

CUE, ROUTINE, REWARD: THE SCIENCE BEHIND HABITS



Image Source: istockphoto.com

By Sonia Van Der Linde

Habits are repeated behaviours that are automatic and require little to no conscious thought. They are usually triggered by cues in our environment and play a vital role in our daily function, as it allows the brain to rely on routine, thereby conserving energy.

According to research, habits form through a process known as "context-dependent repetition" - is repeated consistently over a long period of time, it is more than likely to become automatic. A good example is brushing your teeth before leaving the house or making your bed after you wake, which eventually becomes a habit as it happens at the same time daily, in the same location.

From a neurological standpoint, a

structure deep in the brain, the basal ganglia, is central to habit forming. Functional MRI studies have shown that this region of the brain becomes more active as habits are formed, while activity decreases in the prefrontal cortex – the part of the brain involved in decision making. So, as we form habits, less conscious effort is required of your brain, conserving energy.

Habits develop in three stages known as the "habit loop". Cue, routine and reward. The cue starts the process by triggering a behaviour involved in the routine, which is then strengthened by a reward, like the feeling of a small accomplishment. As the habit is built over time, the brain starts expecting the reward when the cue is encountered, triggering the routine.

According to a study published in the *European Journal of Psychology*, it takes approximately 66 days for a habit to form, however, this statistic is heavily influenced by the complexity of the new habit and the personal psychology of the individual. A person suffering depression might struggle to form new habits as the feeling of pleasure – the reward part of the habit loop – when accomplishing a daily task is dulled.

Understanding the science behind habits can aid in our efforts to change our daily behaviours and improve our overall lifestyle. Structure and consistency is key in forming these daily routines and improve productivity, in order to lead a more fulfilling life.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As the semester draws to a close after weeks of working to complete assignments, study for tests, and then exams – tired is an understatement.

With some of us waking early for morning exams, or having to attend both morning and afternoon sessions, sleep was nothing more than a concept. But, at least we have recess to look forward to, to rest and recuperate, but also unlimited time to finish this edition!

Welcome to a brand-new edition of Madibaz News! This edition serves a refreshing outlook on a myriad of topics to keep you engaged and entertained. From the latest campus news, in the News section, to university sports in the Sports section – we have something for everyone.

A bit closer to home, Science & Technology helps us to create habits, Opinions exposes the realities of remote work and tips to balance working from home, while Lifestyle & Entertainment offers us wellness tips and options regarding budgeting and safer drinking habits. If you ask me, this is all a great contribution to June being National Youth Month.

As a tribute to the Soweto Uprising, June 16th serves as a great reminder that we are much more than we think, and that we have the power to do anything we put our mind to, even if we have to fight for it. So, this month, after resting and recuperating obviously, don't forget to lock in and chase your goals. We have half a year left to make our mark, let's make these next six months count!

Enjoy the new edition, see you soon!

Leigh-Nakeetah Jason
Editor-in-Chief

VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP LECTURE PICKS PARTICIPANTS BRAINS



Image Source: Nelson Mandela University

By Vincent Meya

A call for value-based leadership was made by Dr Wendy Luhabe during her keynote address at the 2025 Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Public Lecture in May. The lecture, held at the Nelson Mandela University's North Campus' Conference Centre, was titled "A Blueprint for a Thriving Nation".

Dr. Luhabe, a renowned businesswoman, social entrepreneur and economic activist, shared a powerful reflection on South Africa's current leadership challenges. She highlighted the need for better leadership to build a better future.

Amongst those in attendance, was Archbishop Thabo Makgoba himself, and Lungi Makgoba, of the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Development Trust (ATMDT). Others who graced the occasion were Nelson Mandela University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Learning and Teaching, Dr. Muki Moeng who emphasized the university's commitment to value-base education.

Dr Bridget de Villiers, senior Industrial Psychology and Human Resources lecturer, pointed out that the real gap in leadership lies in weak accountability systems and deep rooted cultural, political networks within organizations. She highlighted the importance of frameworks

like the "King IV" report and stated the need for structural reform in making ethical leadership the norm, instead of an exception.

Executive Director of the Izingwe Properties, Mr. Phil Goduka, shared further insight on the role of higher education, and raised awareness on the current struggle with unethical behaviour and corruption in South Africa's Public and Private Sectors.

"At Nelson Mandela University, students are taught the importance of personal ethics, business ethics, and self-leadership skills that prepare them to enter the workplace with integrity and a drive to transform society," he said.

In attendance were students, several professionals and many community members, who after the lecture, had an interactive session with the speakers who challenged them to grapple with real-world issues. Dr Luhabe posed the question, "What does economic justice mean in a society still shaped by racial inequality and gender discrimination?"

The lecture was concluded with a rallying call for South Africans to reflect on their role in shaping leadership.

MASIFUNDE GRADUATES EMBARK ON NEW JOURNEY



Image Source: Asemahle Mbeki

By Vincent Meya

Masifunde Learner Development proudly hosted its Vocational Training Programme Graduation Ceremony in April.

The ceremony, supported by the South Africa's Social Employment Fund, celebrated talented students who had successfully completed their training. It was held at Masifunde Changemakers Academy in Walmer, Gqeberha, where more than fifty graduates graced the stage, receiving their Vocational Certificates.

This marks a significant milestone for the training programme, which empowers individuals with valuable skills to enhance their employability and ability to contribute to the economy.

Masifunde Learner Development is a non-governmental organization which started in 2004, and runs development programmes for children and youth overall in Nelson Mandela Bay and nationwide. Its vocational training programme was designed to address the pressing need for skilled workers in their community.

