation posts, people are stocking their fridges with greens and meal preparation containers are flying off the shelves.

We've all been there - determined to kick-start our journey to a "summer body" and to finally achieve our health and fitness goals. So, what's this collective rush to get fit and healthy?

For many, the start of a new year represents a clean slate, an opportunity to leave past habits behind and re-invent yourself. For some, the motivation to get fit in the first quarter of the year is driven by a desire to look good and feeling more confident, improving the overall health or simply feeling more energized.

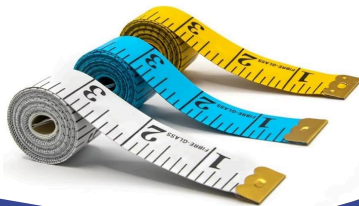
Aliziwe Mzolwa, a Data Capturer from Labour Relations said that her new healthy lifestyle journey started in January when she realized that she needed to make a few changes in her habits. "I was feeling sluggish, unmotivated, and my energy levels were at an all-time low. The turning point for me was when I realized I wasn't feeling like the best version of myself and just didn't feel confident in my own skin" said Mzolwa. She began by making small changes to her diet, cutting back on processed foods and sugary drinks. "I started exercising regularly, beginning with walks and progressing to more intense workouts like weightlifting and cardio. My goal is to achieve a healthy weight and maintain a consistent level of fitness. I'd also love to increase my endurance and strength", added Mzolwa.



Human Resource Development (HRD) intern, Phethile Sana stated that she has been on and off the fitness journey over the past few years but became more consistent and disciplined last year (2024). "New year's goals differ from one person to another, the weight loss goals of those around us can create a sense of pressure and influence our own decisions so you end up not following through with it. For me, it's more of wanting to get my body back. With the on and off, I put on so much weight, I went from 70kgs to 90kgs and this has affected my health as well as my confidence, said Sana.

The idea of a 'summer body' becomes a tangible goal, a motivator to push through the initial discomfort of adjusting to a new exercise routine or diet, so to sustain motivation beyond the initial excitement of January Mzolwa and Sana both suggest that people must get rid of unrealistic expectations which creates lack of accountability.

Employee Wellness Services, Assistant Director, Ntombizandile Faló said that in trying to balance out wellness and work, the department does offer some programs that promote a healthy lifestyle like access to an on-site gym and wellness workshops throughout the year. "All employees are welcome to sign up for a free gym membership or visit our wellness office for some practical tips on their well-being" said Faló.



# ORGANOGRAM UP FOR REVIEW

By: Dineo Matroko

In 2019 the Department embarked on a transition of implementing a new organogram which saw officials migrating to either district offices or other directorates within the Head Office.

According to the Organizational Planning (OP) Chief Practitioner, Nokuthazo Qaba, the process was not an easy one as placement was a tedious exercise that had its challenges. "As the OD section we tried our best to take everything including feelings of the employees into consideration throughout the process making sure that we don't leave anyone behind. Labour unions were part of each and every step of the migration process to make sure that the needs of the employees are catered for and fairness is applied at all times" said Qaba. She added that there was and still is optimal support on both ends.

Whether the move by employees to districts has affected the head office negatively, Qaba was confident in saying that employees moved across the system in line with the Service Delivery Model of the Department. "The migration does not have a negative bearing on service delivery", added Qaba.

The placement of employees is still ongoing and there has been issues like budget constraints, but Qaba is confident in the process. "With the guidance from Department of Treasury we are still continuing with the placement process as posts appear in the system due to natural attrition which leaves vacant posts that employees are placed against" said Qaba.

Siyabulela Mpupha who migrated from Chris Hani East district to Human Resource Planning (HRP) said that the move helped him because he is now closer to his family. "Being far away from your family has a huge contribution towards your quality of work as you often get home sick and lose interest, moving to Head office was a win for me. I have always been interested in the work that my section (HRP) does and the new structure gave me that opportunity of doing what I am most passionate about" explained Mpupha. He added that he was a bit skeptical of the kind of reception he was going to get from his new colleagues but instead he was received with kindness. "I am very happy at head office, my colleagues are so accommodative and working with them is such a breeze" said Mpupha.

Late last year the Department started the process of consultation with Chief Directorates in reviewing the existing structure of the Department. The review according to Qaba is as a result of a number of factors such as the shift of Early Childhood Development (ECD) function from Social Development to Education, realignment of Curriculum Support and delivery value chain, budget cuts and the implementation of District model as guided by the sector. All this remains to be seen and implemented as employees eagerly wait for the big reveal that will surely affect their lives in a positive or negative manner.

**"Late last year the Department started the process of consultation with Chief Directorates in reviewing the existing structure of the Department."**

# ENSURING SAFE AND CONDUCTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AT HEAD OFFICE



By Lonwabo Tube

The Education Head Office houses hundreds of employees who spend most of their day in its offices everyday of the week. This means there needs to be regular building maintenance to make sure that employees work in a safe and conducive environment at all times.

