



National Senior Certificate (NSC) Awards For 2017

Citation for Special Ministerial Awards

We are aware that every year there are numerous candidates who achieve excellent academic results in the face of tremendous hardship, ill health and personal obstacles.

We are struck by the courage and fortitude displayed by many learners and families in achieving monumental goals.

This year I wish to recognise two learners who exemplify the exceptional courage and determination shown by many, many of whom are not known to us, in achieving their success.

I have chosen two people from very different circumstances, and I have done so for good reason.

The first one I have chosen precisely because it is often assumed that if one goes to a school in the so-called "leafy suburbs", everything comes easy.

The first award goes to a candidate who has achieved exceptional academic achievement and exhibited inspirational courage, despite huge personal challenges.

Many of us take for granted the support of a loving family. This learner lost her mother in Primary School and was then raised by her father. Because of strained family relationships, in Grade 9 she moved out of home and into rented accommodation with another family.

This must have had an immense effect on her emotionally. Instead of feeling sorry for herself, which one could well have understood given her circumstances, she supported herself by working two jobs. She continued being involved in the life of the school, using her immense talent as an opera singer to great effect.

Her peers say that despite her hardships and challenges, she is kind, caring, humble and full of life.

She was acknowledged by her school at the end of last year when she won the principal's award for fortitude, and passed her matric with 6 distinctions and an average of 83.3% at one of the top academic schools in the province.

This recipient is truly an example of how one can, with hard work and the right attitude, succeed despite hardships.

Our first candidate to receive the Special Ministerial Award is Genevieve Heathcote-Marks of Westerford High School.

Our second candidate is a young man who has faced and overcome extreme challenges throughout his high school career.

He has grown up and lives in an area where violence, gangsterism and drugs are prevalent. Living in the informal settlement of Wallacedene, Kraaifontein and next to a shebeen, forced this young man to adjust his methods of study.

Because of the noise from the shebeen, he studied late at night when the loud music had stopped, until the early hours of the next morning.

The learner attended school daily, tired and hungry, where often the only meal he would eat in a day, would be the meal at the school feeding programme.

Living with his mother, who is a single parent and unemployed, and his 7 year old brother, he would often spend his afternoons looking after his brother while his mom was out looking for work.

His Principal and peers say that he is a well-mannered, dedicated, hardworking, and passionate learner who in spite of his circumstances, was the top learner in Grade 12 at his school in the June and September exams last year.

Despite these trying circumstances, he worked hard and with determination, he passed the National Senior Certificate with 2 distinctions, and an aggregate of 72% and obtained access to Bachelor's degree study opportunity at a Higher Education institution.

This learner, likewise, is a true inspiration and a fine example for others in similar circumstances. These marks, under these circumstances, make him a top student in my eyes. The second Special Minister's Award is presented to a candidate from Scottsdene Secondary School in Kraaifontein:

Benedict Nafooh Khabotle



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