

## DID YOU KNOW?



April is Freedom Month and the commemoration will be held on Saturday 27

April at the Union Buildings. Freedom Month is celebrated under the theme: "Mobilising Society Towards consolidating Democracy and Freedom"



# MY DISTRICT TODAY

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## Outcome 12: An efficient, effective and development-oriented Public Service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenry *Going an extra mile*

*Robbie Senoelo: GCIS Gauteng*

After 30 years, a homeless man from Alexandra, known as MoRussia, was finally reunited with his family in QwaQwa in the Free State thanks to the GCIS Regional Coordinator based at Alexandra Thusong Service Centre.

Ramoholo Daniel Mahlako/Mahlangu left home to seek work in Johannesburg in 1982 and never returned. Instead, he was in and out of jail for petty crimes because of unemployment. In 2011, a Good Samaritan, Nompie Radebe, found him wandering the streets of Alexandra and sleeping on the pavements. He also did not have any form of identification. Nompie then decided to bring his plight to the attention of Robbie Senoelo.



MoRussia and Nompie Radebe in Alexandra before he left for QwaQwa.

"I tried to get him an identity document at the Department of Home Affairs, but the officials refused to process his application because he did not have any supporting document," said Radebe.

"After being sent from pillar to post, I met Robbie who facilitated the application process and obtained an ID for him."

"Now I can even cast my vote in elections," was all Ramoholo could say when Robbie handed him his first identity document.

The story did not end there. Robbie started tracing MoRussia's family in the Free State and with the assistance of Thapelo Hlubi, a community development worker in Phuthaditjhaba, he tracked down the family, after which Robbie reunited "MoRussia" with his family.



"MoRussia" and his sister, Ouma Mahlako, meeting for the first time in 30 years.

"I am so happy to come back home alive. I am going to adjust and get used to the life here," Mahlako said.

"We will be forever indebted to you for bringing my brother home. We never thought we would see him again – we thought he was dead," his sister, Ouma Mahlako, said.

Robbie approached ward councillor Motaung and requested that Mahlako be listed for the Expanded Public Works Programme. Councillor Motaung then promised he will be considered for the next intake as he is regarded a special case.



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## Outcome 12: An efficient, effective and development-oriented Public Service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenry

South Africa celebrates Freedom Month in April to commemorate the dawn of freedom and democracy and the achievements we have made to move away from hatred, division and a painful history while building a common future together.

The theme for this year's Freedom Month is *Mobilising society towards consolidating our democracy and freedom.*



Freedom Month derives its significance from 27 April 1994, when South Africa held its first democratic elections. On this day, the country remembers and celebrates struggle icons and honour those who are committed to transformation and building a better life for all of us.

South Africa remembers its national heroes by awarding National Orders to distinguished citizens. The National Orders reflect the inclusiveness and diversity of a democratic South Africa, our people and our place in

Africa – in essence, the spirit of the new South Africa.

Freedom Day represents peace, unity, and the restoration of human dignity to all South Africans. It is a reminder of the countless sacrifices our countrymen made and a chance to ensure that no one will ever take our freedom for granted.

South Africa has taken many strides away from its past of exclusion and discrimination on the basis of sex, colour and creed, and has steadily moved towards humanity. This has led to a new culture of human rights and respect for the human spirit.

One of the symbolic moments of our break from the past was the raising of the new flag in 1994. This moment aptly affirmed the pride of a new rainbow nation and a celebration of humanity.

Another symbolic moment was the unveiling of a new coat of arms on 27 April 2000 which embraces the history of the people of the country. The new coat of arms bears testimony to the fact that Africa and her symbols have become part of the new culture in the country.

The 2013 celebrations for Freedom Month take on special significance while the nation prepares to commemorate 20 years of freedom in 2014. It has been 19 years since the dawn of democracy and the President will look at the achievements there have been in entrenching democracy and creating a better life for all.

Freedom Day reaffirms our freedom and ensures that the violation of such rights never occurs again.





Kabelo Teme from Credit Ombudsman informing members of the community.



## Outcome 12: An efficient, effective and development-oriented Public Service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenry

### Empowering consumers with knowledge

*Matshidiso Mokoka: GCIS Gauteng*

Consumer Rights Day is celebrated worldwide on 15 March every year. In observing this day, the Gauteng office of Consumer Affairs held a consumer event in Khutsong on Saturday 16 March to create awareness among consumers about consumer protection laws and consumers' rights and responsibilities. The theme for 2013, *Consumer justice now!*, encourages consumers to expose exploitation owing to poor consumer protection.

