

Durban mayor opens 2013 World Transplant Games

DURBAN: eThekweni Metro Municipality Mayor Councillor James Nxumalo has officially opened the World Transplant Games 2013 in Durban on Sunday, 28 July.



Nxumalo led approximately 1,200 athletes from 50 countries in a beach walk to mark the official opening of the games that begin today. A ceremony was held to welcome athletes to the City of Durban.

"The World Transplant Games are a celebration of the human spirit, giving individuals with previously life-threatening illnesses, the chance to compete in a high-level sports event and prove that they can not only lead normal, fulfilling lives, but push the boundaries of their physical endurance," said Nxumalo.

He added that the Municipality was proud to be associated with these games, "as they represent a very significant course which is saving people's lives."

According to publicist Frances Park-Ross, "approximately 1 800 participants from 50 countries will compete in the 2013 World Transplant Summer Games, taking place in Durban from 28 July to 04 August 2013".

Park-Ross said the beach walk kicked off without a glitch - this is the tradition of the World Transplant Games to kick with a walk. "It was so beautiful and colourful with about 50 flags raised in the air. It was like meeting of the United Nations," she said.

The event, according to Park-Ross will unfold at various venues across Durban, and, "is the biggest organ donor awareness event in the world."

The aim is to offer hope to those awaiting transplants and encourage the public to become donors, by showing the difference that organ transplants can make to the lives of young and old.

In addition to competing in qualifying events, competitors have to be transplant recipients of either solid organs or bone marrow.

There are over 50 events including athletics, swimming, tennis, squash, golf, volleyball and bowling. Cyclist and road races will take place in the City.

"The standard of these games is expected to be high. The 100-metres race has a competition record of 11.18 seconds and the long jump, 6.85-metres. South Africans have performed well at previous World Transplant Games," she said.

At the 2011 competition in Gothenburg, Sweden, 47 South Africans participated, winning 17 gold, 17 silver and 14 bronze medals. Four South Africans currently hold World Transplant Games world records.

Several South African sports stars, including golfing legend Gary Player and Olympians - Chad le Clos and Brigitte Hartley, teamed up to welcome the athletes and give inspirational messages of encouragement on television, in-flight entertainment channels and on the World Transplant Games website.

In addition, they are encouraging the public to register and become organ donors. World Transplant Game Federation President, Olivier Coustere, said in a statement, "Countries that have hosted the event have experienced a 30 percent or higher increase in organ donation rates."

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