



SSP E-NEWSLETTER

2010: Celebrating Ten Years of Success – Developing Leaders for South Africa



The Future of Student Sponsorship Programme

By Kim Robinson, SSP Executive Director

Our tenth anniversary is a great time to be prospective. As much as this is a time to celebrate and thank those responsible for our success, it is also a time to look forward.

Over the next decade, I hope that Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP) continues to meet its core purpose, namely, identifying academically distinguished, low income learners and enabling them to excel at South Africa's best schools. I also hope that SSP broadens its positive impact and achieves the following:

- An increase in the number of academically talented low income learners that we assist each year;
- An expansion of our footprint nationally to all nine of South Africa's provinces;
- The placing of SSP alumni at the forefront of building a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic, united, and prosperous South Africa in a variety of endeavours throughout the country;
- A heightened awareness of the organization - recognised by schools, learners, funders and potential employees - as an outstanding social enterprise whose staff and scholars demonstrate leadership, integrity, excellence, professionalism and commitment to public service;
- A financially self-sustaining entity; and
- Bringing on the SSP alumni to play a central role in the organization's programmes, on-going sustainability and development.

Student Sponsorship Programme addresses South Africa's major imperatives: skills development, nation building, transformation and leadership. Every day we do work that is relevant and important to influence the future. It is a joy, challenge and pleasure to do this work. I hope that we continue to improve with the support of our stakeholders who pursue in our vision.

Where it all began

By Busisiwe Maile, SSP Student Recruitment Officer

(Abstracts taken from a letter to a sponsor from SSP Director in Kenya, Nyagaka Ongeru)

Many of us only know SSP as we see the organization today. As with most meaningful endeavours, SSP manifested into what it is today because a vision to help others was followed through.

SSP was founded when Nyagaka Ongeru and his colleagues saw the need in South Africa for a programme modeled after the Student Sponsor Partnership in New York. This organization recruits individuals who serve as mentors and contribute financially to the education of New York public school children.

Friends and family responded positively to the vision and by December 1998 the seed capital was successfully assembled. Early in 1999, Mr. Ongeru and his co-visionaries Teresa Clarke and Gerri Engelman went about putting Student Sponsorship Programme in place.

Over the course of 1999, many more donations were received and an operational organization was established.

In January 2000, the first class of 25 learners began their eighth grade in three of Johannesburg's very best high schools. SSP received over 200 applicants for these 25 slots. Learners were recruited from Soweto and Alexandra, the largest black townships surrounding Johannesburg.

Twenty five sponsors were also recruited. They were responsible for paying a portion of the children's tuition fees and more significantly, would serve as mentors to these children. Funding was also received from some prominent donors in South Africa, including Anglo American and the Educational Development Trust of South Africa. Contributions were also received from Abt Associates Inc., JP Morgan and Deutsche Bank.

Today, SSP extends its sincere gratitude to an increasing list of donors from corporate entities to generous individuals. SSP's sponsors are instrumental in making possible the organization's vision of providing excellent education. Their continual support is pivotal to SSP's success.

The current state of affairs at SSP

By Laurence B. Comer, SSP Deputy Director

For an organization that is only 10 years old, Student Sponsorship programme has achieved more and impacted more people than most organizations in the developmental space. From a modest beginning of 25 learners in their first year, SSP is proud to report that it now has more than 300 high school learners on scholarships. Furthermore, SSP is eagerly following the development of more than 230 alumni, most of whom are registered at some of the best tertiary institutions in South Africa and the United States.

In 2008, SSP established an office in East London in the Eastern Cape. The reach of SSP though extends beyond their offices in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. Proof is in the number of applications received from learners in many other provinces, particularly in Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal. While SSP does not have any partner schools in these provinces, the organization has been able to place some of these candidates into boarding at their partner schools in Gauteng.

SSP is thankful to their partner schools which have demonstrated their commitment to transformation in South Africa and have gone out of their way to ensure that every SSP scholar is successful. It is the belief of SSP that their 25 partner schools rate among the best, not only in SA, but also in Africa.

The passion and drive that is so unique to South Africa is visible in the commitment of the more than 200 mentors who are currently guiding and molding SSP scholars. Mentorship is an essential part of the success of SSP scholars and as such mentors are an invaluable source of experience and wisdom that SSP scholars have access to.

With the support of the parent community, SSP scholars have an invaluable support structure that will do what is necessary for them to achieve success.

SSP scholars have shown that they truly are the future leaders of SA. Not only do they excel academically but they also demonstrate leadership and passion throughout their high school careers.

