

KwaNobuhle matric tops his Engen Maths and Science class

Port Elizabeth matriculant and Engen Maths and Science School alumni, Kamvalethu Hlatshwayo did not allow the passing of his father in 2012 or subsequent financial constraints get in the way of studying towards his dream job.

Kamvalethu, who is starting the four-year journey to achieve a Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical) at Stellenbosch University this year, says he will tackle the challenges ahead the same way he achieved his incredible success at school.

Kamvalethu beat out 46 fellow matriculants at the end of last year to take top spot in the Engen Maths and Science School (EMSS) class based at the Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth. Achieving 80% for science and 79% for maths, he credits the extra lessons provided by EMSS for his outstanding results, which were enough to ensure he finished second amongst all the learners who wrote the 2018-matric examinations at the three EMSS schools based in the Eastern Cape.

“It’s all about hard work, managing your time and your priorities,” says the 18-year-old, whose greatest challenge was not believing in himself at first.

Kamvalethu grew up in KwaNobuhle, a township on the outskirts of Uitenhage, and attended Solomon Mahlangu High School. He is however adamant that he could never have achieved such academic excellence without the commitment of the Engen programme teachers, who gave him the support he so desperately needed over three years from Grade 10 to Grade 12.

“The EMSS programme helped me not only academically but also with life lessons and made me want to learn more and to attend classes all the time.”

He was also inspired by his science teacher, Mr Stuurman who, he says, was his mentor even though he might not have been aware of the impact of his advice. “I took it and live by it.”

Kamvalethu has the following advice for the 2019 matriculants. “This is your last year in high school so make it count, the decision you make this year will impact your life in the future, life begins after matric and that matric is the foundation of your future. Remember, work smart not hard.”

It is youngsters like Kamvalethu that the EMSS programme aims to assist, with a view to not only see them achieve personal success, but also to help address key national skills shortages in engineering, medical and other technical fields.

In 2019, 532 matriculants from across South Africa benefited from Engen-backed extra classes in English, Maths and Science, achieving an impressive 93% pass rate against the national pass rate of 78.2%. Of these, 67% of the EMSS learners received Bachelor passes against the national average of 43%.

Kamvalethu attended the EMSS centre based at Nelson Mandela University, which is one of three centres in the Eastern Cape (the others are located in East London and Cala). There are nine EMSS centres in total in South Africa including one each in Cape Town and Gauteng, and four in KwaZulu-Natal. Two of the KZN based centres attained impressive 100% pass rates.

Adhila Hamdulay, Engen’s Corporate Social Investment Manager, says the company is delighted to see Kamvalethu get the chance to pursue his bid to become a chemical engineer. “Kamvalethu is a prime example of future leaders that the EMSS programme aims to assist, with a view to not only see them achieve personal success, but also to tackle the bigger issue of helping address key national skills shortages in the engineering, medical and other technical fields.

She adds: “At Engen, we strongly believe that we have a responsibility to help young people realise their full potential, and we feel enormously privileged to have played a role in Kamvalethu’s impressive achievements.”

Equipping people with potential and drive to succeed in their careers sums up Engen’s approach to human resource management and education-focused corporate social investment programmes, comments Engen’s head of transformation and stakeholder engagement, Unathi Njokweni-Magida.

“We identify, support, reward, recruit, train and develop high-potential candidates for fulfilling careers in skills-challenged fields, in support of SA’s transformational agenda and Engen’s own business. We strongly believe that we have a responsibility to help young people realise their full potential, and we feel enormously privileged to have played a role in their impressive achievements.

“We are so incredibly proud of these learners, who epitomise the quality of the young people we work with around the country every year. Our ultimate reward is to help set them up to pursue stimulating careers that won’t only benefit them personally, but also the economy as a whole,” adds Njokweni-Magida.

Engen congratulates Kamvalethu and the EMSS class of 2018 and offers a well-deserved round of applause to all the learners and teachers.