

The Weekly

POWERBOAT TEAM GOES ABROAD

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Aspiring young pilots....Ngwathe F1 powerboat team is going to Ukraine

Seven learners from various disadvantaged communities in the Ngwathe Local Municipality have joined the South African powerboat team that has departed to the Powerboat World Championships (PWC) held on August 25 and 26 in Ternopil, Ukraine.

The municipality is running the programme in partnership with the private companies involved in promotion of the formula one (F1) powerboat sport in South Africa.

These learners who are part of a 16 member team from the municipality were identified through the municipal programme that is aimed at producing black professional powerboat pilots from the townships.

As aspiring pilots, their visit to Ukraine is mainly to observe, but it will also serve to motivate them to excel in their career choices. The learners are from Parys, Heilbron, Koppies, Edenville and Vrededorst. According to the Executive Mayor of Ngwathe, Joey Mochela, the learners are also excelling in their school work.

“We are very excited to witness a sport which was previously dominated by whites, developing to an international level in our disadvantaged communities. When Zam Entertainment initially came to us with the concept, we felt that we could not waste any more time in embarking on a special programme to identify kids from humble backgrounds from all 5 towns.”

The aspiring pilots are: Lehlohonolo Lephuthi, Branden Naude, Sibongile Beyaphi, Puleng Direko, Modibedi Thoote, Rebone Thabane and Bafana Dlamini. The youngest member of this team is 13 years old and the oldest is 17 years old.

“The trip shall also serve as empowerment, capacity building and motivation for our young future stars. Our councillors and the community at large played a vital role in identifying these young pilots and we are grateful for that collective effort,” said Mochela.

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Mochela has accompanied the learners to Ukraine.

Former South African F1 powerboat promoter, Christo de Jager, has expressed his faith in the South African team.

“This team is one of the best teams in South Africa and we are going to witness history when, Puleng Direko, becomes the first black powerboat formula one pilot within the next few years.” The event organiser and the current national F1 promoter, Zola Key of Zam Entertainment, said the sport is growing in leaps and bounds.

“F1 powerboat racing has been established in South Africa more than 25 years ago and is one of the biggest Formula 1 National Championship series in the world. The South African Formula 1 Powerboat Series is a dynamic sport offering adrenalin, power, speed, technology, precision, close competition and excitement in abundance.”

“Our programme includes swimming lessons, motivational talk, life skills and academic assistance. We thank the premier of Free State, Ace Magashule, for investing in youth development by ensuring the revival of the sport that nearly perished because of lack of funding, Fezile Dabi District and Ngwathe Local municipality for hosting and supporting the initiative,” said Key.

He said the Free State Tourism Authority (FSTA) has played an important role in ensuring that the sport is sustained.

The spokesperson of the municipality and powerboat event manager, Steve Naale, said the parent's contribution has played a very important role in ensuring participation of their children.

“Our role as the municipality is to create an enabling environment for the promotion of sport, arts, culture and recreation with a view to engender social cohesion, nation building and lasting transformation.”

“We are proud to be hosting this annual event taking place on the banks of the Vaal River, in Parys. This year we are looking to host a festival that will include cultural exhibitions on October 27 and 28,” said Naale.

The trip was sponsored by FSTA in partnership with Phakisa Freeway, Fezile Dabi District Municipality and Ngwathe Local Municipality.

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]