

## It's "plough" back time

### Thami Mphokela, Manager, Sebokeng Science Centre

A little under 20 years ago ArcelorMittal South Africa established Science Centres within the local communities of Vanderbijlpark, Newcastle and Saldanha aimed at addressing the country-wide shortage of skills in the STEMI fields. This was mostly caused by a lack of interest from students, inadequate facilities in schools and insufficient qualified teachers.

Our science centre situated in Sebokeng has been the hub for schools support for the Sedibeng District Municipality over the years and to date have given support to over 100 Schools in and around the Vanderbijlpark Operations. The centre has directly or indirectly helped over 100 000 students improve their Mathematics and Science grades.

This is done by exposing students to science and technology in a fun and relaxed environment by providing them with classrooms, fully equipped science laboratories, interactive science exhibitions that enhance their thinking skills and curriculum-linked science and mathematics instruction.

With the support of the Department of Science and Innovation, the centre runs a volunteer programme for unemployed STEMI graduates and it is pleasing that of the new volunteers the centre has attracted are its own alumni. From 1 May 2022 the team was joined by Kefiloe Shirley Motlhajwa and Manako Mpetla, who were both part of the science centre school groups in 2011 and 2015 respectively.

Shirley is B.Ed. graduate specialising in Natural Science, whilst Manako is a graduate in Chemical Engineering. Their roles in the centre will be to stimulate, motivate and train others as they have been trained. We are certain that they will enjoy their time in a fun and exciting environment whilst ploughing back to the community that "raised them."



Figure 2 Shirley Motlhajwa having fun with Robotics Sets



Figure 1 Manako Mpetla excited by the chemistry she shares with the centre