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Community Plumbing Challenge 2016 in South Africa Concludes on World Youth Skills Day

Johannesburg, South Africa (July 18, 2016) — The Community Plumbing Challenge 2016, which this year took place in Diepsloot, Johannesburg, South Africa, concluded Friday as the world celebrated World Youth Skills Day.

Organized by IAPMO in collaboration with the World Plumbing Council, the international event aims to contribute to improvements to public health in regions where communities are still threatened by a lack of basic sanitation and safe drinking water systems.

CPC2016 was hosted in Diepsloot by Water, Amenities, Sanitation Services Upgrade Programme (WASSUP) and Diepsloot Arts & Culture Network, in collaboration with Healthabitat Sanitation Studio, and facilitated in South Africa by Sticky Situations. Additional event partners included Autodesk Education Experiences and the Wot-If Trust.

During the week of July 9-15, four international student teams representing South Africa, Australia, India, and the United States worked together to design and install a series of new communal toilet facilities for the residents of Extension 1 Diepsloot, in collaboration with WASSUP Diepsloot, a dedicated volunteer and nonprofit organization.

Teams worked tirelessly through a range of unique challenges specific to the local environment. Mostly working against the clock, against difficult conditions, the teams worked together with local partners on the ordering and sourcing of local materials, equipment, and tools to assist in the organization and planning of schedules to find collaborative solutions for the new communal toilet facilities.

By taking part in the challenge, the young skilled champions pushed themselves to the limit of their abilities and developed new skills and understanding, which will assist them in their respective professional careers as plumbers, architects, welders, and engineers.

"We believe the impact that CPC2016 leaves on the Diepsloot community will keep this project going for a longer period of time," said IAPMO International Project Leader Sean Kearney. "The forging of new partnerships makes small community actions much stronger and more long term."

Additional highlights of the CPC2016 included collaboration between local teams and global partners, a Science and Engineering Forum held with Johannesburg Water, and official visits from representatives of participating countries.

"It's the global, national and local collaborations that make CPC2016 work; none of this can be done alone," Kearney said.

U.S. Consul General Christopher Rowan attended the official launch event July 9 and was on hand for addresses from host partners including AutoDesk and Healthabitat. The Diepsloot Arts and Culture Network, which transformed the week's release about CPC2016 into poetry, song, dance, and theater, provided entertainment.



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Rowan also met with IAPMO Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Business Development Dave Viola; International Project Manager Grant Stewart; and Kearney, who gave him insight into this year's event and a personal guided tour of the workshop areas onsite. Rowan was then introduced to Team USA members and leaders, and spent time getting to know each of them. He also toured the designated Team USA site within Extension 1, Diepsloot, where its communal toilet facility designs were to be installed.

On Friday, Rowan arrived on site once again to support Team USA as it moved its two designs from the workshop hub to the actual site within Extension 1. He also spent time with local host team partners, who informed him of their roles in CPC2016, and he gained an understanding of the immense effort that had been levied by each team — and the local and international parties — during the week.

Stacey Walker, First Secretary Policy with the Australian High Commission, and Sarah Withers Dippenaar, Senior Research and Program Officer, represented the Australian government at CPC2016. Upon their arrival, they received a summary of the project, its aims, and events held during the lead-up to the day.

They were then introduced to Kearney and Stewart, as well as Australian Team Leader Greg Tink. Tink took them around the Australian team's workshop and introduced them to each of the team members. Walker and Dippenaar were exceptionally intrigued in what the project was about, how it was being supported, and what the individual team members' contributions to the project had been.

The officials traveled to the CPC2016 site in a local taxi, and walked around both the Australian and South African sites; this included a walk through the streets of Diepsloot. Dippenaar was invited into a small children's school to greet the children along the way. Both officials witnessed the installation of the South African new communal designs, and had the opportunity to speak with WPC Secretariat Stuart Henry while walking up the main street within Diepsloot Extension 1.

CPC2016 will conclude at the World Plumbing Conference, which will take place Sept. 15-16 in Cape Town, South Africa. The performance of the communal toilet designs will be showcased, based on the results of data logging and water metering of the new designs over the next two months.

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