SSP scholars have vociferously announced their intentions to positively influence their schools, communities and country. This influence has been extended to international institutions that have partnered with SSP and the verdict is unanimous; they can see the excellence of an organization that achieves far beyond its 10 years of existence.

While the last 10 years have been exciting and rewarding, I can't wait to see what the next 10 years will produce.

Scholar News: Report-back on Hotchkiss Summer Portals

Two SSP scholars, Naledi Legodi and Busisiwe Sibeko, attended the Hotchkiss Summer Portals in the United States in June. This is what they had to say about their experience.

By Naledi Legodi, SSP Scholar - Grade 10, Parktown Girls

This year I, along with Busi, was invited to attend summer portals at The Hotchkiss School. This year I was challenged to exert myself to my work and do it accurately.

We also learnt a few other field skills and had heated discussions about environmental issues. Those were fun and helped me develop a new way of thinking. I learnt to be more patient with others and to talk tactfully. I learnt how to research large projects and do sustainability audits. I left Hotchkiss with a desire to do more for the environment and broaden my general knowledge.

Thanks must go to SSP and Hotchkiss for awarding me this life-changing experience. It will be treasured for years to come.

By Busisiwe Sibeko, SSP Scholar - Grade 11, American International School of Johannesburg

This year I attended the Hotchkiss Summer Portals programme for the second time as a 2nd year environmental student which was a great pleasure. Not only do we apply the knowledge we learnt from 1st year but we also serve as mentors to the 1st year students.

The Hotchkiss School has a great environment that is fun to learn and to grow in and I believe I have grown through the two years I have attended this programme. I would definitely like to take this project back to my school because Climate Change is a very serious issue and every person has contributed to this problem.

I would like to thank SSP for making this possible for me. Whether I go back next year or not this experience has turned my life around and I believe I will go back to the programme as an intern or a residential fellow one day.



In the photo: Naledi and Busisiwe.

SSP Student Council 2010

By Lillian Said, SSP Student Programme Officer

The atmosphere was filled with excitement and anticipation when the first Student Council elections took place at the SSP office in Braamfontein in August 2010.

The SSP Student Council is composed of different student representatives from SSP partner schools. Its formation is in line with SSP's vision of creating leaders for South Africa and inculcating a culture of responsibility and accountability within SSP scholars.

The Student Council will work with the respective school coordinators in disseminating and collecting SSP information. The council will also look after the welfare of fellow scholars.

A Student Executive Board was elected by the Student Council. The board will take the lead in interactive activities with SSP board members, staff and scholars.



The Student Executive Board members are: Reneilwe Motale (Brescia House, Grade 11) – President, Ntombikayise Sithole (Kingsmead College, Grade 11) - Vice president, Rama Raphaelalani (St. Alban's, Grade 9) – Secretary, and Elijah Mohammed (St. David's, Grade 11) – Organizer.

Photographed on the left (l to r): Reneilwe Motale, Ntombikayise Sithole, Elijah Mohammed and Rama Raphaelalani.



These scholars are among SSP's top performing scholars, have great leadership abilities and confidence. They have also earned the respect of their peers and SSP has faith that they will excel in their newly elected positions.

Photographed on the left: The SSP Student Council members who voted their peers into office, validating the authenticity of this 'by the people for the people' Student Council.

10 Years of involvement

By Sue King, Former SSP School Co-ordinator from St Mary's School for Girls

It is hard to imagine that it is more than 10 years since I met one of the SSP founders, Theresa Clarke in the staff parking area at St Mary's School for Girls in Johannesburg. That is when my interest and, soon to follow, involvement in SSP began. It has been an amazing journey for the scholars, the organization as a whole and, in particular, for me.

The first four girls arrived in January 2001 when the programme began, marking the start of my involvement. I was appointed the school co-ordinator and became responsible for the well-being of the girls, ensuring that they had all the requirements in terms of uniforms, books, stationery and other day-to-day necessities.

This group of four certainly made their mark on the school and each became prefects in their Matric year. One of the girls was elected Deputy Head Girl. As these positions are voted for by the student body, you can imagine my joy for the four of them when the office bearers were announced. Each one was a credit to the school, their parents, themselves and SSP.

During the next eight years, many SSP girls earned similar accolades. By then my involvement in SSP had expanded to include setting and overseeing the marking of the English selection papers. At that stage there were in excess of 3 000 learners writing for about 50 to 60 places. I am pleased to still remain part of this process.

