



Run it Again, Sam

Samuel Mashishi has won many gold medals in his time as a top runner, but it's his heart of gold that impresses all.



The Murray & Roberts athlete from Hammanskraal has more than 30 young athletes that he coaches and guides on a daily basis. Two-time Olympian René Kalmer, operations officer for the black and yellow club, says she is amazed by what Samuel has achieved: "It's just wonderful that Sam gives of his time and he sacrifices so much of himself for these young athletes. He has taken them off the streets, where some of them were once addicted to drugs. Now this incredible initiative has provided a new and much better addiction."

Samuel explains his motivation to do this work: "I started this because of the crime where we live. I knew that this would help the kids. Seeing that I know a bit about athletics, I started with four kids in

2016. This year, because of the prize-giving from last year, there are already 38! If you start with a sport, you stop doing drugs. They learn the value of hard work and that nothing comes for free."

At the end of 2019, the Murray & Roberts team supported a prize giving braai function which some of the team attended. Anastacia Nel, club secretary comments: "It was a prize-giving and braai, but it was also an appreciation of the kids and their efforts. Ramotse in Hammanskraal is not the easiest place to grow up in. There isn't much opportunity there, other than being part of the street culture and the inevitable drugs, so this is something special for these children to anchor themselves onto. There were young athletes from the age of eight, through to teenagers aged 17. It was so heart-warming to see."

Club chairman Ed Jardim says: "There really isn't a lot there to work with, but Sam does a great job. His heart is in it. There's no decent track, the roads are gravel, and Sam just gets on with it and makes do. We are very proud to support the kids with what we can, and I'm sure that in the future, some of his athletes will make it to the Vorentoe Running Academy, where they will no doubt provide the next crop of talented runners who will run with the torch. It's truly an inspirational story."

The faces of the children when they received their donated running shoes and certificates was a picture of joy and happiness, and there is no doubt that Samuel and his team will continue to fly the black and yellow flag high. /A

Images: Courtesy Murray & Roberts