By equipping graduates with practical skills and knowledge, they aim to foster community growth and development, breaking barriers to employment and unlocking new opportunities for personal and professional growth.

"The best highlight of my training was being able to put a smile on the kids' faces and contribute to their academic progress. It brought me so much joy to support their learning and be part of their growth" - Kim Kiewiets, a Library Assistant Graduate.

Over the past few months, the graduates worked closely with the Youth Support Agents (YSAs), where they got to set out their personal goals and develop the much-needed competencies to inspire young learners.

The development's vocational training model goes beyond the classroom. Through the support of Youth Support Agents, each participant gets to define their own goals and are guided towards employment and entrepreneurship.

The graduates were excited, as some received various gifts including cookery and kitchen assistance, hospitality and guesthouse services, maintenance, administration and academic support amongst others.

"We are proud to see these graduates embark on their new career paths, they will improve their livelihoods and make meaningful contributions to their communities, embodying the spirit of empowerment and self-sufficiency that Masifunde, as a development, strives to instil." - A spokesperson for Masifunde Learner Development.

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC WINS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARD



Image Source: Nelson Mandela University

By Vincent Meya

Nelson Mandela University's very own Dr. Thobekani Lose won the 2025 Hult Prize South Africa, University Entrepreneurship Coordinators Award. The celebratory event was held at the South African National Showcase for the Hult Prize Challenge in Sandton, Johannesburg.

The university team, coordinated by Dr Lose included Economics student, Katekani Shannon Mabunda and Law student Ongeziwe Mamane. They presented their start up 'Comnet Hydroponics' at the nationals.

The Hult Prize is a global pitch competition that challenges universities and students to help solve the world's pressing problems by creating for-profit social businesses aligned to at least one UN sustainable development goal. It is the world's largest student pitch competition with approximately over a thousand universities participating globally in over 100 countries, including about 9000 start-ups and over 180 000 participants competing for the \$1,000,000 grand prize.

Dr Lose is a senior researcher and specialist in student entrepreneurship and business

incubation development. He holds a PhD in the effective creation of business incubators and has published over 50 peer reviewed research papers.

"I'm shocked and honoured to be recognised and appreciated for the work that I have been doing in entrepreneurial and incubation development over the past 15 years. You do the work you love without knowing people are watching and then you get this recognition, this means a lot to me" he said.

Nelson Mandela University prides itself of being an entrepreneurial institution, and even has a policy on entrepreneurial development that allows students to operate businesses on campus creating opportunities for other students who help in running them.

Current successful businesses include tutoring, hydroponics, media services, website development, a driving school, tuckshops, fashion and beauty stores amongst others. Dr Lose expressed his gratitude to Sandakahle Sivungu who coordinated several students competing for the Hult Prize challenge

"Our team will one day like to be in a position to influence national policy to include entrepreneurial education from the basic education level upwards. We need far more leadership across all sectors to make sure entrepreneurship development gets enough funding, resources, awareness and a powerful voice" Dr Lose observed.

PSO RAISES FUNDS AND AWARENESS FOR NAKBA DAY



Image Source: Lihle Majola

By Mpumelelo Vimbayo

On Nakba Day, 15 May 2025, the Palestinian Solidarity Organization (PSO) at Nelson Mandela University hosted a vibrant and meaningful event to raise awareness about the ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people, as well as raise funds in solidarity.

The day began early as members set up two main stations: one at the Nelson Mandela T-shirt area focused on art and awareness, and another in the Kraal dedicated to fundraising efforts. The event attracted curious students and staff, sparking important conversations about the history and current realities in Palestine.

The art and awareness station invited participants to engage in creative activities

like designing t-shirts, painting rocks and making beaded bracelets. Free t-shirts were awarded to those who contributed a design aimed at raising awareness of the genocide. This interactive approach opened space for dialogue, though PSO noted the challenge of balancing engagement with focused conversation, especially with a diverse and fluctuating audience.

Meanwhile, the fundraising station at the Kraal proved success, raising R3, 100 through the sale of cupcakes and sweet treats. These funds will be donated to the South African Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS) Coalition.

The term 'Nakba' meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic, refers to the mass displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians during the establishment of Israel in 1948 – a tragedy that continues to impact generations. For those seeking a deeper understanding, SO recommends *Voices of the Nakba: A Living History of Palestine*, a collection of first-hand accounts that sheds light on the enduring impact of this historical event.

Despite the challenges in fully engaging all attendees, PSO considers the event a success and look forward to welcoming more students, faculty and university leadership to future initiatives.

The Palestinian Solidarity Organization at Nelson Mandela University, founded in 2022, works to educate the campus community about Palestine through seminars, awareness campaigns, and public events. They can be found on Instagram: @PSO_MandelaUni.



TOP STUDENT ACHIEVES 95% AVERAGE SCORE

By Louisa Mkhabela

22-year-old IT student, Mmasetshaba Rakgalakane from Kgaphamadi Village in Limpopo achieved what may look impossible. She scored a 95% average in her second year Diploma Exams, a feat that placed her as the top second year Diploma student.

In recognition of her achievement, she was awarded a merit award in April. The award is a testament of her hard work and dedication, and is an inspirational accomplishment that catapults her to a role model status especially to those from her village.

Mmasetshaba who is currently in her third year, has been a top student since her first academic year and has received many awards. Her academic journey, however, has not been without challenge. Just like every other student, she had to work hard to understand complex concepts, burn the midnight oil to beat tight deadlines and pore over challenging assignments. Her passion for Information Technology, and the desire to make a positive impact, has been her motivation during difficult times.