My commitment to SSP has continued, despite no longer being at St Mary's. It is a little like the proverbial 'BUG' – once it has bitten the effects cannot be easily shaken off.

The role of school co-ordinator should be filled by a teacher who is sensitive to the needs of learners who come from different backgrounds to that of most learners at the school.

"Make their lives as inclusive as possible and you will reap the personal benefits in abundance."

It is hard to imagine that my first meeting with Theresa Clark would afford me the opportunity to play a small role in the upliftment of education for all in this wonderful country of ours.

May this wonderful organization continue to grow and thrive in the future. HAPPY TENTH ANNIVERSARY SSP!

Scholar Spotlight

By Ayanda Nyathi, SSP Scholar - Grade 8, St Stithians Boys College



I remember the day I was told that I would attend St Stithians Boys College for the next five years of my schooling career. I really didn't know what to expect. It was a new environment with new people, new teachings and new lessons to be learnt.

Since I was boarding at the school, it would also be the first time in my life that I am away from home. While this seemed very scary at first, I didn't know then (what I know now) that there was absolutely nothing to worry about.

I've always had dreams and goals of becoming someone useful to my country. I knew that to get to that position I had to work hard and that one day I would reap the rewards. Never in my life though did I ever imagine that I would be exposed to such a variety of opportunities and so many choices to choose from. St Stithians College almost seems too good to be true! The school has a special way of throwing challenges at its learners and then convincing them to take these challenges on and give it their all. What I admire most about the school and what makes the school so unique, is its spirit.

For me, this type of school only asks for 100% because it is prepared to give back 100%. St Stithians is a school that turns the ordinary into the extra-ordinary, and that's what I stand for. I wouldn't trade what I have gained for any precious gold in the world.

First SSP scholars to travel overseas

By Yvonne Lushaba, SSP Bridging Programme Officer

In 2006, after six years of fulfilling its vision of enabling young South Africans to access top high school education in Gauteng, Student Sponsorship Programme broadened the horizon for their scholars.

One such initiative was with Impact Young Lives (IYL) which identifies exceptional university students from disadvantaged backgrounds and transforms them into global-minded citizens. In 2006, the organization yielded the results of its efforts and for the first time, SSP, in partnership with IYL, was able to send three of its top scholars to the United States of America.

Three SSP alumni from leading South African universities were awarded IYL scholarships after a grueling selecting process which demonstrated their leadership capabilities. They were Beatrice Mthebule (B.Com Accounting), Bathobile Mahlolo (B.Sc. Property) and Lerato Maboya (BA Law).



Their visit incorporated both academic and professional exposure in addition to meeting and interacting with top leaders in business and politics in the US, including the US Ambassador to South Africa. They went on city tours and visited museums and monuments, leading universities and colleges, as well as places they had seen on television.

Alumni Spotlight: Loyiso Mabece

By Kolisa Siqoko, SSP Regional Director, Easter Cape



Dynamite comes in small packages. This is a fitting description for Loyiso Mabece, a proud Friends of South Africa Student (FOSAS) / Student Sponsorship Programme (SSP) alumni. He grew up on a farm outside of Queenstown called eSada in the Eastern Cape and stayed in a boarding school in East London from an early age.

Loyiso's family members are no strangers to education. He has seven siblings and each not only has a degree but they have also completed their post graduate studies.

Loyiso is one of the first beneficiaries of the SSP/FOSAS programme. He received the scholarship in 2001 and in 2002 matriculated at Selborne College. In his Matric year he was Head Prefect of the school, Hostel Prefect and served on the governing body of East London's Junior City Council. After Matric, Loyiso went to further his studies at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). He graduated with a B. Com majoring in Economics and Finance. After graduation he won a scholarship to pursue post graduate studies in Germany, Nuertingen Fachschule, for a year. He did a post graduate Diploma in International Business.

His working career began at Old Mutual in the Accelerated Graduate Programme as an investment specialist trainee. He then moved to Investec Asset Management as an equity analyst. Loyiso is currently working for the Association for Savings and Investment South Africa (ASISA). A major part of his work involves co-ordinating research on Responsible Investment in South Africa.

When reflecting on Loyiso, you are bound to be captivated by his zest for life and goal

Everyone they engaged had something to teach them and showed a keen interest in knowing who they were, including their meeting with Members of Congress and the Mayor of Washington DC at the United Nations offices. Some of the cities they visited included Atlanta, Washington DC, Chicago, New York and Boston. They even joined in the festivities of the Independence Day on the 4th of July.

