

REAL PEOPLE DOING UNREAL THINGS

Ship on course

When science & technology teacher Margaret Masuku graduated from the University of Zululand in 2004, she never imagined she would one day be teaching her students about shipping.

Now, after pioneering maritime studies at her school, she has been accepted for an MSc in maritime education & training and leaves for the World Maritime University in Malmo, Sweden, in September.

On her arrival at Sithengile Secondary School in Claremont near Durban five years ago, Masuku, 35, found there was a group of 120 students wanting to enrol for maritime studies, and no teacher.

With the township being so close to SA's busiest port and the headquarters of SA's largest shipping companies, there is a constant demand for matriculants and graduates in this field. "There was a curriculum for maritime studies but no textbooks at the school," she says. "The education department said they could not help us with this subject".

But Masuku was interested in learning more about maritime studies, a subject taught at few schools in SA, and for which she has developed a passion.

"I realised I had to pull my socks up and research the topic myself."

Her first lessons with her grade 10, 11 and 12 pupils were put together from information gleaned on the Internet.

"The subject is very broad, covering import and export, types of ships, crew, ports and trade with other countries.

"That same year I attended a Maritime World Day and met Ivan Clark, the previous CEO of Grindrod," she adds.

"I explained about our school and was invited to meet the marketing manager." She left the company's offices with piles of magazines and books on shipping, as well as a commitment to sponsor maritime studies textbooks.

Grindrod also arranges harbour tours for the students and helps with providing outside experts — for example, Brian Ingpen, who teaches at Simon's Town High School and helps the Sithengile pupils prepare for exams.

Project Build, a nonprofit organisation that builds schools in KwaZulu Natal, recently completed a R416 000 maritime centre at Sithengile School, sponsored by Grindrod.



Jackie Clausen

Masuku has attracted sponsorship from several other companies, as well as Transnet and the Maritime Law Association. Jo Tankers, in collaboration with the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, this year awarded 10 bursaries to Sithengile matric students to complete an advanced shipping course.

The highlight for the 10 was being taken aboard the *MT Jo Acer* for a tour, after which they had question time with the captain and crew. Despite living 20 km from Durban, many children who live in impoverished Claremont have never visited the city, much less been aboard an ocean-going vessel.

Masuku says with the help of Safmarine and Unicorn bursaries, eight of her students are now enrolled in maritime studies at the Durban University of Technology, with one former student now employed as a third mate. "But there is a shortage of jobs on ships."

At a meeting with transport department official Zakhele Thwala earlier this year, he emphasised the need for maritime studies in SA. "And he told me I needed qualifications."

Assisted by the department, Masuku applied to the World Maritime University in Sweden for the one-year master's course. She has a full bursary covering tuition, accommodation and fees from the International Maritime Organisation. "They said they are equipping me to be a resource in SA," says Masuku. "I am very excited to go. When I get home next year I need to plough back what I have learnt into my community. I love this subject and I would like to visit other schools in SA to see how they are implementing maritime studies."

Yvonne Fontyn

Margaret Masuku Teacher

THE UNREALITY CHECK

- Pioneered maritime studies at Sithengile Secondary School in Claremont
- Won backing from shipping firms
- Will do master's at the World Maritime University, Sweden
- Some of her students have gone on to tertiary maritime studies