"Receiving an award in my first year was a significant motivator; it pushed me to work even harder to prove to myself that it wasn't just luck, but a result of dedication and hard work," she said.

So, what secrets does Mmasetshaba share with her fellow students?

"To cope with academic workload, I prioritize tasks, create a study schedule, and seek help when needed. Staying organized is key," she advises. She also warns against common mistakes like procrastination, poor time management and not asking for help when needed. "These can be avoided by staying organized, setting realistic goals, and being

proactive in seeking support," she notes.

Mmasetshaba emphasizes the importance of seeking help when needed, recommending that students must reach out to lecturers, peers or mentors for supports, and also stresses the need to take care of mental health, prioritizing self-care, taking breaks and seeking help overall.

Her academic aspirations coupled with her passion for programming include furthering her education and specializing in software development. She is excited to leverage her expertise to drive innovation and make a meaningful impact in the field of IT.



Image Source: Mmasetshaba Rakgalakane

NSFAS URGES STUDENTS TO REPORT RESIDENCE TOP-UP DEMANDS

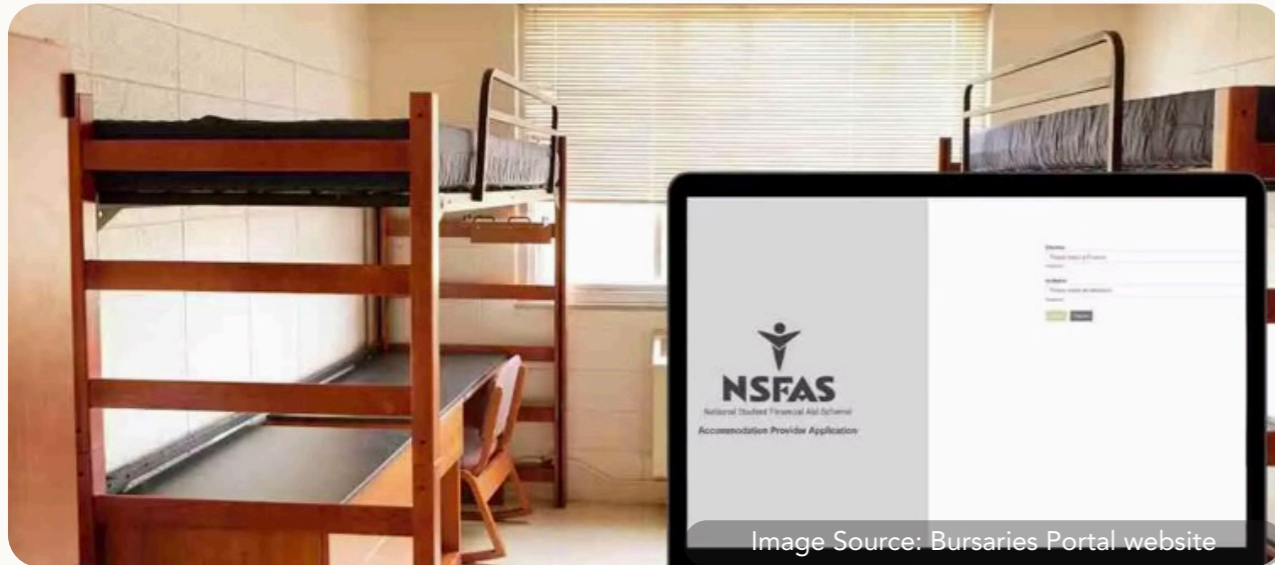


Image Source: Bursaries Portal website

By Sikelela Rollom

The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is urging students to report accredited private residences that demand additional top-up fees or deposits – practices the scheme says are explicitly prohibited.

In a statement released in February, the financial aid scheme reiterated that students funded through it, should not be required to pay extra accommodation costs. According to the NSFAS terms and conditions for student accommodation: “The Lessor may not require or permit the lessee to pay a deposit or any form of payment to the lessor or any other person in connection with this agreement.” Despite this clear directive, some private landlords continue to impose unauthorized fees on students.

At Nelson Mandela University, several students reported being charged deposits and monthly top-up fees. One student said that she paid a R5, 000 deposit and continues to pay R750 in monthly top-ups. When she questioned the fees, citing the policy, residence management allegedly responded “What NSFAS said on the statement does not apply to them,” adding that the university should inform them if such charges are not allowed. She said that she was also told that the Scheme does not cover the

full cost of her room.

Another student reported being informed of a top-up fee – initially R300, later increased to R500 – due to the room including a private kitchen and bathroom within a sharing room. The student said that he also paid a R1, 000 deposit before moving in.

Nelson Mandela University Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Lathitha Mbuzwana, said some residences argue that top-up fees are part of their lease agreements with students and independent of NSFAS regulations. Some landlords, he added, claim to have separate agreements with NSFAS. “We are dealing with it,” Mbuzwana said.

NSFAS spokesperson, Ishmael Mnisi, stressed that any accredited accommodation provider charging top-up fees would be held accountable, calling the practice fraudulent and unethical.

Mnisi urged students to report such incidents to the NSFAS fraud prevention hotline at speakup@nsfas.org.za.

Some residence managers declined to comment, citing contractual restrictions that prevent them from speaking to the media.

