

African Bank Limited press release

9 May 2017

Creating a Library of the Future

Five years ago Nkululeko Malepa, an African Bank system administrator and Computer Science hobbyist - as he likes to refer to himself, and two of his friends Sir Karabo Moropa, a High School Maths and Science Teacher and Tsepo Maleka, a BSC in Computer Science graduate, began quietly building a powerful and innovative education programme. It's called the Tirogae interactive library and it aims to be as mobile as possible.

Situated in the Barcelona region of Daveyton township, Nkululeko and his two collaborators have, through Tirogae, been providing a lifeline to learners whose prospects may otherwise appear grim.

“We developed the library with a passion to transform learners intellectually, socially and emotionally. Our aim was to awaken their creativity and improve their academic life prospects,” says Nkululeko. The library provides a site for a weekly programme that includes reading and storytelling classes; technology classes, youth empowerment sessions; extra lessons for grade 2 to grade 11 learners; career days and help with bursary applications.

In its five years of existence, Tirogae has produced over 40 prospective students who are furthering their education at university level. “But tutoring isn’t everything,” he says.

“I want my students to learn to use the resources around them. I want them to read something or see something they are interested in and follow up on it. I want them to have an idea and then get on the phone and call people they can talk to about it, or pick up a book and read more about it, or sit down and write about it.”

To grow his project even further, Nkululeko applied for support from African Bank’s Community Champion Awards in 2016. The Awards are geared at encouraging employee participation in their communities and in fostering a culture of caring throughout the bank. He proposed some interesting items in his budget: chemistry chemicals sets, latex gloves, a microscope, lab coats, a projector... and two tricycle delivery bikes to store his books so he could transform his library into a mobile library.

With the funding provided Nkululeko created a first of its kind library - a library that has a fully functioning Science lab. “We love the bikes because now we can take our books to other parts of the society as part of our Community Outreach programme,” he says.

On Thursdays, Nkululeko's busy schedule of working at the library and managing his IT company from 07:00 changes, and he joins a group of ladies called "The Reading Gogos" who are championing a progressive English Literacy programme in primary schools in Ekurhuleni. "The amazing women get children excited about learning English and sometimes we even step in to teach actual classes when there is a shortage of teachers."

Nkululeko is a man with a clear vision that education is about teaching youngsters to LOVE learning, and to never stop. Quoting one of his literature heroes, W. B. Yeats he cites "Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire."

"Each of us, if we live to be just 70 years old, spend only 9 percent of our lives in school. Considering that the other 91 percent is spent 'out there,' then the only really substantial thing education can do is help us to become continuous, lifelong learners. Learners who learn without textbooks and tests, without certified teachers, without standardised curricula. Learners who love to learn. To me, this is the ultimate goal of education and my societal transformation work."

"We are so proud to have been able to support Nkululeko's project which has been one of the last 2016 Community Champion Awards to be completed at African Bank. We are honoured to work with such a passionate employee and wish Tirogae Interactive Education the best in the future," concludes Kennedy Dembetembe, CSI Manager at African Bank.

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