**PRESS RELEASE**

Disadvantaged students given the resources to complete their studies

***10 July, 2014:*** *Civil engineering students from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to achieve their practical course requirements, thanks to a workplace integrated learning and training initiative spearheaded by SMEC South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)office and the Singakwenza Ndawonye Training Scheme.*

The Singakwenza Ndawonye Training Scheme allows students with an S3 engineering qualification to attain their diploma while gaining necessary work experience. SMEC South Africa’s KZN office HR manager **Kim Stainbank** notes that the branch teamed up with the training scheme in 2003 to assist students with strong potential, who would not otherwise be able to complete their qualifications.

“The training scheme provides civil engineering students from a disadvantaged background with workplace integrated learning and equips them with the life skills that are needed to succeed in this industry. We identified and funded a comprehensive Life Skills Training Programme which has been included in the training scheme,” she explains.

The programme is carried out twice a year and comprises of several topics which are covered over a two week period. These topics include; professionalism and work ethics, personal health, personal financial management, relationship management, communication, self-esteem and personal development with a focus on having a vision and goals.

Stainbank adds: “The training programme aids the students in attaining positive and focused attitudes, in addition to teaching them the skills required to be well-trained and experienced employees in the civil engineering industry.”

The first group of students to graduate from the Life Skills Training Programme completed the course in July 2013. According to Stainbank, the programme aims to provide skills training to 60 civil engineering students annually.

One of the first students to graduate the programme, **Penny Ncobeni**, observes that the Life Skills Training Programme, as well as the Singakwenza Ndawonye Training Scheme, prepared her for the working environment and assisted her in receiving a permanent position when she qualified.

“The training programme allowed me to complete my studies. I was not confident or ready to work in a professional working environment. I did not know what to expect or what would be expected of me. Once completing the training programme I could not wait to start working,” she reveals.

According to Ncobeni, the training programme offers many benefits to the students. "It promotes a good attitude in the working environment and dedication to all work and tasks. It also highlights the importance of punctuality at work, discipline and respect towards management and colleagues.”

Stainbank believes that the Life Skills Training Programme and the Singakwenza Ndawonye Training Scheme are extremely beneficial to civil engineering students who lack the resources to complete or continue their studies. “These training programmes prepare the students for the demand and pressures of the working environment. They also give students who would not otherwise be able to complete their studies the resources needed to achieve their goals,” she concludes.

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**There are numerous photographs specific to this press release. Please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the SMEC link.

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SMEC South Africa provides professional engineering services throughout South Africa and the rest of Africa in the following sectors: hydropower, transport, water, natural resources and environment, geotechnical, mining, tunnelling, urban development, renewable energy, power, government and advisory services and social infrastructure development.

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