PROPELLA PROMOTES CLEAN TECH OPPORTUNITY FOR INNOVATORS



Image Source: Propella

By Sikelela Rollom

On 10 June 2025, Propella Business Incubator hosted an information session for their Global Clean Tech Innovation Programme at the Ocean Sciences Campus at Nelson Mandela University.

Propella supports innovators and startups in key sectors including energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture and healthcare. The incubator assists entrepreneurs in transforming high-impact ideas into sustainable businesses by offering technical support, mentorship and access to market opportunities.

The Global Clean Tech Innovation Programme (GCIP) is designed to support small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) developing solutions in clean technology, electronic waste management and climate innovation. The programme is a collaboration between the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), supported by GCIP-SA and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation.

During the session, Propella’s Marketing Office, Zandile Silo, advised prospective applicants to

have a proof of concept, identify their innovation focus area, and conduct relevant research. “We help you with ideation and identifying the innovation or technology element in your concept.”

Siphosethu Martins, Propella’s Finance, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, added that applicants can rework existing solutions, provided there is a clear innovation element. “There must be a level of innovation for it to quality for funding.” he added.

Nelson Mandela University student Lisakhanya Patrnia, who attended the session, said, “I found this session very educational and empowering. The Department of Science, Innovation and technology must continue to invest in these programmes. One thing I’ve learned is that ideas are there, but without financial support, they become null and void.” Another student, Jabu Mnyango, said the session helped clarify how to access funding. “I always have ideas but never knew where to start. Now I know,” he said.

Clean tech innovators across the Eastern Cape are encouraged to apply for the Global Clean Tech Innovation Programme as time permits.

WHY BEING BROKE ISN'T AN IDENTITY

By Asisipho Mpahleni

When struggling becomes a meme, a TikTok joke, or a personality, we risk normalising poor habits instead of challenging them. This year, over a million students in universities and nearly 600,000 TVET colleges rely on government funding, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). It is not surprising that financial strain is a shared experience, highlighting the pressing issue of financial insecurity. With 24% of young South Africans neither working nor studying, staying broke isn't quirky, it's risky.

One thing unites many South African students: money slips through our fingers faster than we can say "month end."

Here's the truth: tertiary education doesn't just test your academics, but it exposes your money mindset. Some of us are spending to escape, while others are swiping to belong. That weekend splurge? It is not a lack of discipline, but rather a symptom of never being taught better.

For many, varsity is the first time they're expected to manage an income, whether it be

a bursary, an allowance, a part-time hustle, or hand-me-down cash. But how do you manage money when you have never seen it modeled at home? When "budget" was a word only used during January's school-shoe panic?

Too many of us were raised in households where money was either feared, fought over, or simply never spoken of. Home wasn't about financial planning, but it was about survival. So now we cope the way we know how: we overspend, we joke, and meme "month-end noodles" as if being broke isn't quietly exhausting. We've normalized the chaos because we were never taught the calm.

It's time to flip the script. Being broke isn't a personality but a problem we can tackle with the right tools. Try free resources like the GIFS Financial Literacy Course and platforms like Moneyversity by Old Mutual, which rewards you with points (that you can actually use on groceries), just for learning how to manage your money. If you're tired of the struggle aesthetic, start with one small shift: learn, unlearn and earn while doing so. Broke might be relatable, but it does not have to be your lifestyle.



Image Source: Unsplash

THE FUTURE OF REMOTE WORK



Image Source: Pexels.com

By Aka Radana

Remote working is one of the biggest industries in the workplace today. It has changed when, where and how we work, bringing numerous advantages like reduced commuting, a flexible schedule, and access to a global talent pool. Accompanying these benefits, however, are numerous challenges that raise the question of what the future holds for the work structure.

So, what is remote working? Remote working is defined as work that takes place outside of the usual workplace environment such as an office. Remote work can include co-working spaces, working from home, or any location that does not pertain to working from an office desk.

As mentioned, remote work brings the benefit of a flexible work schedule which allows workers to balance their professional and personal lives efficiently. Remote working also helps employees save money, as they no longer have to pay to commute long distances to work, which is why it has become popular nowadays, and has greatly been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic where people were

forced to work online during lockdown.

Remote work, while bringing multiple advantages, is not without its unique challenges, namely barriers in communication, distractions at home, and feeling isolated as the solitude that comes with remote work may cause workers to become lonely.

This is why should one begin to work remotely, they should also make sure that they meet with their colleagues at a coffee shop setting or through messaging apps with video conferencing to break communication barriers, as well as loneliness. In addition, establishing clear boundaries around one's working hours to minimize distractions from friends and family.

The digital age is in full swing. Among future remote work trends are an increase in the employment of Artificial Intelligence, as well as a change in the traditional nine-to-five work structure providing workers with room to work around their schedules effectively. All things considered, it is safe to assume that the remote work industry has a vibrant future.

ME, MYSELF & THE MASK I WEAR



By Asisipho Mpahleni

You: "I just want to be easy to love."
Inner Voice: "You are just scared of rejection."

Have you ever looked in the mirror and thought, "Who is this version of me?" Not the loud one. Not the helpful one. Not the funny, or always-available one. But the real one. The one that's been edited out so often, they're barely in frame anymore. You.

People often mistake people-pleasing for kindness. But it's not about being nice, it's about being safe. According to psychologist Dr. Thema Bryant, people-pleasing is "a trauma response rooted in fear of rejection or conflict," not just a personality trait. It's the fear that saying no might cost you love, friendship, or acceptance.

You: "I'll drop everything to help people, even when I'm overwhelmed."
Inner Voice: "And who helps you?"
You: "I don't know... I just feel guilty if I say no."

