



Press Release – Silverstar – 07/12/2018

Silverstar’s shining send-off for Grade 12 Columba learners

“Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end.” Seneca, Roman philosopher

Marking the end of one chapter in their lives and the start of a brave new one, 30 Grade 12 learners in the Columba Leadership programme at two Mogale City secondary schools attended a ‘farewell and thank you’ lunch on 6 December at Publicity Grill House, hosted by Silverstar Casino, which sponsors the programme in the schools.

The learners, from Mandisa Shiceka in Kagiso and Ahmed Timol in Krugersdorp, have been part of the Columba programme (<https://www.tsogosun.com/citizenship/community/learning/columba-leadership>) since Grade 10, and have worked together with their principals and educators, learning and living the Columba leadership values of focus, integrity, creativity, awareness, perseverance, and service, assessing their school’s challenges and implementing solutions, and engaging in social change projects in their schools.

The aim of the event was to express appreciation to the youngsters and nine participating educators for the work they have done in their schools through the Columba programme over the past three years, to acknowledge their achievements as learners, and to wish them well in their life journeys.

Adele Wilson, Silverstar’s CSI Manager, says, “We have been partners in the Columba programme in Mogale City for eight years – and we have been very impressed at the significant impact it has had on the individual participating learners, on the educators, and on the schools. Hosting a valedictory lunch for the Grade 12s as they leave the school environment and embark on new life adventures is our way of thanking them and encouraging them. It will also hopefully motivate them to stay involved in their schools as Columba alumni, ensuring that the programme remains an integral part of the culture.”

Columba is a peer-driven leadership programme for high schools in economically disadvantaged communities that encourages youth to be self-motivated, work-ready, and employable. Projects undertaken by Columba learners in the schools over the years have included supporting a school feeding scheme, establishing a library and a book club, cooking for studying Grade 12s, a school food garden, addressing learner issues such as late coming, bullying, gambling, discipline in class, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and many more.

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This year an alumni initiative was incorporated into the Columba programme to deliver a sustainable plan for the Mogale City schools, particularly Mandisa Shiceka which has completed seven years in the programme, to ensure that the values are lived and become institutionalised in the schools and that positive youth engagement is maintained.

Alumni can play an important role in determining the ongoing development of their schools. “The intention is to create a culture of alumni giving back to their schools and equipping learners to continue the projects,” says Shanda Paine, Tsogo Sun’s Group CSI Manager. “By giving back, the alumni not only pass on valuable lessons to other learners, but also gain experience, knowledge, and live up to the value of service.”

Training was held earlier in the year for 52 Columba learners (grades 10-12) and alumni to strengthen their partnerships, engage on the values to broaden their impact, build skills, and encourage an ethos of giving back.

Kwazi Nkabinde, a Mandisa Shiceka Columba alumnus, says, “Being part of the Columba programme was an honour. It grew me a lot and made me view the world differently and see light even when it was dark. Columba emphasises that leadership is a verb and I’m proud to say I carried leadership to varsity and I’m now secretary to my residence.” Sibahle Mkhaside, also an alumnus, says that being part of Columba and bringing change to the school “means that I will have an impact, even after I am gone.”

Alumnus Prince Novela, 22, is an aspiring businessman, a co-director of a record company, and a founder of a youth organisation called ‘Marvellous Acts’. “My goal is to empower the youth to think business.” Elias Moragela, 20, who is completing second year in BSc Quantitative Analysis at Wits, sponsored by the Moshal Scholarship Programme, plans to graduate “and be the best I can be – and pay it forward by giving back to my community.”

Grade 12 Columba graduate, Philani Mkhonta, says, “I enjoy helping other people succeed because I don’t want to shine alone like a star, but rather we shine together like the universe. I am motivated by the value of service.” Also in Grade 12, Mpho Modillane says, “What keeps me motivated is seeing people work hard for what they want to achieve. I feel inspired when I am needed and appreciated. I will help my community strengthen their hopes and find a way to achieve their goals.”



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Adds Paine, “Tsogo Sun Citizenship (<https://www.tsogosun.com/citizenship>) and Silverstar continue to be extremely proud of these young people who have proved themselves to be hard workers, engaged, and full of hope for a bright future, not just for themselves, but for their communities as well. It is evident that the Columba programme has strengthened them and empowered their educators. We wish them all the very best for the future, and look forward to hearing their good news stories in time to come.”

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