

PVC encourages Abulele and Natalie to dream, believe and achieve

Dream, believe, achieve is the theme for this year's Cell C's Take a Girl Child to Work Day® and this is exactly what Professor Narend Bajjnath, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, is encouraging two young girls, Abulele and Natalie, from very tough backgrounds, to do.

Identified through Unisa's Chance 2 Advance programme, the PVC hosted 17-year-old Natalie Assani from Holy Trinity School and 16-year-old Abulele Qubintsika from Berea Park School today with the aim of expanding these girls' horizons, broadening their knowledge and allowing them to challenge the stereotypes instilled within our educational systems.

Both girls have had to overcome terrible traumas and are now flourishing under the proper care, with a renewed commitment to improving their education.



Prof. Narend Bajjnath takes a moment with Abulele Qubintsika and Natalie Assani before they join him on his university duties.

Natalie's past won't determine her future

Natalie is originally from Congo and was brought to South Africa at a very young age by extended family who fled the war and political instability. She had a very traumatic childhood, both in the Congo and when she arrived in South Africa, and was later removed by the Department of Social Development, who put her in a place of safety at Lerato House in central Pretoria. Natalie is also a victim of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Despite these challenges at such a young age, Natalie is determined to not let her past determine her future. "This is the first time I've come to such a huge university and I'm very happy and excited at the same. Being here today has inspired me to study further when I complete school," she said.

As a lover of the law, Natalie wants to pursue a career in property law. Having come out of Congo, a country that has been in conflict for nearly two decades, she believes that South Africa is a fertile ground for young women to be educated and pursue their career goals. Natalie's visit to Unisa also shows the university's solidarity with migrant communities.



Cell C Take a Girl Child to Work Day® has become one of the country's biggest collaborative acts of volunteerism. This initiative challenges corporates in South Africa to continue to share their knowledge, job experience and ideas on career and job opportunities, not only today, but on an on-going basis to help achieve the goal of encouraging young girls and women to be active in the country's economy.

Abulele, who is currently living in a shelter in Pretoria, has also experienced many trials. She suffered neglect and extreme poverty and did not go to school for a year because of economic conditions. The good news is that she is back at school and has drastically improved her grades. She believes her visit to Unisa is all about gaining more knowledge. “High school can only prepare to a certain extent, so by being here at Unisa I can see what life beyond school is really like,” she said.

Abulele’s career aspiration deeply rooted in the truth

Her career aspiration is deeply rooted in the truth as Abulele wants to be a journalist one day. “I decided that this is what I wanted to do when I was in grade 7 when my stepfather had brought home a newspaper from Ecuador. I noticed how biased the news was; even corrupt people were written about in a positive light. That’s was when I knew that I wanted to be a journalist who reported on the truth and wrote objective news,” she explained.

The PVC believes that having these girls at Unisa comes with many benefits for their future. According to him, it all starts with demystifying the university. “I think the greatest thing is demystifying the university for them, and others, because so few people get access to it. Viewing it from the outside makes it a mysterious place and part of the first step of getting access to an institution, any kind of institution or profession, is to demystify it,” he explained.

He was quite happy to have Abulele and Natalie accompany him throughout his day so that they have an idea of how the university works from the inside. “I believe this is something that helps shape the aspirations of children, they start to believe that this is something that they can do. And that’s very important in terms of cultivating aspirations for youngsters that commends you with their capabilities,” the PVC said.