

# **Keynote Address by Mayor Gerson Molapisane During the Mayor's Excellence Awards At Tivumbeni EMPC On 01 February 2024**

Madam Speaker, Councillor Sanie Tiba

The Mayor of Maruleng Municipality, Mayor Musolwa

Members of the Executive Committee

Chairpersons of Section 79 Committees

PR and Ward Councillors

Mopani West District Director, Mrs. Philippine Modika

Circuit Managers

Principals and educators

Leadership of SADTU, PEU, NAPTOSA, RCLs and SGBs

Parents and the most important guests today, our outstanding learners

Members of the media

Distinguished guests

It is with great pleasure and immense pride that I stand before you today to celebrate the outstanding achievements of the Mopani West District in Limpopo Province. Today, we gather not only to recognize individual accomplishments but to commend the collective efforts that have made

Mopani West the best district in the province. This is a testament to the dedication, hard work, and passion exhibited by every individual within the district.

### **Programme Directors**

I must, however, touch on a few issues before we get into the celebratory mode. On the 17th and 22nd of January 2024 we visited primary schools and high schools respectively as part on our annual Back-to-School Campaign. This campaign was a collaborative effort to ensure the readiness of our primary and high schools for the academic year.

We were on a mission to assess the preparedness of our schools. We wanted to identify areas that required intervention, both from other government entities and the community. Each ward was visited, and valuable information was gathered to pave the way for positive change and improvement.

I am proud to announce that our dedicated team has been working tirelessly to address the identified areas of concern. We believe that education is the cornerstone of a thriving society, and we are committed to providing the best possible learning environment for our children. •

Generally, we have identified that most schools face similar challenges such as water shortage, access roads, undocumented learners, poverty affecting the learners, ageing, decaying and dilapidated infrastructure, shortage of furniture, stationery, and classrooms.

We have observed that in some schools there is still a prevalence of drugs, gangsterism and teenage pregnancy, this requires collective efforts that must emanate from the community , led by the community and supported by all key stakeholders, more importantly the SAPS.

We have met and discussed how to address these challenges collectively and effectively as various government entities and have regular progress updates and improve coordination of these issues.

Some of the issues require intervention from Mopani District Municipality, Home Affairs, Social Development, Eskom, SAPS, Public Works, the department of education and of course the Greater Tzaneen Municipality. These issues also require the intervention of various NGOs and community structures. We will take a lead in the coordination of solutions and interventions.

### **Programme Directors**

In a groundbreaking move, this year, for the first time, we combined our Back-to-School Campaign with our School Shoe Donation Campaign. We are delighted to share that through the generosity of various sources, including municipal employees and councilors, we collected over 300 pairs of school shoes. These shoes will undoubtedly make a meaningful impact on the lives of many learners, ensuring they have the necessary resources to embark on their educational journey comfortably.

I would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the Good Samaritans who contributed to this noble cause. Your generosity has not only provided

footwear but has also sent a powerful message of community solidarity and support for our children's education. Your kindness will be remembered by those whose lives you have touched.

As we move forward, we call upon everyone in our community to continue supporting our School Shoes Campaign and of course our schools.

Education is a collective responsibility, and together, we can create an environment where every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. Whether it's through donations, volunteering, or spreading awareness, your involvement matters.

### **Programme Directors**

I must emphasize the profound importance of education in our communities. Education is not merely a pathway to knowledge; it is the key to unlocking opportunities, fostering growth, and creating a brighter future for all. In rural settings, where resources may be limited, the transformative power of education becomes even more crucial.

As we gather here, I want to draw attention to a significant opportunity for our matriculants—the Mayor's Student Financial Aid Scheme. This initiative has been designed to provide financial assistance to those who aspire to pursue higher education. The scheme recognizes the potential within our youth and aims to break down financial barriers that might otherwise impede their educational journey.

The Mayor's Student Financial Aid Scheme is currently open for applications until the 12th of February 2024. I encourage all eligible matriculants in our community to take advantage of this opportunity.

