“Speak Until Someone Listens” This was the theme of the Child Protection Week event which was held at Mpumalanga Stadium in Hammarsdale. The aim of this event was to raise awareness on the plight of the children in the country and to remind the children of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to children and drug abuse.

This event was attended by the HOD, Nkosinathi SP Sishi PhD, the Mayor of Ethekwini Metro, Councillor James Nxumalo, Regional Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services, Mnikelwa Nxele, Deputy Provincial Commissioner of SAPS, Phindile Radebe, Pinetown District Director, Thembelihle Gumede, the community of Mpumalanga Township as well as leaners who painted the pavilion beautiful with their school uniform.

The Head of Department, Nkosinathi SP Sishi PhD, who was a key note speaker, said the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal is part of the collective of people and organisations that are serious about issues that pertains to the rights and protection of children. “We stand united in our purpose of protecting our children and to teach our children to protect themselves,” he said. The HOD gave rather disturbing statistics reflecting the magnitude of social ills in our country and our schools in particular, but said the Department together with social partners are going to leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the damage done is reversed.

The Mayor, James Nxumalo, said that there is a lot of work to do in fighting the scourge of child abuse and social ills. “While attending the Child Protection Week event at the ICC in Durban, children told us terrible and horrific stories of their vulnerability and how they have been abused by strangers and by those very close to them,” he said.

Learners marching to the stadium

The Head of Department Nkosinathi SP Sishi (PhD)
The shining star of the event was the young ex offender, Thobani Mpungose, who gave a heart rending story of how he was arrested, but also gave a motivating exhortation about resilience, vision and focus. Speaking to learners he said, “You need not associate yourselves with bad friends, don’t take drugs, respect your parents, but above all, you need to have a strong relationship with God.”

The Child Protection Week is a national initiative that highlights activities aimed at protecting all children from any form of abuse, neglect and exploitation. All government departments are mandated to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation through the development and management of accessible, integrated and coordinated services based on the multidisciplinary and intersect oral approach.

After the establishment of a democratic government in 1994, South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and committed itself to implement the principle of “first call for children” in terms of which the need of children are considered paramount in services, programmes and development.

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