



Lapalala Wilderness School Officially Opens New School Building

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More than 30 years after the Lapalala Wilderness School was founded by Clive Walker and Dale Parker, it officially opened its doors to the new school building on Saturday, 26 November 2022.

The superb eco-built campus has been funded by the Parker family and the Mapula Trust, under the guidance and direction of Duncan Parker, son of Dale Parker, with the assistance of Gianni Ravazzotti and the Italtile Foundation.

The sustainable design of the new school building makes efficient use of space and energy, with minimal impact on the natural surrounding landscape. Beautiful, rammed earth walls made with soil from on-site excavations are a feature of the campus.

The official opening was attended by the Patron, Clive Walker, the Parker family, existing clients and donors, board members and the media. A choir from the local Mphari High School entertained guests and distinguished thought-leader, entrepreneur and academic, Dr Reuel Khoza, gave a powerful keynote address.

"Education should be diverse and varied. That is good for human development. There is also massive capacity for education that is focused on conservation and enjoys greater resonance with the wilderness. Attention should also be given to industrialisation and commercialisation. The healthy balance among these constitutes what in governance terms is seen as the interplay among People, Planet and Profit; a requirement for human sustainability. The Lapalala Wilderness School is, in this regard, a small but significant project," according to Dr Khoza.

After Dr Khoza's address, the ribbon was cut by Clive Walker and Duncan Parker and a plaque in memory of Dale Parker unveiled, followed by a guided walk around the new school grounds.

The Mission Statement of the school is: "To help our children and young adults discover the value of biodiversity in our natural world and our place within it and to identify and nurture Africa's future conservation champions." Children from neighbouring local communities are fully sponsored, and fee-paying schools come from various parts of South Africa to attend courses at both primary and secondary levels.

In partnership with the Lapalala Wilderness Reserve, the school offers tertiary level students the opportunity to complete the practical components of their conservation qualifications.

Today the Lapalala Wilderness School is run by its Director, Mashudu Makhokha, and a dedicated team of educators. "Our vision is to teach young people the concepts of conservation, ecology, the protection of wild creatures, wild landscapes and the natural resources of our environment. Lapalala Wilderness School is an educational institution like no other. It uses the environment as its classroom to deliver learning that has the potential to create lasting change in both learners and the world in which they live," he says with enthusiasm.

The experience at the school encourages an appreciation and love of nature via interpretive river walks, game drives, stargazing, spoor identification, and informative conservation and wildlife talks. Practical skills include creating food gardens, beekeeping, tree planting, water and energy audits, and how to recycle, repurpose or reuse waste material.

The knowledge and skills gained at the Lapalala Wilderness School empower the youth to share what they have learned, and to play an active part in making a difference with the many challenges facing our planet.