For many South African youth this is a dream that may never come true, but for these three scholars, they lived the dream... thanks to SSP!

They said going to the US made them appreciate South Africa more. The experience opened their eyes to opportunities that awaited them back home and prepared them for their individual goals. People they met with taught them the value of philanthropy and mentorship. They were also grateful to be ambassadors for South Africa during their time in the US.

The relationship that was forged with the Impact Young Lives (IYL) programme has continued with SSP scholars being selected each year to participate in the programme. It also laid the foundation for SSP to partner with other international initiatives that endeavour to expose and empower the youth of South Africa.

The Bridging Programme: Get ready for High School

By Yvonne Lushaba, SSP Bridging Programme Co-ordinator

Making the transition from primary school to high school is a challenge for everyone, even more so when making the change to a different socio-economic institution.

To this end, the Bridging Programme was introduced in 2008, funded by Epoch and Optima Trusts. The programme helps to ease the transition made by learners into the scholarship programme.

When learners apply for an SSP Scholarship in their Grade 6 year, they have to go through nine months of training in Grade 7.

SSP Scholars are faced with a huge task when awarded with their scholarships. They are taken from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and schools to top schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria and East London and are expected to adjust to different conducts in socializing, learning and even speaking.

With the assistance of the Bridging Programme, a learner's academic delivery is improved through the programme's employed teaching style which is similar to that of the schools the learners receive scholarships for. The Bridging Programme is also aimed at bringing the learner's academic standards on par with the other learners in their prospective new high schools.

The Bridging Programme has so far empowered more than 300 learners, of which 115 have been awarded scholarships. The programme enhances their performance in English, maths and science while exposing them to computers, personal development workshops and week-long holiday camps.

The Bridging Programme also offers personal development workshops which empower learners socially, i.e. interacting with people from different backgrounds and understanding themselves better.

There is anecdotal evidence to the efficacy of the programme with studies indicating that the performance of learners who have been through the programme was better than those who had not been. Educators attested to seeing noticeable differences in the two groups. Those learners who went through the Bridging Programme have more confidence, are more assertive and participate more in school activities.

The Bridging Programme has had a positive impact on scholars in the programme and SSP hopes that with funding, it will continue to do so.

orientation. His positive energy, enthusiasm and independent thinking are infectious as he asserts: "I reckon my positive attitude is very contagious; people around me tend to be positively influenced. I am a proudly South African young man of great potential – I am looking forward to contributing tremendously to the South African market and economy."

He has certainly lived up to the vision of Student Sponsorship Programme. Loyiso is an embodiment of the new generation of leaders that SSP seeks to produce.

Mentor Spotlight: Carrying on the mentoring baton

By Lerato Maboya, SSP Alumni

As a former scholar of SSP and a member of the SSP Alumni, my mentor Bradley Koen was one of the best parts about the programme. He encouraged me immensely and didn't only focus on me as a student, but on my life in general. He believed that success was more than just getting good marks at school, rather that it should be inclusive of all aspects that make up the individual.

I matriculated from Park Town Girls High School in 2005 with a distinction. My results allowed me to study what I always wanted to, namely Law. I am currently doing my internship at Bowman Giffillan Attorney's.

It is often said "To whom much is given, much is expected". SSP needs individuals with the time, patience and heart to mentor another. These values helped me to step up to the fore. I have gained so much from having been an SSP scholar, so being a mentor is my way of giving back to the organisation.

My mentor / mentee relationship with Itumeleng Makgakga, who is a grade 10 SSP scholar at Brescia House, started three years ago in 2008. If there is one lesson that I hope Itumeleng will learn from our relationship, it is that the greatest gift that one can give oneself is to be true to who one is. I am hoping that she finds herself and develops her character to its full potential. Based on that solid foundation, she can map out her destiny marrying her vision, passion and talent into one solid body of success.

I think that the key ingredient to having a successful mentor / mentee relationship is that both individuals remain who they are and do not create expectations or embodiments that cannot be fulfilled. They are the true driving force of this relationship which will be fuelled by their will, commitment and passion.





"The 2009 group had a smoother integration and a higher academic performance. They were also more confident in their social skills." Jenni Milward (St. Johns College)

Robyn Coleman

By Sibongile S. Khumalo, SSP Operations Manager, Eastern Cape



"The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm is terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason to stay ashore." - Vincent Van Gogh

Robyn is looking forward to her journey at SSP. She has immense passion for young people, has a creative soul and is passionate about training and development.

