

Meadowlands march unites community for child safety

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National Child Protection Week is observed annually from May 25 to June 1.

To mark the occasion, the Gauteng Department of Community Safety, Social Development, and the City of Joburg Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum hosted a peaceful walk and fun day in Meadowlands, Soweto, on May 30.

The event aimed to raise awareness of children's rights, promote child safety, and encourage communities to protect young lives.

The march began at Spider Park in Meadowlands Zone 6 and ended at the Fiat Sports Centre in Zone 9.

Pamela Hendriks, the monitoring and evaluating officer for by-laws at the CoJ Social Development Children's Unit, said: "Because we face so many challenges, including child abuse, this day sends a message that we are here and want our children protected. We also want communities to take a stand to protect our children." This year's theme was Working Together in Ending Violence Against Children. The entities highlighted issues such as rape, murder, and missing children

to remind communities of the urgent need to create safer environments for all children. ECD centres from Meadowlands, Diepkloof, Pimville, Noordgesig, Orlando East, Orlando West, and Dobsonville participated in the walk and related activities.

Fikile Poka, principal of the Chosen Generation Children's Academy, said: "With the rising number of injustices against children

in our country, it is important that we continuously raise awareness and sound the alarm for their protection. It was a beautiful sight to see about 2 000 children and the ECD workforce united in highlighting children's rights in our country."

She also commended motorists and the Meadowlands community for their cooperation, noting how they stood by the roadside, observing the children's demonstration to ensure they were seen and, hopefully, heard.



Children from ECD centres during a peaceful march in observance of National Child Protection Week.



The ECD workforce at the event.

CATHSSETA celebrates graduation of 164 chefs

The Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) has proudly marked a major milestone in its ongoing commitment to eradicating poverty and inequality through skills development.

A total of 164 learners have successfully graduated from the occupational chef qualification programme (NQF Level 5), an initiative designed to tackle youth unemployment by providing hands-on, industry-relevant culinary training. Graduation ceremonies were held in Durban on May 16 and in Sandton on May 28, celebrating the achievements of learners from provinces across South Africa, including KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape, Limpopo, and North West.

This is the first cohort to graduate from CATHSSETA's pioneering chef artisan programme. Launched in response to the Decade of the Artisan campaign — a ministerial flagship initiative introduced in 2014 — the programme supports the development of technical skills and promotes artisanship as a respected and viable career path. Speaking at the ceremony, CATHSSETA CEO Marks Thibela highlighted the broader purpose behind the initiative: "CATHSSETA remains committed to playing a pivotal role in addressing unemployment by providing relevant skills training. We believe this programme opens doors to new opportunities and contributes meaningfully to the growth of the hospitality sector." The programme aligns with CATHSSETA's strategic

response to the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030, both of which call for the annual production of at least 30 000 qualified artisans and prioritise occupations in high demand. Select graduates were chosen for international culinary training programmes, providing them with global exposure and experience that will accelerate their careers. While some alumni have secured employment abroad, most have already found permanent positions locally since completing the programme.

At the Sandton graduation, executive manager for Learning Programmes Lebogang Mpye, commended the graduates. "Each graduate's journey reflects resilience, ambition, and a shared commitment to uplifting their communities through the power of education and practical skills.

The qualification they have earned is globally recognised, giving them a competitive edge in the international hospitality landscape." Mpye described the programme as more than just conventional training. "This three-year programme is unique. It blends theoretical instruction, practical modules, structured workplace experience, and a formal trade test — producing well-rounded culinary professionals prepared for leadership in the industry.

"These graduates are not just chefs — they are artisans — proudly aligned with South Africa's economic and social development goals," she concluded.



CATHSSETA CEO Marks Thibela.



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