

MEC Dhlomo leads successful first Township Park run at KwaMashu

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has hailed the major success of a 5km race which took place at KwaMashu today, and is regarded as first ever park run to be held in a predominantly black township.

The Saturday International Run, which took place at the Princess Magogo Stadium, was hosted by former Comrades Marathon champion Bruce Fordyce and also featured 155 athletes, some having come from as far afield as Cape Town and Gauteng. Inkosi Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi was also present and started the race in honour of his late mother Princess Magogo.

Park runs are 5km running events that take place every Saturday morning in fourteen countries across five continents. They are run by volunteers, and participation is free of charge. The concept of park runs also ties in with the Department's strategy to promote healthy lifestyles. MEC Dhlomo, who participated in the park run alongside Fordyce and his wife Jill, believes the overwhelming response to today's event bodes well for his and Fordyce's plans to spread the concept of park runs to other black townships.

"This 5km Saturday International run started in the United Kingdom and has become popular in South Africa. But it has been launched mainly in predominantly white residential area. For the first time, we had a launch in a township and it was a resounding success. This will encourage us to work towards such launches in many predominantly black residential areas. We can only do better from here," said MEC Dhlomo.

MEC Dhlomo called on the people of the province to embrace the concept of park runs, and adopt healthy lifestyles in order to curb the impact of non-communicable diseases. He also urged the public to avoid smoking, drinking alcohol, eating fatty and junk food, but instead live a more active and health-conscious lifestyle.

"Regular physical exercise, such as running, has many benefits. It attacks obesity and increases life expectancy of the population. There are many South Africans who are on treatment for diabetes and hypertension but have since decreased the doses after starting gym because their bodies have since improved. Some people who could have started treatment for hypertension and diabetes due to genetic and family history of the disease have delayed the onset of these diseases because they exercise. Exercising also saves money because people burn the fat and stay well for quite a long time. As MEC for health, I try to lead and talk about disease prevention and to be exemplary."

MEC Dhlomo also extended his sincere thanks to about 20 park runners who came from Gauteng; a few others from Cape Town; as well as Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

He also thanked the sponsors – Discovery Vitality, MRP Sport, Blue Dot Communications, Dischem Pharmacy, and the KZN Department of Sport and Recreation - who made the event possible.



KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo with Inkosi Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi; with participants from the park run