

# SAYes calls for more mentors as mentees graduate

SAYes, a Cape Town non-profit that facilitates mentoring for young people living in children's homes, held a celebration and ceremony to honour 83 young graduates who, despite facing many challenges in terms of family and living circumstances, completed the one-year SAYes Transition to Independent Living mentoring programme.

The programme includes weekly meetings with mentors and various workshops on topics such as work and money, lifelong learning and education, family and community, sport and recreation, and citizenship and identity.



Graduation ceremony

Co-founded in 2008 by the actress, Gillian Anderson, and Michelle Potter, SAYes focuses on providing mentoring for youth in government care who are preparing to transition into life as independent adults. The SAYes programme provides a framework and supportive ecosystem of specialised staff and resources designed to optimise the impact and effectiveness of mentoring.

"We are extremely proud of the 2017 SAYes graduates and we commend their incredible courage and tenacity, and their commitment to their own growth and well-being," said Potter, co-founder and executive director, SAYes. "We are grateful to our volunteer mentors who make the programme possible and who are there for their mentees throughout this journey."

At the age of 18, youth in South Africa's children's homes age out of government care and must begin to fend for themselves. They face complex challenges such as finding and maintaining employment and housing, managing finances and advancing their education. Not to mention, deeply personal obstacles such as developing healthy relationships and maintaining their physical, mental and emotional well-being. SAYes believes that effective mentoring has the power to guide young people through this difficult transition so they can thrive as independent adults.

There are roughly 350 young people ages 14 to 18 who live in Cape Town children's homes. The goal of SAYes is to reach all of them but to do so, the organisation needs more mentors. SAYes currently serves roughly one-fourth of those young people.

## **The impact of SAYes mentoring**

One example of a recent SAYes success story is a mentee who learned about cycling from his mentor and eventually trained for the Cape Town Cycle Tour. Another mentee was recently accepted to Stellenbosch University to pursue a career in finance, and another is working at a luxury Cape Town hotel, pursuing her dream culinary career.

"Through the SAYes programme I have learned that, for young people like me who have been through hardships and struggles, there is always a new opportunity around the corner," said Sandrine Tshikuna, SAYes Mentee. "If one door closes, another one always opens."

Mentors also benefit significantly from the SAYes programme. Mentor training is designed and delivered by SAYes operations director and research psychologist, Dr. Andrew Dellis. The mentoring skills and experience gained through the programme can be applied in professional settings, bolstering mentors' career qualifications. Additionally, mentors have opportunities to meet other like-minded individuals and develop genuine, rewarding relationships with young people in their communities.

"I've been a SAYes mentor since 2015 and it's always incredibly rewarding," said Mashudu Matshili, mentor and board member, SAYes. "Each year I gain something new from my work with my mentee, from the training, and from other mentors who I meet through the programme. I'm continuously honing my skills to become a better mentor and expanding my perspective on the community around me."

## **The opportunity to become a SAYes mentor**

To prepare for 2018, the organisation is now calling for more volunteer mentors in the Cape Town area.

At the start of the yearly programme, SAYes matches each mentor with a mentee. Mentors and mentees then meet one hour a week for nine months. Throughout that time period, SAYes provides a proven, evidence-based mentorship training and development programme to guide and support the mentor-mentee relationship.

SAYes is accepting volunteer mentor applications now through the end of January 2018 for the 2018 programme.

*If you are interested in becoming a SAYes mentor, please register for an upcoming information session by visiting: [SAYes](#), or contact SAYes by email: [volunteer@sayesmentoring.org](mailto:volunteer@sayesmentoring.org), or by phone: +27 (0) 21-830-0795.*

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