Towards the end of the year to date there has been a lot of building maintenance going on such as painting and repairing of air conditioners at the Head Office. According to Facilities Management Acting Assistant Director Sibongile Ngxata, the Department has embarked on this 'clean up' exercise on its buildings to make sure



that the buildings are safe and clean. "This will help in preventing illnesses associated with fungi, dust and also physical injuries as a result of employees tripping and falling on damaged floors" said Ngxata. He added that employees were starting to flood his office with complaints about faulty electrical wiring, non-functional air conditioners, cracked and peeling walls in their offices.

"We decided not to ignore these complaints and started with the maintenance immediately because regular building improvements will help us as the Department to save on the cost of re-building. We are also busy with scheduled inspections and preventive measures so that we can reduce unexpected repair costs".

Carpentry Artisan Simphiwe Jeke who is part of the team responsible for maintenance at the Head Office said that people might not take building maintenance seriously but a safe and neat work environment boosts the morale of employees. "Regular maintenance is not just about fixing broken furniture or peeling walls it

is a very important part of making sure that employees are happy and at peace when at work and we're not just preventing problems, we're also improving the overall quality of our facilities" added Jeke.



Siviwe Nkomo who is an Artisan at Coega Development Corporation (CDC) working in the Department said that she is thrilled to be working with the Department on this project. "As an artisan I have had the opportunity to work on various projects, but this one of working in Education is particularly close to my heart because of seeing the impact that our work has on employees at the Head Office and it is truly rewarding. Employees here appreciate us and the work that we do because the complements they give us for a job well done are encouraging" concluded Nkomo.





## A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

By: Bongani Mziba

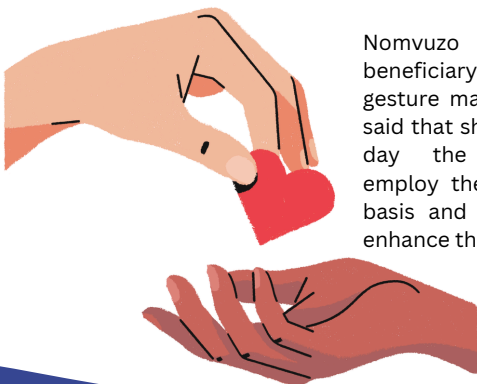
**E**C Education Head Office concluded the year 2024 on a high note when the MEC and his top management handed over food parcels to seventy six (76) General workers as a token of appreciation for their contribution and hard work.

Noxolo Solani one of the beneficiaries said that the groceries helped her a lot during her sons' initiation period. "I was so stressed at the time not knowing how I will feed my son who was at the initiation school as he required three cooked meals a day. Just when I was beginning to panic, God answered my prayers through the MEC and his management by giving me and my fellow employees the food parcels" said an appreciative Solani.

Solani added that the groceries not only helped her son but her entire family through the December holidays. "Family relatives who came far to support and celebrate with us also benefited. I am honestly still in shock of what the Department did for me and I will forever be grateful and treasure that moment the MEC made me feel as part of the staff" said Solani.

Facilities Management Acting Assistant Director, Nontyatyambo Dubula said that after the initiative made by the MEC, general workers are now more enthusiastic and eager to work because they have seen that they are valued and are considered part of the Education Head Office family. "Such acts of kindness do add value to people and how they view their work environment".

Nomvuzo Gadla who also a beneficiary appreciated the gesture made by the MEC and said that she has hope that one day the Department will employ them on a permanent basis and capacitate them to enhance their personal growth.





# EPWP CAR WASH PROGRAMME A BEACON OF HOPE TO CAR WASH ASSISTANTS



By: Thando Ngcume

**I**n a groundbreaking initiative, the Eastern Cape Department of Education EPWP car wash programme is making waves in the Provincial Office, providing job opportunities and skills training for the unemployed.

Since its inception in 2020, the EPWP car wash programme which started with three (3) employees has to date employed six (6) car wash assistants who's main job is to tend to the Departments' government vehicles.

The assistants receive comprehensive training in car washing, detailing, and maintenance and because of its success there might be a chance for Districts to also adopt it.

According to the EC Education, Transport and Auxiliary Services Acting Assistant Director, Nomawethu Khewana, the programme was designed to empower unemployed local people who were washing employee's cars at the head office at a cost to get more skills and knowledge about cars as a source of income.

This programme is a beacon of hope to the team because it has immensely improved their lives for the better. We are now hoping that as the Department, we can provide them with the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)" said Khewana.



"I am so grateful for the opportunity that we have been given by the Department not only have I gained valuable skills in car washing and detailing, but I also earned a steady income to support myself and my family" said Thembisa Maneli who is one of the car wash assistants. She went on to say that the programme has given her a sense of purpose and dignity as she was struggling to find employment before joining the programme.

Olwethu Dlamini who is also on the programme expressed his gratitude for the opportunity. "I was skeptical at first, but the EPWP Car Wash Programme has been a game-changer for me. I have learned so much about car maintenance and repair as such I have even started saving up to open my own car wash business one day" said Dlamini. He added that the programme has not only given him a job, but also gave him hope for a better future.

"I can finally provide for my family through this programme and although the work is hard and requires one to be patient it is the fresh start that I have been looking for to improve my life" said Dlamini.

I would recommend the EPWP Car Wash Programme to anyone looking for a fresh start. It's hard work, but it's worth it"