That's what people-pleasing does. It chips away at your identity, smile by smile, favor by favor, until you're tired, resentful, and unsure where your needs even fit in.

How did we get here?

Somewhere along the way, many of us learned that being liked was safer than being real. Especially girls, who are often praised for being agreeable, nurturing, and self-sacrificing. Boys, meanwhile, may people-please through overachievement or performance.

Mini Quiz: Are You a People-Pleaser? (Psych-backed)

- Do you...
- ✓ Say yes when you want to say no?
 - ✓ Become anxious when someone's upset with you?
 - ✓ Avoid conflict to keep the peace?
 - ✓ Feel responsible for others' emotions?
 - ✓ Change yourself to fit in?

3 or more yeses? You're not weak. You're wired to keep the peace. But at what cost?

NO MORE LECTURES, JUST LIFE LESSONS



By Ncobile Mahlangu

Campus life is over, and reality has kicked in.

You're navigating a whole new world of responsibilities, relationships, and self-discovery. It's exciting, but also daunting. How do you maintain old friendships while making new ones? How do you balance work with your love life?

For many, varsity life is a time of intense personal growth, self-exploration and bonding with like-minded individuals. But once graduation hits, comfort zones disappear. You're on your own, trying to figure out who you are beyond lecture halls and campus routine. Staying connected with friends' post-graduation isn't easy. Friends move away, chase careers or get caught up in their own lives. But it's not impossible. With a little effort and intentionality, you can keep your friendships alive. A simple call, or planning occasional meetups, even a voice note here and there can go a long way.

Making new friends as an adult can be intimidating. Unlike varsity, you're no longer

in an environment where you're surrounded by people your age with similar goals and interests, but again, it is not impossible. Join clubs, volunteer, attend workshops and say yes to more things. The key is to show up and be open.

Dating post-varsity is a whole new experience. You're no longer surrounded by potential partners who share your interests and schedule. But that's not a bad thing, it's an opportunity to be intentional. You get to reflect on what truly matters in a partner, and build a relationship rooted in authenticity and shared values.

So, how do you navigate friendships, love and life after varsity? It all starts with staying and being true to yourself. Don't force connections or pretend to be someone you're not. Be open, curious and willing to take risks. Try new things, learn from your mistakes. Keep growing. Life after varsity is what you make of it. With a little courage and self-awareness, you can build meaningful relationships, discover your place in the world, and create a life that is uniquely yours.

BALANCING ON A BUDGET

By Nthabeleng Mqakelana

Money is something that we all need and love, but unfortunately it is not in abundance for everyone. That's why budgeting and smart money management are essential. Many university students battle with managing their finances. While some receive allowances, these are often only enough to cover basic necessities. However, students sometimes forget this and misuse their funds.

Although life comes with many demands, it is important to understand the difference between need and wants.

We can all agree that life is expensive. Financial management must be a priority, it is the only way to stay afloat. Sometimes you hear stories of students who spend their money carelessly and end up without enough for food or other essentials. These situations can even lead to conflict amongst friends or roommates. In more serious cases, some may even resort to borrowing money from loan sharks which is extremely risky, and should be avoided at all costs.

To avoid falling into the trap of poor financial

decisions, here are some helpful tips:

- Prioritize needs over wants. Understanding what is essential and what isn't is the first step to smart money management.
- Open a savings account. Having a savings account can provide a financial cushion in times of crisis, because life is unpredictable.
- Track your spending. Monitor your expenses by organizing them into categories. This will help you identify areas where you're overspending and make necessary adjustments.
- Compare prices before buying. Don't rush purchases look around first. You don't want to regret spending more when you could have paid less elsewhere.
- Use a shopping list. This helps you stay focused and avoid impulsive buying. You'll also avoid buying duplicates of items you already have.

Good money management doesn't mean you can't enjoy your life, it means planning wisely so that your needs are always covered, and your future is secure.



NEW CAMPAIGN PROMOTES SAFER DRINKING HABITS



By Nthabeleng Mqakelana

Substance abuse continues to be a serious issue amongst South African youth, especially in higher institutions where students misuse alcohol. Despite having regulations, reckless drinking still leads to poor decisions, risky behaviour and the loss of our youth.

To help address this issue, the Eastern Cape Liquor Board together with Nelson Mandela University have partnered to raise awareness about this matter by launching a new alcohol awareness campaign. The launch took place at the University's North Campus, and marked the beginning of a joint effort to promote responsible drinking habits.

A key part of the campaign, is the introduction of student ambassadors who volunteered to assist and make a difference in the lives of their peers by assisting them in making better choices. These ambassadors will work to raise awareness, encourage responsible behaviour, and create a safer campus environment. Since the role is not easy, students will be supported

by the university's monitoring and evaluation office.

The campaign is not aiming to force young people to stop drinking altogether, its plea to the responsible use of alcohol. The message is clear – when students avoid alcohol abuse, they protect their future. Irresponsible drinking often led to unplanned pregnancies, academic failure and dangerous situations.

At the event Dr Msiya from the Eastern Cape Liquor Board suggested that implementation and consistent participation in extracurricular activities can be a healthy distraction from substance abuse. This will be achieved by ambassadors promoting student participation in societies, sports and other activities that support positive lifestyles.

This initiative is a hopeful step in the right direction. With the dedication of the student ambassadors and support from the university, there is a strong belief that small changes will have a big impact on campus life.