Worker.

Robyn Coleman was born in Cape Town but grew up in a town 60km from East London called King William's Town. Robyn studied her Bachelor of Social Science degree at Rhodes University in East London, majoring in Social Work and Psychology. She completed her postgraduate degree at the University of Fort Hare and is a registered Social

On the work front, her first experience was taken from a family business in clothing manufacturing where Robyn designed her own surf and funky clothing range for five years. She then moved into education and training where she lectured computer application and developed and lectured a Life Skills programme for two years. Robyn then moved into the public sector consulting environment for seven years doing project management, training and recruiting for small, medium and large projects in the Eastern Cape.

Robyn is also a counselor contracted on a part-time basis to the Responsible Gambling Programme in East London since 2006.

Socially, Robyn loves long distance running and completed the Two Oceans Ultra Marathon and Comrades Marathon for the first time this year. She loves to read, paint, go on road trips and spend time with her animals: Peanut (kitten) and Jess (Jack Russell).

The FOSAS / SSP merge in the Eastern Cape

By Sibongile S. Khumalo, Operations Manager, Eastern Cape



The learners photographed above were adopted from the former FOSAS programme that operated in East London before it merged with SSP. Pictured here are Sibusiso Mbandazayo, Miche Du Plessis, Sandisiwe Bacela, Siphesihle Melamane, Milisa Janda and Vuyokazi Gwayi.

Sean Day started FOSAS, Friends of South Africa Schools, with a mission to provide access to a good education to many promising young people who lacked the means. The programme saw very humble beginnings and early struggles to gain credibility with partner schools in Cape Town and later expanded into East London in 2000.

With the backing of three of the best schools in the area (Clarendon High School for Girls, Selborne College and Hudson Park High School), FOSAS was able to afford 16 deserving scholars the opportunity to enjoy what still remains a rare commodity in South Africa today, a great public school education.

In 2007, FOSAS merged with SSP, which was only operating in Johannesburg at the time. Through this important union, this ensuing larger and much stronger organization was able to mobilize resources to continue to fund the existing scholars as well as extend SSP's support programmes into the area.

SSP's approach of inclusion, support and constant engagement was very well received by all and yielded significantly improved academic progress reports by the end of the first year. Sibusiso Mbandazayo said this of this life-changing intervention: "This interaction gave us a sense of community, an 'SSP Community'."

Graduates of the FOSAS programme remain part of SSP in their alumni organization, a community that positively contributes to SSP's vision of creating leaders for South Africa. Proud examples are Milisa Janda, who is in her second year at Amherst University in Massachusetts; Akholiwe Ngceba, a Rhodes University graduate who continues to empower others less fortunate than herself through community engagement; Asanga Mehana, a Geomatics boffin and waterpolo champion;

and Athabile Masola, an education enthusiast who was awarded the Rhodes/Mandela Scholarship to complete a Masters degree at Rhodes University.

Why the Mentorship Programme is integral to SSP

By Meriam Mahlatsi, SSP Programme Officer

"Every child needs someone who holds high expectations and sees a better life in the future, and YOU can be that person." - Dr. Jim Kooler

Mentoring in SSP was motivated by Student Sponsor Partnership in New York which recruits individuals who serve as mentors as well as contribute financially to the education of New York public school kids.

In 1999 when mentoring was introduced to the first 25 SSP scholars, each scholar was mentored by their financial sponsor. The SSP mentoring programme was one-of-its-kind in South Africa which schools and parents were excited about. Ten years later with 315 current high school scholars and over 200 mentors, the face of our mentorship programme has changed dramatically.

Over the years, the number of scholars outnumbered the financial sponsors and SSP had to embark on a recruitment drive for volunteer mentors. Our mentors come from various industries and provide our scholars with valuable knowledge based on experience. They also motivate and encourage scholars to be better at all they do. SSP mentorship training for mentors, mentees and parents has improved over time. Events are organized to bring together mentors and mentees throughout the year. SSP scholars now better understand the value of mentoring and SSP is of the belief that this protocol is grooming the next generation of leaders to see the potential in others and embrace it. Ten years from now our mentors will be the very scholars who are being mentored today.

To everyone who has supported the Mentorship Programme, SSP thanks you. SSP also expresses their sincere appreciation to all their mentors who have committed to mentoring SSP scholars through their five years in high school.

10 Year anniversary celebrations at SSP

By Simone Bartlett, SSP intern from Barbados

To celebrate a decade of success Student Sponsorship Programme will host several appreciation and networking events to thank those of you who have made this triumph possible.

