

MEDIA RELEASE - 19 November 2003

Limpopo learners win the 2003 primary schools' environmental awareness competition

A PRIMARY school from Phalaborwa in Limpopo has come out tops in this year's Morula Kids Competition - the environmental awareness competition supported by South African National Parks.

Schiettocht Primary School in Phalaborwa snatched all three positions in the Grade 0-4 category with highly artistic entries that impressed the competition judges. In their submissions, the learners were asked to illustrate the theme: "People and Parks". The winning entries from Schiettocht included gift boxes, gift cards and bowls.

The learners won themselves the grand prize of a weekend visit to the world-renowned Kruger National Park. They also received certificates during a function held at the SANParks headquarters in Muckleneuk, Pretoria.

While the first prize in the Grade 5-7 went to Jai Hind Primary School from Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal; both Monyebodi Primary School in Addney, Limpopo and Kgaugelo Middle School in Ga-Rankuwa received second and third prizes respectively.

The learners from Jani Hind Primary School also won themselves a visit the Kruger National Park.

Now in its third year, the Morula Kids competition is one of a number of youth projects sponsored by SANParks. Its main aim is to encourage conservation awareness among children; to allow them to have an understanding of the national parks system, and to encourage them to use their creative skills (for example: art, poetry, music, etc.) to interpret conservation issues.

The prime attraction to the competition is the main prize, a trip for 10 kids to the Kruger.

In his address during the function, SANParks Chief Executive David Mabunda paid tribute to the learners and their educators and said an investment in the education of the youth was fundamental in empowering the South African society.

He added that SANParks was planning to embark on vigorous environmental education campaigns among all stakeholders, particularly among schools and communities neighbouring all the country's 20 national parks.

"Education is the cornerstone of our country and ignorance is our greatest enemy.

Conservation issues are frequently complex and contested; hence we require a combination of research, invention, innovation and adaptation. None are possible without a firm, educated basis of knowledge, understanding, skill and commitment.

"A major priority for SANParks is to re-orient our educational efforts so that in addition to raising public awareness, we also pay attention to building the capacity of our neighbouring communities to empower them to contribute to a sustainable future," said Mabunda.

While the Morula Kids Competition began in September 2001 to celebrate tourism month, it

drew considerable national support and as a result, SANParks decided in 2002 to make it an annual event. So far, over 10 000 learners countrywide have participated in the competition.

The competition is aimed at Grade1-7 learners and they have to come up with creative means

of interpreting the theme. They have to do this through any art form.

A panel of judges selected from people representing various sectors, including education, publishing, tourism, arts and culture met to determine the winners.

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Issued by:

Lulama Luti

Manager: Media Liaison and PR

South African National Parks

Tel: (012) 426-5203

Cellphone: 082-746-3529

lulamal@parks-sa.co.za

Enquiries:

Dr Razeena Wagiet

Director: People and Conservation

South African National Parks

Tel: +27-12-426-5000

Web: www.parks-sa.co.za