THE RISE OF PODCASTS IN MODERN STORYTELLING

By Siphesihle Manyuka

Podcasts have skyrocketed in popularity, emerging as a dominant force in the world of storytelling and digital media as a whole.

From gripping true crime narratives to fictional series and thought-provoking interviews, podcasts have captivated a global audience. One might then wonder what it is about this medium that has revolutionised the way we engage with stories and digital content in its entirety.

One of the main reasons podcasts are so captivating is that they are intimate by nature. "Podcasts create a sense of connection," - Siphesihle, an accounting student at Nelson Mandela University, "Listeners feel like they are part of the conversation, and the storytelling often feels more personal and engaging than traditional media."

Whether it is the soothing voice of a narrator or the vivid stories unfolding, podcasts allow listeners to immerse themselves in a world of

storytelling that feels close and relatable.

Another factor is convenience. Podcasts fit seamlessly into everyday life. "You can listen while commuting to school or work, while exercising, or even cooking" - a second-year law student. This accessibility and convenience have made podcasts a versatile companion, allowing listeners to consume content on the go.

According to research, the shift in media consumption patterns shows that podcasts are challenging traditional media models. They offer a more flexible and personalized approach to storytelling, which appeals to modern audiences who crave autonomy over what, when, and how they consume content.

Podcasts are redefining storytelling by offering intimacy, flexibility and accessibility. As they continue to thrive, they represent a growing trend that is reshaping the landscape of media, putting listeners in control of their own narrative journey.

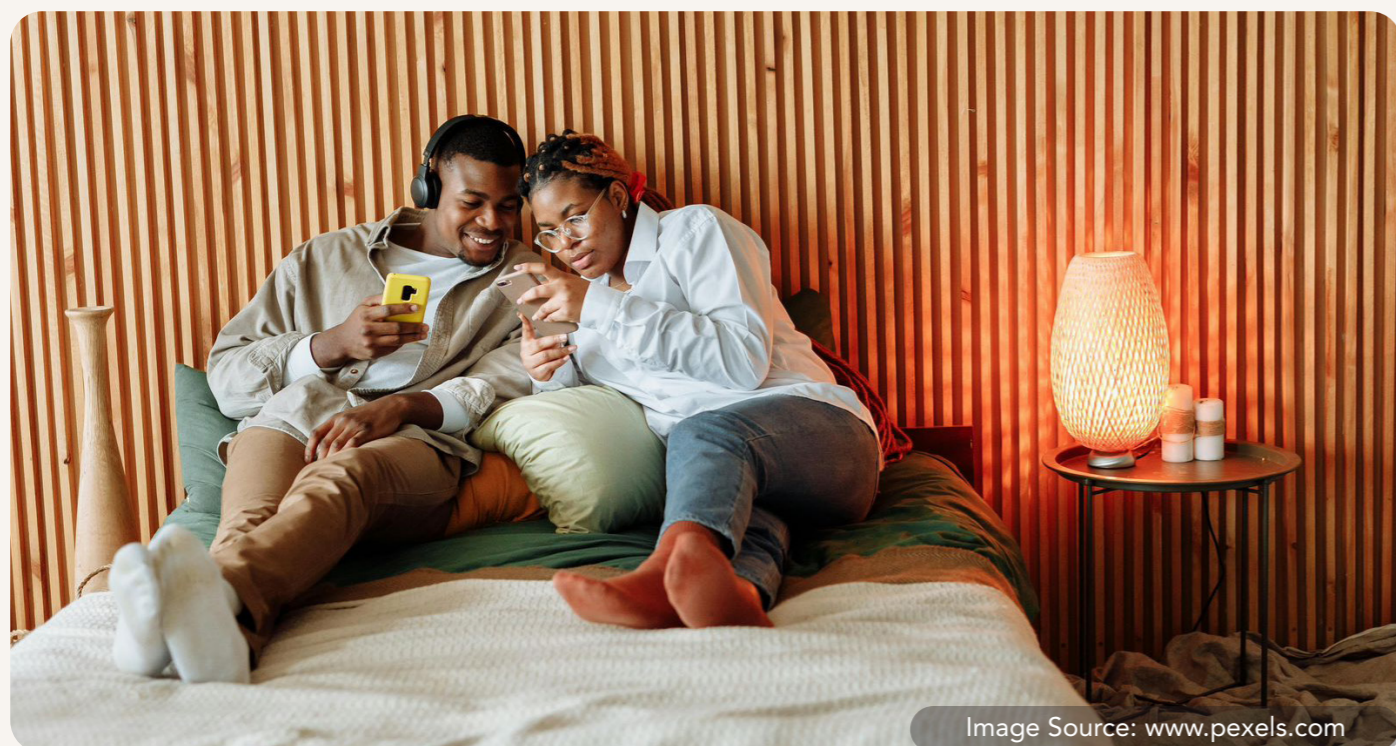


Image Source: www.pexels.com

ENZYME-BASED RECYCLING: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

By Sonia Van Der Linde

For decades, plastic pollution has been an environmental crisis with over 400 million tons of plastic being produced annually, with large quantities of the waste, ending up in oceans and landfills.

Recently, scientists have discovered and engineered enzymes able to breakdown certain types of plastics, potentially offering a solution to this devastating problem. However, is this technology viable at the scale that the Earth needs to solve this crisis?

When Japanese researchers first discovered and identified the bacterium *Ideonella sakaiensis* in 2016, they found that it possessed the ability to break down polyethylene terephthalate (PET) - commonly used to produce bottles and textiles. By producing two enzymes, PETase and METase, the bacterium was able to breakdown the ester bonds and degrade PET back into its basic components Terephthalic Acid (TPA) and Ethylene Glycol (EG).

