

## Presentation on rhino poaching wins competition

The Lapalala Wilderness School (LWS) supports 39 schools, 370 educators and approximately 10 874 learners through the Sustainable Schools Programme. With an aim to instil a passion for nature in the hearts of the country's youth, the vision of LWS is to help children to discover the true value of the biodiversity of the natural world and to identify and nurture Africa's future conservation champions.

For the past ten years the school has also sponsored a public speaking competition to build awareness of the severity of rhino poaching. The winner of the 2022 competition was Daniel Nkhumane, a Grade 11 learner at Sekoba Secondary School in Ga-Masenyha Village, Mokokopane.



Daniel's academic life before 2022 gave no indication of what he would achieve. He was on a fast track to becoming a high school dropout. By his own admission, he was not the brightest child in the class and had failed Grade 10 twice. He lacked confidence and was hanging out with friends whom he described as bad company.

He made a decision to change schools, moving from one a few minutes from his home to Sekoba Secondary School, an hour's walk from where he lived. His application to this school was almost rejected due to his poor academic results, but he was accepted after a teacher convinced the school principal that Daniel deserved a second chance.

LWS facilitated a public speaking competition about rhino poaching between a number of schools in the region. Daniel was one of the two learners chosen to represent his school. Excited, but lacking in confidence when speaking in public, he conducted all the research for the project but was too shy to present his findings to his classmates and teachers. An intervention by an educator who believed in him was the only thing that allowed him to stay in the competition.

At the start of his presentation, Daniel was gulping down water like a man dying of thirst. This acted as an icebreaker with his audience, boosted his confidence, and he was on his way. Says Daniel: "I did my level best but did not think I was going to win as other learners presented very well. To my surprise, I won the first prize!"

Daniel has an important message for all learners. "Never ever give up on yourself. Some of us just need to work and push a little bit harder than others, and we will achieve great things. Choose your friends wisely so that you may shape your future, and not have to face bad actions and decisions." ■