

## **BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE & INFORMATION GAP – CBE PARTICIPATES AT SASOL SCIFEST AFRICA 2008**

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) kept the flag of Built Environment professionals flying high as it participated in sub-Saharan Africa's largest science festival, SciFest Africa.

"In 2007 the festival attracted around 45 000 people and proved itself not only just a gathering for scientists, but also a spot for anyone wanting to gain better insight into the world of science" said Chief Executive of the CBE, Mr Bheki Zulu, as he explained why the CBE decided to participate in this event.

Attendants at this annual event included scholars, school teachers and community members, as well as professionals from various disciplines.

Amongst the greatest challenges facing the Built Environment profession is the skills shortage in this booming sector. The recently published research of CSIR titled "Built Environment Professional Skills Supply-Side Audit 2007" is most significant, as this research underscores the need for programmes that address the entire "pipeline" of skills needs. This means that interactions with prospective professionals must begin at school level and continue right throughout their educational journey.

The theme for this year's SciFest Africa was "See Science Through Different Eyes". Each year SciFest Africa offers over 500 events and activities that include exhibitions, lectures, hands-on workshops, excursions, laser-shows, quizzes, whiz-bang science shows and a film fest. Offerings are of interest to people of all ages.

The event is also highly accessible since entrance to its stimulating, inter-active exhibits is totally free, and for any of the many lectures, workshops and other exciting events the price is as little as R8,00.

SciFest Africa Director, Mr. Brian Wilmot, said that 46000 schools had attended the event this year and that 20 000 people from different provinces had visited on a daily basis.

"The major challenge for this year's event was the persistent petrol price hike which made it difficult for people from disadvantaged areas, specifically learners, to get to the event" said Wilmot.

Information materials were handed to learners and teachers who visited the CBE stand. Kingswood College's Maths, Science and Technology teacher, Mr. Rupert Jackson, said that they are currently advising students to choose courses in the Built Environment sector, as there is a great need for Professionals in this industry, and it is important to first understand the structure.

Vaal Tech's Dean of Students, Dr Jenny D. Pretorius, said she was very pleased with the way CBE has created awareness of the importance of the Built Environment and how students are being given relevant information that will assist them in choosing a career in this industry.

Visitors who attended the event were asked to complete a survey which will be used to advise the Department of Education about bridging the Knowledge and Information gap which currently seems to persist in the science environment.

Ends.