Since the discovery, researchers have been using protein engineering to try and improve the breakdown ability of the enzymes produced

by the bacterium. In 2018, a "mutant PETase" was created by the University of Portsmouth in collaboration with the U.S Department of Energy which was shown to break down the ester bonds within the PET faster than that seen with the natural PETase. These efforts, however, remain in the early stages as all experimentation has been done at a small scale, and applying enzyme-based recycling at an industrial scale will be challenging as it needs to be done under very specific, controlled conditions. PH levels, temperatures and many more factors within the environment play a vital role in the efficiency of the enzyme in breaking down PET.

This method still holds a lot of promise, as companies like the French 'Carbios', are funnelling large funds and efforts into constructing plants that will commercialise enzyme-based recycling.

There are currently many other institutions and companies searching for other enzymes that may break down other types of plastics as well, as PET may be a very common plastic, but it is not the only one. While this may not be the magic solution to the problem, it represents hope that there are solutions.



Image Source: www.pexels.com

MORE THAN WARMTH: THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF TEA



By **Ayabonga Malima**

As we enter the cold and breezy season of winter, more and more people are in need of drinks to keep them warm. A cup of tea comes to the rescue—not only is it a great body warmer for the winter season, but is also a healthy drink alternative to summer cocktails and offers several health benefits.

A cup of tea is good for one's overall health, especially during the winter season when many people tend to be less physically active. A good, hot cup of tea can support health in various ways, including improving cardiovascular health, enhancing endothelial function, reducing inflammation, and even aid in the prevention of pancreatitis.

In relation to cardiovascular health, tea consumption has been linked to better heart health. A 2016 study published by the *The American Journal of Medicine* clearly

highlighted that tea drinkers tend to have less plaque buildup in their arteries, due to the fact that tea can slow the accumulation of plaque, leading to a healthier heart.

Tea is also rich in antioxidants, which help combat inflammation throughout the body. When it comes to endothelial function, green tea in particular has been shown to improve the health of the endothelium—the thin inner lining of blood vessels—helping regulate important vascular functions such as blood clotting and inflammation. When looking at the pancreas, an essential organ, herbal teas have been found to help reduce inflammation, which plays a vital role in digestion and blood sugar regulation.

As we usher into the cold season of winter, remember that tea is more than just a comforting drink that can keep you warm this during the cold winter in Gqeberha—it's a powerful health tool!

CORAL REEF RECOVERY PREDICTION USING AI MODELS



By **Sonia Van Der Linde**

Corals, a diverse group of small cnidarians which live together in large colonies, known as coral polyps, form a diverse underwater ecosystem that has become invaluable within an ecological and economical landscape. These coral polyps live in symbiosis with zooxanthellae—microscopic algae that photosynthesize and share the produced sugars, providing the coral polyps with 90% of their energy needs.

Unfortunately, these ecosystems are becoming increasingly threatened by climate change. Rising ocean temperatures are leading these colonies to undergo a phenomenon known as “bleaching” - where their symbiotic algae are expelled from the coral tissues, which leads to them turning white and becoming more vulnerable to disease and death.

Teams of scientists from varying institutions are currently working on artificial intelligence (AI) models that may accurately predict recovery periods of varying coral reefs. Studies are analyzing thousands of reef sites across the world, and assessing factors like sea surface temperatures, pollution levels and the species diversity within the area. According to some

findings, not all reefs respond to bleaching in the same way. While some may take only five to ten years to recover, others may take decades or never recover at all.

Being able to predict the recovery periods of coral reefs is crucial with regards to restoration efforts, as it helps conservationists prioritize which reefs need immediate help, as well as knowing where to focus resources. The data that this potential AI Model offers can aid ecologists in restoration projects such as coral planting, as it can more accurately predict which species have a better chance of quick recovery in certain areas after bleaching events, and whether or not colonies are facing long-term damage, or simply undergoing normal ups and downs in health.

Coral reefs are extremely important in many aspects of the world. They provide a food source and habitat for many small marine animals and reef-building corals are generally considered a keystone species, meaning an entire ecosystem can collapse without their presence. Apart from that, they also play an important role in tourism, fisheries and coastal protection, as they act as breakwaters in many sites.

A SETBACK CAN'T BE YOUR END

By Zukukhanye Maseti

Oyama has been incredible, achieving so much in such a short time. Oyama Mangali is a 22-year-old athlete who started track in February. She excels in the 100m and 200m, and thus far has competed in the University Sports South Africa (USSA) Eastern Cape, placing third in the 100m, and first in the 200m. She also won 200m gold and 100m silver at Campus Life.

Her love for track made her transition from netball to sprinting, which led to a calf injury early this season, resulting in two months off training, which deprived her of participating in the USSA at the beginning of May.

"It was a big hit to me not to be able to go to USSA athletes because it was something I was working towards" Oyama shared. She stated that her motivation came from within. "I know where I want to be, and I know where I have been, where I don't want to be anymore. That

vision alone that is what keeps me going." she said.

She advises people that want to start the journey to know why they want to run track – it being a hobby or competitive, as it will determine their drive and how much work they want to put in. "You need to be chasing progress instead of perfection. You need to run with a purpose. Talent only starts but your heart finishes it for you."

She explained that it is more than just about positions, winning medals but about the sacrifices you had to make.

