

Investec announces winners of 2014 Junior Innovators competition

A "Heating Kettle Bottle" - a battery-powered kettle and water bottle - has taken the winning title in the third annual Junior Innovators competition hosted at Investec in Sandown earlier this week.

Grade 11 scholar from McAuley House in Gauteng, Tsakane Sono is the recipient of a R60,000 bursary towards her tertiary studies at a university of her choice. "I feel out of this world. Knowing that I am walking away with R60,000 towards my studies means that I can really do something with my life. Maybe one day my idea could be on the shelves." She plans to study a business-related degree after school.

Second and third place were awarded to Kate Kekana from Sandtonview Combined School for her "Take Away-inator", a solar powered machine that detects and removes smells from water, and Sesethu Mngcina from Sophumelela Secondary for her "Personalised Plug", uniquely designed plug covers.



Over the last 23 weeks, hundreds of high school learners from schools across the country have participated in Junior Achievement South Africa's (JA South Africa) Mini Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Academy Programmes, gaining access to skills on how to manage their own small businesses. Based on the strength of their proposed business ideas, 45 learners in Grades 10 to 12 were invited to participate in the final phase of the competition at Investec.

Setlogane Manchidi, Head of CSI at Investec, says the programme encourages learners to realise their entrepreneurial flair. "The last week of the competition includes workshops over four days at Investec's offices in Sandton, and is intense by design to ensure students take the most away from the experience. We bring all the finalists to Johannesburg to give them first-hand exposure to a dynamic work environment and to provide mentorship as they finesse their business ideas. We've put the emphasis on creating awareness among high-potential students, of the entrepreneurial characteristics required to succeed, with the aim of inspiring them to tackle the future passionately."

Promoting entrepreneurial skills and thinking

The initiative was launched in 2012 by Investec, in partnership with JA South Africa, and is aimed at promoting entrepreneurial skills and thinking among Grades 10 to 12 learners. It also seeks to recognise learners who have demonstrated promising entrepreneurial potential. Mentorship is a key part of this. During the final week, nine JASA alumni members are on hand to mentor the finalists and assist them in refining their business ideas by exposing them to the basics of business, microeconomics, business ethics and ways of improving their entrepreneurial potential.

Commenting on the Junior Innovators Competition, Linda McClure, Managing Director of Junior Achievement South Africa says: "South Africa needs to continue to foster a generation of entrepreneurs who will become active participants in the economy. With its practical nature, Junior Innovators seeks to confirm that among our youth, there are potential job creators as opposed to job seekers."

Since its inception, the competition has prompted the emergence of a multitude of interesting business ideas, such as a "melodic fishing rod", a "bullying alert" for teachers, and solar powered cell phones. Manchidi adds, "By stimulating entrepreneurial thinking among learners at a young age, we aim to enhance their ability to explore new ideas which can address some of the socio-economic challenges facing the country. The initiative is a reflection of Investec's commitment to facilitate the development of tomorrow's business leaders."

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