



SchoolNet SA - a finalist in the National Science and Technology Awards

Today's research... tomorrow's innovation

Sadly, SchoolNet South Africa did not win the National Science and Technology (NSTF) NGO Award but we have consoled ourselves by being one of the 3 finalists at the national awards ceremony at the Emperors Palace on June 29th. It was a glamorous event with most dignitaries in formal dress.



The National Science and Technology Forum Awards provide national recognition to a range of contributors. SchoolNet South Africa was one of three finalists in the category of Non-governmental organisations (NGO) for an outstanding contribution to science, engineering and technology (SET) and innovation in South Africa over the last five to ten years. The Awards are intended to recognise and celebrate individuals and organisations for outstanding contributions in science, engineering, technology (SET) and innovation, for a range of purposes including the achievement of sustainable economic growth for South Africa, improving the quality of life of its people, promoting excellence among SET and innovation practitioners and in research and development.



The NSTF Brilliants Programme was given a good deal of prominence in the awards ceremony. The NSTF Brilliants Programme had recognised 18 first year students studying in the science, medicine and engineering fields. One young man and one young woman are chosen from each of the 9 provinces. The programme is limited to those students who had received top marks in mathematics and physical science in the National Senior Certificate Examinations (grade 12) of the previous year. We heard that this translates into them having obtained 100% in both subjects. Candidates are identified by the Provincial Education Departments, and then selected by the NSTF. These students took the stage and were congratulated by everyone at the awards ceremony. Their profiles can be viewed online here <http://www.nstf.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/whoswho.24.pdf> Three of the students each gave a short address that was most engaging. The speakers were a diverse group. The first to speak was Mr Dylan Hlamulo Maluleke from Thohoyandou Technical High in Limpopo who is now studying for a BSc in Civil Engineering at the University of Cape Town. He described how his remote village saw few cars when he was growing up. However, he had been fascinated by cars and from primary school he had known he wanted to study some kind of engineering. The other two speakers were both studying veterinary science at different universities and coincidentally both had fathers who were vets.



In our NGO category there were two other contenders, Health Information System Programme (HISP) which used mobile technology to roll out a campaign to vaccinate 500 000 girls against the Human Papillomavirus. Working in partnership with the Department of Health this was the largest known campaign of its kind in the world using Android tablets to track the roll out. The app was developed by the University of Oslo.

The other candidate in our NGO category was the winner of the award – Mobile Agri Skills Development and Training (MASDT). This project's incubation programme provides a comprehensive integrated practical and technological approach to developing emerging farmers. It assists and supports the farmers in food production, income generation and job creation on a small-scale commercial basis.



The NSTF annual Gala Dinner confers awards that are presented by the Minister of Science and Technology who is the Patron of the event. At this year's awards, the Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandour delivered an excellent keynote address that is available here: <http://www.nstf.org.za/news/minister-pandors-speech-at-the-19th-nstf-south32-awards-07-07-2017/>

This year's Awards celebrated ***Sustainable Tourism for Development***, as the theme and in recognition of the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (#IY2017) declared by the United Nations. The importance of science, technology and innovation in creating a sustainable tourism industry was highlighted at this year's awards ceremony.

The NSTF awards were well documented in national media with the Mail and Guardian as well as the Sunday Times having supplements specifically devoted to details of the researchers who were recipients of the various awards. The names of the finalists in each category are available on the NSTF website at this address:

<http://www.nstf.org.za/awards/nominees/current-finalists/>