"Athletics isn't always glamorous, and the path is rarely linear, there is beauty in the process, especially when you don't give up. I'm proud of how far I've come, even if it doesn't always show on a podium." - Oyama, an inspiration to us all.



Image Source: Oyama Mangali

EASTERN CAPE DERBY AT USSAS A HIGH-STAKES AFFAIR



Image Source: Varsity Sports

By Fullstop Communications

Madibaz are preparing for a high-stakes clash against Fort Hare in their opening fixture of the University Sports South Africa rugby tournament soon.

The Eastern Cape Derby, scheduled for the opening day on Monday, 30 June is expected to be one of the highlights of the week. The goal? A spot in the B-section final, so stealing an early march over the opposition will be hugely advantageous.

David Manuel, the Gqeberha team's head coach, mentioned that their primary objective was to gain promotion to the A section, but also emphasized that they wanted to showcase the university's broader rugby vision. The team is keen to maintain their momentum following a strong Varsity Shield Campaign in which they lost the promotion-relegation march against University of Johannesburg by a paltry of three points.

"We've been drawing attention from some of the country's top rugby schools" he mentioned, schools" Manuel mentioned "Performing well at events like the USSAs is critical to our long-term ambitions." He noted that many parents were now viewing the university as a serious

option for talented young players. One of the core values was to leave the jersey and club in a better place, "That's the legacy we're building".

Madibaz defeated UFH 32-16 in their Varsity Shield encounter earlier this year, but this does not necessarily give Manuel a peaceful night's sleep. Matches between the two institutions always turned out to be fiercely contested, so they are ensuring that they are at their very best.

"They missed last year's tournament, so they're in the B section this year. If we get the chance to face them, it'll be an excellent test of where we stand." Although the squad is a mix of youth and experience, it brought in several experienced players who were ineligible for Shield duties "which strengthens our hand."

Currently, the students are focusing on exams as they need to earn a certain number of credits to qualify for next year's Shield.

Manuel added that every player had a personalized fitness/gym programme and that the on-field sessions had been ramped up in recent weeks.

"We're confident we'll be ready to perform in Pretoria."

GQEBERHA OFFICIALS FLY SA FLAG HIGH



Image Source: Supplied

By Fullstop Communications

One could say the international careers of sports officials Melinda Goosen and Cheryl Kotze is going swimmingly after the pair were appointed to manage the aquatics team at the World University Games.

Goosen, who manages swimming at Nelson Mandela University, has been tasked to head up the diving squad while Kotze, an administrator of the club, will manage the men's swimming team. The Games, which draws thousands of elite athletes worldwide, takes place in Germany's Rhine-Ruhr region in July.

Even though it will be Goosen's fifth appearance, the opportunity remains as thrilling as ever. "It's a massive and spectacular occasion."

The diving role is a new one for Goosen, who is already burying herself in logistics to ensure a seamless team experience to what she says is the "premier international event for student-athletes". Besides logistics, both her and Kotze's roles entail everything from ensuring athletes stay aligned with training programmes, to submitting crucial documentation, to the local organizing committee. Goosen mentioned

that there was a different dynamic in managing the four-member diving team, compared to the swimming contingent of 23. "I'm really excited about the talent among the divers. It's only the second time we have had divers in the squad."

Kotze returns to the global stage after managing the USSA swimming team at the 2023 Games in Chengdu, which was postponed. "It was as close to the Olympic experience as you could get."

Preparations by the Madibaz pair started as far back as last September. "We've made monthly presentations to the USSA high-performance committee, followed by one-on-one sessions with head coaches and the swimming committee," Kotze explained. "Now that the team have been selected, the real work begins."

Kotze will work alongside coaches Marco Markgraaff from Kovsies and Keenan Riffel or Tuks, both of whom were also part of the 2023 delegation. "The three of us know each other well and work seamlessly together. That strong team dynamic makes a huge difference when you're competing on the world stage."

WEIDEMAN KEEN TO EXTEND GOLDEN RUN

By Fullstop Communications

Gqeberha karateka Luchay Weideman hopes to kick on from where she left off a year ago when she puts her body on the line at the University Sports South Africa tournament.

The Nelson Mandela University student claimed four of her team's 18 gold medals in 2024, and it confident that she can deliver a similarly impressive performance. "My goal is to maintain that standard, both personally and for the team," she stated.

The Human Movement Science Coed is well aware that each year brings new opposition, and with it, new challenges. "It motivates me to work harder and to find new ways to elevate my performance."

She tracks her physical progress while constantly refining her technique to ensure she is at her peak when it counts. However, mental fitness was equally, she said. "You have to stay composed."

The Madibaz champion has already made her mark this year by winning silver in the kata (a choreographed pattern of movements) and a team gold in kumite (sparring) at the Afro-Asia World Open in Nelson Mandela Bay. She competed as a team member of the Hillside Dojo, which received a special invite to the event that doubled as the South African Championships. She is keen to replicate that form against the country's top student-athletes at the Durban University of Technology soon.

Madibaz won 28 medals en route to claiming gold in the full-contact and bronze in the semi-contact disciplines last year. Those, and other recent successes, have sparked a surge of interest in the sport locally, which means that there will be several new faces in the squad

for KwaZulu-Natal. "It'll be exciting to see how they perform and contribute to the growth of karate." - Weideman, who believes the rise in numbers has opened many doors for the club.

Her older sister, Adre, who mentors the semi-contact team, is confident, they, as well as the full-contact team coached by Sango Mbinyashe, are in with a shout. "I definitely believe both teams are in a great position to achieve top results."



Image Source: Supplied