

MY MRYE EXPERIENCES

Prepared by Nkululeko Sibanda

I am both a “fruit” and alumni of the Mpepu Rural Youth Encouragement (MRYE) Outreach Programme. I come from a small town called Nqutu in northern KwaZulu-Natal. My first encounter with MRYE was in 2006 when the group visited my school. I was only doing Grade 10 then but I was touched by the way they presented careers. Excellent Khumalo, a former MRYE chairperson, was doing Grade 12 at that time (making him a “fruit” of this programme as well). He never lost contact with the group when he enrolled at the University of Pretoria the following year, in 2007. He joined MRYE soon after he enrolled and came back to our school to continue MRYE’s core business, which further encouraged me to study further. With MRYE’s help, I registered for a degree at the University of Pretoria. Other learners from my class were also encouraged by MRYE continue studies and enrolled at other tertiary institutions in Durban. MRYE guided me through the whole procedure of enrolling at the University including the course and bursary application and registration. MRYE continued to mentor me and monitor my progress, especially during the first tough semester at the university. They made sure I was coping with the new life and I loved the group so much that I joined them.



Nkululeko Sibanda receiving his degree

I was already familiar with how MRYE operated, so it was easy for me to fit into in the group. As a MRYE “fruit” with a full understanding of the vision of the organisation, I enjoyed the responsibilities that were given to me, such as organising trips to schools. Working for MRYE is both challenging and rewarding and one has to be committed to the organisation. My most

memorable MRYE trip, which I also assisted in organising, was the to Free State and KwaZulu-Natal in January 2012. I was also invited to the Golden Key Society in my third year (2011). Had MRYE not visited my school in 2006, I wouldn't have made it this far and am proud to have graduated with a BEd degree from the University of Pretoria in 2013.

I am now in life where I am because of the support of MRYE. I am currently working as an Educator in Dennilton, Limpopo, and am enrolled at UNISA for a BCom degree. I am also involved in MRYE activities during my spare time around Dennilton.



Nkululeko with his MRYE friends

At the beginning of this year I assisted a learner who had very good marks for Matric in 2012, but had stayed at home for the whole of 2013 as he had not had access to information or application forms for continuing with tertiary education. In rural areas, similar to the area from which I come, it is not easy to access even an application form of any tertiary institution. I met him towards the end of 2013 and quickly assisted him to apply at the University of Johannesburg where he enrolled for a BCom Law degree in 2014.

I am thrilled to acknowledge that MRYE is doing wonders for South Africa's youth. It is, however, not easy to measure exactly how much impact MRYE has had since its inception because of the number of places MRYE visited and the multiplier effect of these visits. I

would like to see MRYE continue giving hope to South African learners. Learners with the quality to obtain higher education and successfully earn degrees are present the rural areas, but only organisations with the calibre and passion of MRYE can unearth them and maximise their potential.

I am proud to be a MRYE “fruit” and alumni!!