

Support 'Nomsa of the water'!

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During her breaks at school, Nomsa Theledi often regretfully had to watch how her classmates were able to buy themselves a treat or eat a packed lunch. She, a young girl from a poor South African family, had to do without such delights.

Theledi thought about how she could improve her situation. Suddenly, she knew. Every day, as she walked the thirty kilometres from home to school and back, she'd fill her bottle of water in the river she crossed. There was always someone who'd ask for a sip. Nomsa then offered her bottle and focused her gaze on the other person's throat. As soon as it moved, she'd charge them a penny. Soon, she earned enough to pay for her own lunch and to buy groceries for her mother.

Infectious smile

This entrepreneurial spirit is still there in 2020. Now, the 47-year-old mother of four and qualified nurse runs a bed and breakfast all by herself: Bothabelo, in Phalaborwa in the province of Limpopo. That, too, is quite uncommon in the often male-dominated culture. But Nomsa doesn't care. Donning her infectious smile and her big red hat, she keeps inventing new events for her Nomsa Na Mati foundation (literally: 'Nomsa of the water').

Not so long ago, she organised a 'charity dinner' with Christiaan Hanssen, a cosmopolitan citizen of The Hague and sustainability consultant, who runs the Silonque Bush Estate & Spa lodge near the Kruger Park. "Nomsa is an

intriguing person," says Hanssen. "She's the only black woman who runs a bed and breakfast in the area; she sets an example for other girls and women partly because of that."

Charity dinner

Moreover, her foundation fits in well with Hanssen's desire to give something back to the local population. "The money of Nomsa Na Mati is intended directly for the children of Phalaborwa." They received support from the local butchers and bakers during the charity dinner. Together, they raised 60,000 rand, approximately 3,700 euros. In addition, guests of Hanssen's lodge pay 25 rand per night to the foundation. The next step is professionalising the foundation. "It would be nice if we could hire someone for half a day or maybe a full day, so we can get more sponsors," says Hanssen.

That the work of the foundation is bearing fruit was recently demonstrated when Blessing Maseisa Malesa (24) visited. Thanks to Nomsa Na Mati, this clever boy from a poor family was able to graduate from the Vaal University of Technology in Gauteng. As thanks, he installed all the software on Nomsa's computers. But Malesa wants to do more. "When I'm successful, I want to build a library in our community so that every learner would develop a culture of reading."

www.facebook.com/Nomsanamati

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Nomsa Theledi (big red hat) and Christiaan Hanssen (braces) among the locals.

