

Bus Buzz



Monthly newsletter for Golden Arrow passengers

First time DOTY entrant takes the crown



Adam Lehman (Driver of the Year winner) and Nic Cronjé (GABS CEO)

The 2012 Driver of the Year (DOTY) competition was held at Good Hope Suites at Grandwest in Cape Town on April 6th this year. The competition was introduced in 1986 by Golden Arrow's CEO, Nic Cronjé, as a way to further instil a culture of customer care, reliability and driving excellence. In its 27th year, DOTY is one of the premier events on the Golden Arrow calendar and all the drivers involved put a lot of hard work in throughout the year to distinguish themselves amongst their colleagues.

This year's finalists have 128 years of combined service between them, with five of the finalists finding themselves in the top ten for the first time. Arrowgate driver, Adam Lehman, clinched the top spot; an extraordinary feat since this was his first DOTY competition. Lehman only joined the Company in June 2010, but has already established himself as a safe and well-mannered driver. According to CEO Nic Cronjé, this win should really inspire each and every driver. "Not to take anything away from Adam Lehman's exceptional performance, but what this

really shows is that you don't have to work for the company for ten years to win this competition, it's all about the effort that you make," says Cronjé.

In addition to the top ten, Rookie of the Year is awarded to a driver who has had less than one years' service at the time of the competition and this year the award went to Leslie-Carl Solomons from Philippi Depot. The Female Driver of the Year was awarded to Natashé Douglas for her exceptional people skills, driving record and practical driving ability.

Looking back on the strike: Was it really worth it?

When one considers the negative impact of the recent twenty-five day strike in the bus commuter industry, one cannot but wonder whether there is not a more constructive way in which to conclude wage agreements.

A snap survey conducted via in-person interviews, Facebook and electronic mail to determine the impact of the strike on passengers clearly showed the essential role that Golden Arrow's services play in people's lives. Without our buses, passengers were forced to spend extra, un-budgeted for money, extra hours travelling and face the uncertainty that comes with having to suddenly rely on a different means of transport which is not necessarily the most convenient or cost effective.

The results painted a disturbing picture. The majority of commuters were out of pocket up to R1 500 spent on alternative transport and travelling time was increased in most cases by up to three hours a day. Almost half of the survey participants faced disciplinary action of some sort as a result of the strike. Little wonder then that the majority felt that it was commuters who incurred the biggest losses as a result of the strike.

Strike action does not only inconvenience passengers and reduce company revenues but also denies employees the means with which to provide for their families and meet their financial obligations. In fact, experience suggests that many people find themselves in on-going financial difficulties as a result of having had to resort to micro-loans to make ends meet while on strike.

One has to ask oneself "was it really worth it?" in light of the hardships suffered, the more so when a simple calculation shows that it will take about nine months for employees to recover lost wages.

While there appears to have been many who were prepared to accept the wage proposal tabled by employers in the National Bargaining Forum, the absence of a legal requirement for trade unions to conduct a strike ballot denied such employees a meaningful voice.

There is no way, with the best will in the world, that any employer could have given favourable consideration to

labour's demands, yet they stubbornly maintained their position for many weeks of the negotiating process. Nor were Labour representatives willing to take into account the fact that the South African commuter bus industry has seen average annual revenue increases of around 5% for the past few years.

Upon reflection it is therefore clear that very serious thought needs to be given to the far-reaching ramifications of prolonged strike action, particularly in light of the fact that commuter's lives were disrupted and it would seem that no real gains were won as a result.



Locked out: A security guard cuts a lonely figure at the Epping complex during the strike

Zenzele empowers trainees to do it for themselves

Zenzele is a training and development organisation that provides vocational, business skills training and entrepreneurial development for historically disadvantaged people from its premises in Khayelitsha. The name Zenzele means "Do It for Yourself" as the organisation seeks to empower South Africans with technical skills that assist them in either starting up their own businesses or making them employable by existing organisations. Together with Golden Arrow Bus Services (GABS), Zenzele is turning their dream into a reality as the organisation has continually grown from strength to strength, increasing in both size and capacity. Through their six year partnership with GABS, the organisation has purchased welding equipment and materials as well as performing maintenance on older equipment. According to Young Ngcwase, the General Manager of Zenzele, the generous contribution made by GABS has seen numerous welding graduates either receive permanent employment or start up their own welding businesses. "We would like to thank GABS for their loyal support during this difficult economic climate and hope that many more individuals will be helped through this long standing relationship. Thank you Golden Arrow," he says.

Funding by GABS, sourced from the HCI Foundation has had tangible and life-changing results for programme participants. One such success story is a gentleman who was able to capitalise on his newly learnt trade through the formation of his own business. This entrepreneurial spirit has made it possible for him to purchase a vehicle and to employ staff to assist him. In addition, a group of hardworking ladies, armed with knowledge from Zenzele's sewing course has obtained a tender to produce grocery bags for a leading retail outlet. Operating from a workshop provided by Zenzele, these women are making the most of their acquired skills and have successfully entered the business world.

The skills taught at Zenzele include welding, woodwork and sewing but the organisation also provides its learners with access to a business councillor who assists new business owners with everything from business plans to stock taking methods. The training lasts for a period of six months at which point the graduates are afforded a workshop in which to start their own business should this be their goal. Zenzele currently has 15 students in welding, 17 in sewing and 15



Fatima Brown (GABS) and Young Ngcwase (Zenzele Training and Development)

in woodwork. All three courses are open when it comes to gender and there is currently a contingent of female welding trainees. The students pay a small fee for the training but it is heavily subsidised by the organisation itself which is completely non-profit driven.

Looking to the near future Zenzele would like to see all its students successfully placed in positions of employment while the long term goal is for Zenzele to become independent and to move away from being wholly donor-reliant.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS ILLEGAL TO SMOKE ON THE BUS

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