The event encouraged consumers to use the services of the Consumer Affairs Office when they encounter problems with creditors taking advantage of their ignorance. Advocate Manamela from the Gauteng Consumer Affairs Office said, "Consumer protection laws have been promulgated to protect consumers from fraudulent creditors. It is imperative that consumers are aware of institutions that protect their rights.

Institutions such as the FSB (Financial Service Board) help consumers to use their money wisely and retain a good credit record. He told consumers that although the rights of consumers are important, they also are accompanied by responsibilities.

Consumers were told to be conscientious and to not just sign any document they did not understand or borrow money from micro-lenders not registered with the National Credit Regulator. Some creditors are not afraid to exploit consumers' ignorance by forcing them to buy goods without explaining the contracts. This practice has landed many consumers in financial trouble. Chances are that they will lose what they had bought and will have to pay more for the product than initially thought.

With the introduction of the National Consumer Protection Act, the Consumer Affairs Office is well placed to protect consumers. Economic Development MEC Nkosiphendule Kolisile emphasised the importance of

Consumer Rights Day to educate consumers about their rights, and that they must be respected and protected.



MEC Nkosiphendule Kolisile addressing the community at the World Consumer Rights Day celebration in Khutsong.

"The people must be aware that the Consumer Affairs Office is there to protect them against market abuse and social injustice. Customers must be treated as true clients," he said. Consumer education and awareness is much needed in disadvantaged communities, as these communities are often exploited by unscrupulous creditors.

Some agencies of the Gauteng Consumer Office, such as the Financial Services Board and the Credit Ombudsman gave advice and distributed information to the community. Kabelo Teme from the Credit Ombudsman said, "Events such as these remind me of what is really important. Not only did I come with information for consumers, I too learnt quite a lot. We need more such events to educate consumers. People do not know their rights, nor are they aware of their responsibilities."



## Outcome 12: An efficient, effective and development-oriented Public Service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenry

### Prison is not nice, inmate tells learners

*Odas Ngobeni: GCIS Limpopo*

On no fewer than five occasions, Marks Nyoni told more than 500 learners at the Bankuna School, outside Tzaneen in Limpopo, that “prison is not nice”.

Nyoni, 38, is a former training officer at Modikwa Platinum Mine near Burgersfort, serving a 20-year term at the Polokwane Correctional Centre.

Reverend Dr Moses Shipalana, who was also at the event, urged parents, learners, and business and religious leaders to contribute in nation-building. “We have a responsibility to build a nation we can all be proud of. We cannot build a nation that has no respect for the rights of women and children. It is a shame that we hear of a child as young as two years who has been raped,” Reverend Shipalana said.

Schools, teachers and learners who produced the best Grade 12 results in 2012 were awarded on the day.

The top three learners received certificates from the Department of Basic Education and laptops from Sasko Bakery, while the best-performing schools and teachers walked away with trophies and certificates.

St George College, which achieved a 100% pass rate with 95% bachelor passes, received most of the awards on the day, including the Circuit Manager’s Award for the most consistent performer in the past three years with a 100% pass rate. Meridian College was the second-best performing school, with a pass rate of 96,5%; followed by DZJ Mthebule School in third position, with a 90,17% pass rate.

Meanwhile, Nyoni has been offered a job at Avuxeni Computer Academy upon his release from prison.

“We are a training institution and our view is that with the skills he possesses, he will have something to contribute to this institution. He has learnt his lesson, and all we can do now is help him rebuild his life,” George Baloyi, National Marketing Director for the Academy, said.

As South Africans celebrate freedom this month, Marks Nyoni’s testimony conveys the message that we should respect the freedom of others.



Marks Nyoni, inmate from Polokwane Correctional Centre addressing learners at the career expo. With him is Beka Ntsanwisi of the SABC’s Munghana Lonene FM.

Speaking at the career expo and awards ceremony for Nkowanokwa Circuit, Nyoni told learners, parents and teachers that a moment of weakness ended with him in prison. “I was angry, and out of the rage I killed a fellow human being.”

Accompanied by Munghana Lonene radio presenter Beka Ntsan’wisi, 40 inmates sang songs and confessed their crimes.

“I brought the inmates here today for you to hear first-hand that crime does not pay. Some of them were respected members in their communities, but because of the crimes they committed they are now in prison,” Ntsan’wisi said.



From left: Nkowanokwa Circuit Manager for the Department of Basic Education, Doreen Manzini, with the principals of the top performing schools - Joya Varahese of St George College, Thea Gerber of Meridian College and Phillip Dambuzza of DZJ Mthebule School.

