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## **MEC RODGERS LENDS HELPING HAND TO ORGANISATION TRAINING KZN'S NEXT BEST SWIMMERS**

Last week, KwaZulu-Natal Finance MEC, Hon. Francois Rodgers lent a helping hand to the Siyandisa Academy which commemorated the International Week of the Deaf by curating specialised swimming and drowning prevention training for differentially abled children in eThekweni.

The Siyasindisa Academy is a 14-year-old youth-led non-profit organisation which is based in Amanzimtoti. The academy's dedicated team of facilitators and coaches offer training and mentorship on swimming, canoeing, and surfing to disadvantaged and differentially abled children residing in several townships in the south of eThekweni.

Its deaf awareness week programme targeted children from the Chatsworth-based Kwavulindlebe School for the Deaf.

The programme ran from Wednesday 18 September to Saturday 21 September 2024 at the Alex Bulley swimming pool in Montclair. The more than 80 beneficiaries include children living with autism, deafness, and blindness.

One of the facilitators was Terence Parkin, a globally celebrated South African swimmer who was thrust into the spotlight after he won the silver medal at the summer Olympics in 2000.

The Siyandisa Academy had appealed to MEC Rodgers for assistance with transportation and facilities costs.

After undertaking the necessary screening and vetting tests, MEC Rodgers acceded to the academy's request due to its impressive record dating back to 2010.

"As a swimmer and community development enthusiast, the programmes led by the Siyasindisa Academy hit home for me," MEC Rodgers said.

"It is my vision to see all children of KwaZulu-Natal get equal opportunities regardless of their social and physical limitations," he added.

The MEC has undertaken to approach the necessary structures within government to ensure that the Siyandisa Academy is sustainably empowered by the state so that it reaches more children. The MEC will also be calling on members of the private sector for their possible contribution.

Charles Khumalo, who is the founder of the academy, expressed his gratitude to MEC Rodgers for his intervention.

"Previously, we tried securing assistance from other government departments but there was no response. Mr. Francois Rodgers' contribution has enabled us to make our Deaf Awareness Week programme a success" he said.



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Khumalo explained that among their main challenges was managing the cost of day-to-day administration as well as transportation costs when their pupils are invited to participate in sporting competitions.

The academy was also in the process of securing accreditation with the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) so that it can offer accredited lifeguard training.

MEC Rodgers views the Siyasindisa Academy as having the potential to transform the lives of the children and families that benefit from its programmes.

“We have already seen some of their participants secure bursaries from better-resourced schools in eThekweni. The academy’s programmes can help uncover a generation of KZN’s next internationally acclaimed swimmers.”

“We remain committed to programmes that uplift marginalised young people. Such programmes have the immense potential to transform lives, break the poverty cycle and prevent our children from falling into the trap of social-ills such as drug addiction and early pregnancies,” the MEC said.

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