SSP kicked off the festivities with an alumni reunion on 9th September at Cool Runnings in Melville. Both alumni and 2010 Matric scholars attended the event.

In honour of our 10 years of success, SSP launched their **R10 in 2010** campaign for alumni. SSP asked each SSP graduate to contribute R10 to the programme in 2010. The amount of R10 is a symbolic gesture to show support for SSP and inculcate an ethos of contribution. We realize that many of our alumni are still studying or are only beginning their careers, our hope is that the symbolic gesture of R10 will increase to more significant amounts as SSP alumni progress in their careers.

Principals, school coordinators, and mentors will be invited to join SSP for a cocktail reception on 28th October at a venue to be determined. This will be an opportunity for friends of SSP to get to know each other.

Finally, SSP's grand gala dinner will be held on the evening of 24 February 2011. The occasion will be a monument to South Africa's transformation. In light of SSP's vision of creating leaders who can build a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic, prosperous, and united South Africa, the celebrations will be both powerful and appropriate. More on this to come.

Tributes to SSP from the SSP family - In celebration of the organization's 10 years of existence

By Busisiwe Maile, SSP Student Recruitment Officer

Ntombiyezulu Khumalo, Grade 11 scholar from Roodeen

As an SSP scholar I know that I have a bright future ahead of me. I have no doubt that I am guaranteed to become a leader somewhere, somehow.

I want to say well done to SSP for the great work it has done. From the small numbers that you started with in the programme to the hundreds of scholars in the programme today, I am looking forward with great certainty to becoming an SSP sponsor one day.

Joleen Tarr, SSP Alumni second year Student at the University of Johannesburg

SSP gave me a gift that changed who I am. The opportunity I was given made me realize the importance of giving back and doing good for others. I was given an education that not only enriched me as an individual but it also gave me a chance to succeed in all spheres of my life. I am working towards my degree and I will graduate as a professional. I will go on to pursue my career and be economically secure. I will also be in position to give back.

I wish SSP many more years of success so that they can continue giving and continue creating greatness because that is what they do.

Busisiwe Maile, SSP staff

Working for SSP is more than just a J.O.B. It is also more than a pay cheque at the end of each month. Being a part of SSP, I

know that I am a part of something much bigger than I am because SSP is in the business of changing lives and in essence changing South Africa.

I hope that my contributions will complement SSP's vision of creating leaders for South Africa. I hope that SSP will continue to grow as an organization and continue to positively touch the lives of South African youth and instill in them a spirit of excellence and the courage to achieve greatness.

Phambili SSP, Phambili!!!

Friends for life

By Aubrey Mbatha, SSP Alumni-Matric Class of 2005



Sometimes you choose your family when you choose good friends. This was the case with the relationships I formed through SSP. I matriculated from King Edward in 2005 and the friendships I formed with other scholars within the SSP community almost a decade ago continue unabated and are stronger than ever.

I met Thato Moloi when we were both going for SSP evaluations for high school entrance. Little did I know that we would end up going to the same high school and go on to become very good friends for the next five years in high school and beyond!

Thato and I became friends from the common experience we shared through SSP. We also discovered that we had a lot of similar interests and because we were both from SSP, it was mutually important that we support one another. The other would make sure that notes were taken if one was absent. We helped each other with assignments and homework. I was the first person Thato went to when he needed help and he was the first person I went to when I needed help.

Thato and I went on to forge friendships with two other SSP scholars at King Edward who were a year ahead of us, Arthur Nkuna and Masibulele Madasa. Even though they were a year ahead of us, I guess we gravitated towards one another because we were all SSP scholars.

When Thato and I matriculated we both received admission to Rhodes University. To our delight, we also discovered that Arthur and Masibulele were in the same dining hall we were in at Rhodes. Naturally, this completed our circle of brotherhood.

Circumstances might have forged our friendship but the fact that we offered each other a support system and a friendly space where we could each be our best selves, is the reason why we are still friends to this day.

We make it a point to keep in touch, even though our lives have taken different routes. We are like family and our bonds will stay tied forever.

I am currently completing a major for my B.Com Economics and Management degree. Thato completed his B.Com Economics and Accounting degree and is now working at Lindhelani as a researcher. Arthur is still at Rhodes University doing his final year in B.Com Economics and Management. Masibulele completed his BA in Drama and is currently doing his post grad Diploma in Education while teaching at a primary school.

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