

## **INSETA honours National Disability Award winners**

The Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (INSETA) National Disability Awards, held in Johannesburg on 2 December to coincide with International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, saw the announcement of winners in five categories, and sent a clear message that people with disabilities are making a major contribution to the South African workplace and economy.

The main objective of the third annual Awards, was to honour and raise the profile of workers with disabilities in all sectors who are making a remarkable difference in the workplace, as well as individuals and organisations supporting the advancement of people with disabilities.

INSETA CEO Sandra Dunn said that with every year, the gala event has improved in scope and exposure. "Persons with disability can add valuable skills and experience to the workplace, but companies still don't have an adequate ratio. The awards help to raise awareness of the potential for the workforce. And we do have reason to celebrate, as tremendous strides have been made. I am happy to say that the insurance sector can be well pleased with its commitment to bringing new entrants with disabilities into the sector. In the past financial year more than 10% of all new entrants onto Learnership and Internship programmes were entrants with disabilities"

In the category National Disability Company (for organisations that have created opportunities for people with disabilities), joint Awards went to Netcare and Sanlam Limited. Netcare has set a five year target to increase on a year-on-year basis the number of disabled person that they employ; this has resulted in an increase of 48% in disabled employees. They were also involved in taking seven disabled persons who were never employed before and giving them a life changing experience through training and thereafter permanent employment.

Sanlam Limited was honoured in this category for their activeness in providing learnerships for unemployed disabled learners. In 2011 they implemented a learnership for Financial Services Administration with 17 disabled learners. 100% of the learners achieved their qualification and 80% of them are now permanently employed at Sanlam

The National Business Leader award (for persons with disabilities who have achieved in the workplace), honoured Martin Trevor Brown of Radical Mobility.

Radical Mobility has through innovation and their passion to engineer mobility for accessibility become the leading company in customised wheelchairs. Brown has also set up a fund to help other disabled persons to obtain a power wheelchair

The Young Leader category (for young persons between the ages of 18-25 who have displayed great potential in their studies or in the workplace),

honoured Karabo Nguyuza of Etana. Fresh into her learnership at Etana she has been promoting People with Disabilities in her workplace and is heavily involved in fundraising activities for Helene Franz Special School.

The Champion Award honoured the amazing Charlene Sunkel. Sunkel was medically boarded in 1997 and was admitted to a state psychiatric lock-up ward involuntarily. The discrimination she faced there forced her to take charge of her schizophrenia and claim her life back. She is now an acclaimed poet, author and has written and produced theatre plays and short films. She is also an award winning advocate for mental health issues.

Key note speaker, Deputy Minister of Women Children and Persons with Disabilities, Ms Hendrietta Ipeleng Bogopane-Zulu, said that INSETA has set an amazing example by holding the awards; “We need to elevate this awareness to higher levels. Going forward, the government must partner with INSETA so that we can inform programmes – because it’s one thing to implement programmes, but another altogether to ensure they have impact.

“The politics of disabilities is about identity, as an affirmation of people and class of people – a barrier of limitation; we are working towards placing people with disabilities on an equal level, so that they can be considered for their own worth; not placed on a different standard. And awards like these celebrate the achievements, and the capabilities of people with disabilities, and thus work towards removing those barriers,” she said.

Dunn commented that “I believe with these Awards we have encouraged the further efforts of everyone in South Africa, able bodied or disabled, to challenge the prejudices that still persist in our country.”

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