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## DUNDEE RURAL HORSE RIDING FESTIVAL 2010 AND FASHION SHOW – SUSTAINING THE SPORTING SPIRIT

Capitalising on the euphoria of the 2010 Soccer World Cup, Dundee sustains the sporting spirit by once again hosting the Rural Horse-Riding Festival in grand style. In this month of horse-racing in KwaZulu-Natal, the festival now enjoys the unique position of heralding the advent of the Durban July Handicap.

Traditionally held on the last Saturday of July every year, the Dundee Rural Horse Riding festival will be held on 24 July 2010 at its traditional venue in Dundee in northern KwaZulu-Natal, the deviation here intended to allow for the Durban July to be held on 31 July 2010. This will be the sixth edition of the festival revived by the provincial government in 2005.

A number of prominent public figures including the MEC for Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation Mrs Weziwe Thusi, traditional leaders and senior municipal leaders and officials will also grace the festival as it is viewed as a critical event in the sporting calendar of what has been the biggest year of sport in the country's history.

Dundee, the once sleepy coal mining town, will come alive next weekend as the race on Saturday will be preceded by a street parade of some of the horses contesting horses on Friday afternoon, at 14:00, in front of the Dundee Municipal offices. The parade will also include a colourful steet carnival with a Brazilian flavour, bringing the small town of Dundee to a complete standstill.

"The spectators and participants who shall be attending will be wowed by the many exciting activities that they have become accustomed to being associated with the race," said Mike Mthembu - the event's Programme Manager.

The race, which has steadily grown bigger over the years, had begun as a KwaZulu-Natal race but the festival is now fast becoming not only a national but an international event with participants from, amongst others, provinces like the Free State and the North West, as well as the neighboring countries such as Botswana and Lesotho.

The Rural Horse Riding event has also attracted the interest of other countries such as Sweden France and Australia. Bilaterals with these countries regarding possible funding and investment opportunities, co-operation and exchange programmes are at an advanced stage.



The festival has begun to attract much support from other government entities and corporates as a result of its significant contribution as a catalyst to economic growth and community development within the greater midlands area.

The stake money has increased exponentially from the initial R15 000 to R100 000, thanks to the generosity of major sponsors Gold Circle, Orange Grove Dairies and Harness Racing. The Umzinyathi District Municipality and the Ndumeni Local Municipality have contributed towards the partnership with a contribution in excess of R250 000, according to Mthembu. The municipalities are also responsible for infrastructure logistics and operational aspects of the event. Punters will also get an opportunity to bet for their favourite horses.

As has come to be expected, the Dundee Rural Horse Riding Festival will also provide opportunities for display of other talent on the day. The promotion of Fashion has become a major attraction with young and emerging designers present to showcase their exquisite wear. This will obviously be the precursor to the Durban July. Mthembu also said that people can look forward to a traditional flavour in all activities of the day including music, song and dance. He also urged those who will be attending to dress well as there will be a selection of the best-dressed couple. Fashion designers that will be participating are under the tutelage of Nguni Shades and KZN Young Designers, the brainchild of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Local fashion designers will also take part in the event. The fashion show has been coordinated by the Department of Arts and Culture.

There are many recorded cases of participants reaping the benefits of this initiative. Following from the partnership forged with Harness Horse Riding in particular, some of the rural jockeys have been featured at Harness Racing events in Durban. One such participant is Nkululeko Kunene, who was treated in Sweden last year to engage in farrier training, a horse care discipline. He was jointly sponsored by the Department of Sport and Recreation and Harness Racing.

Mr Mthembu maintains his view that the ultimate objective is for the race to become a professional event with revenue generation and job creation.

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***see attached photos from last year.***