Education should be a right, not a privilege, and this scheme is a step towards ensuring that every motivated and capable student has the chance to pursue tertiary education.

It's important to note that the MSFAS focuses on supporting students who wish to enroll in reputable tertiary education institutions with registration fees only. The national student financial aid scheme (NSFAS) will thereafter takeover the financing. The MSFAS and NSFAS underscores our

commitment as government to providing quality education that equips our youth with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in an ever-evolving world. By supporting students in attending respected institutions, we are investing in the future leaders, innovators, and contributors to our community's well-being.

Education is a catalyst for change, and when it reaches the heart of rural communities, the impact is immeasurable. It empowers individuals to uplift themselves, their families, and the entire community. It is a force that transcends generations, breaking the cycle of poverty and opening doors to new possibilities.

Let us recognize the broader significance of investing in education in our communities, especially the rural areas. It is an investment in the resilience, strength, and prosperity of our community. By supporting our youth in their pursuit of knowledge, we are building a foundation for a thriving, educated, and empowered rural society.

**Programme Directors**

Just before the commencement of the final examination on 22 August 2023, I met with the District Director, Mrs. Modika and all circuit managers from Mopani West District at Karibu Leisure Resort. In that meeting they promised to deliver the best results and the promise to improve upon the 2022 final examination results. They have kept their promise.

In previous years, we received requests for support or sponsorships from various circuits who held their separate Excellence Awards. This year moving forward we have agreed in principle with the District Director that we will exclusively sponsor or provide financial assistance to host excellence awards at the district level and not at the circuit level. This is done taking into account our limited financial resources/constraints and in the face of multiple and competing needs of our communities. We hope that this message is well received and understood in this context.

Programme Directors

I have a token of appreciation for the sterling job that the district director and her collective have done. I have kept my end of the bargain and although we have scarce resources, I have managed to scrounge



something together and hope that will surely complement our verbal expression of gratitude and appreciation. Let me take this opportunity and invite the DD to the stage and receive the little gift that we have brought today.

### **Programme Directors**

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the learners who have contributed to this remarkable success. Your commitment to excellence, resilience in the face of challenges, and the pursuit of knowledge have undoubtedly set you apart. You are the future leaders, innovators, and change-makers, and your achievements today are a reflection of your unwavering determination.

It is essential to acknowledge that success is not achieved in isolation.

Behind every accomplished learner, there is a team of dedicated educators who tirelessly work to nurture, guide, and inspire. To the educators of Mopani West, thank you for your tireless efforts in shaping the minds of our future generations. Your commitment to fostering a love for learning, instilling values, and promoting academic excellence has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in the success we celebrate today.

Equally deserving of our gratitude is the School Governing Body, whose support and collaboration have created an environment conducive to learning and growth. Your dedication to ensuring the smooth operation of our schools, providing resources, and fostering a sense of community has been instrumental in Mopani West's ascent to the pinnacle of academic achievement.

As we revel in the glory of being the best district in Limpopo Province, let us not forget the lessons learned along the way. Let this achievement serve as a reminder of the potential that lies within each learner, the impact that educators can make, and the strength of a united community working towards a common goal.

As I move towards conclusion, I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of Mopani West District. Let this moment be a source of inspiration for future endeavors and a reminder that together, we can overcome any challenge and achieve greatness.

Congratulations once again to Mopani West District, the epitome of excellence in education in Limpopo Province. May this achievement be the catalyst for even greater accomplishments in the years to come.

Finally, I want invite everyone here and those watching at home to go and register to vote or check their status on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, which is this coming weekend on Saturday and Sunday. All 23 303-voting stations across the country will be open from 8am to 5pm. This is in preparation for the upcoming national general elections scheduled to take place this year on a date or dates to be announced by the President. Let's go register, voting is right that every South African over the age of 18 must enjoy.

**I thank you, kea leboga, na khensa, baie dankie.**