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Media Release

28 February 2019

For immediate release:

Young people breaking down barriers between science and society

Encouraging young scientists to share their work and engage with society is part of the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)'s drive to connect science and society, to ultimately lead toward its vision of a critically engaged and scientifically literate society.

In line with this objective, SAASTA's Young Science Communicators competition provides a platform for young people studying science to share stories about their work and to develop their communication skills. At the end of 2018, over 200 passionate, young scientists put together their thoughts and stories, in the form of videos, articles, audio clips and other creative modes of communication such as poetry and cartoons, to enter the competition.

The art of sharing complex scientific ideas using accessible language and tools is key to breaking down the barriers between science and the broader public.

The most recent round of the competition acknowledged the importance of communicating science in indigenous languages, and talking to and engaging with people in their mother tongue. The United Nation's 2019 celebration of the International Year of Indigenous Languages raises awareness of the importance of language as a tool for communication, education, social integration and development.

Communication of science in indigenous South African languages is critical for science to be inclusive to all of South African society. Entries in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Sepedi, Sesotho, and Afrikaans highlighted the appetite for young scientists to be sharing their work in their own languages.

Geologist Humbelani Muofhe, who was awarded second place for her Tshivenda entry in the Indigenous Language category, said "Writing [my] Tshivenda entry was not easy because some scientific words do not exist in my home language, but I found a way to explain them better."

Sharing stories about the impact and relevance of science and research to the broader society can help better connect science with society. Michél Strauss, a PhD candidate in Physiology student from North West University, was awarded first place in the Writing category. She is passionate about her work and says “it is amazing to know how our findings could positively impact the lives of others”. She hopes by writing about her work she can bring more attention to the harmful role that a high salt diet plays in cardiovascular disease development, and encourage readers to make conscious decisions when it comes to their daily salt intake.

The adjudication of the competition has been concluded and the results are:

Article category:

First place: Michél Strauss - *Spilling the "salt" on a shaky situation*

Second place: Yashini Naidoo - *Superbugs: The end of an antibiotic era?*

Commended:

Mpho Mosia - *A diary entry by cell-free DNA*

Jonathan Botha - *Growing money on trees: Cellulose and its role in the bioeconomy*

Karla Alujevic - *Not too hot, not too cold: A lizard's struggle to find that "just right" in the face of climate change*

Carri-Ann Bloom - *Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Why Local is Lekker.*

Open Category:

First place: Molly Czachur - *Finding Fish*

Second place: Julia Davies - *The Streets Beneath*

Commended:

Amica Muller-Nedebock - *DNA. Why does it matter anyway?*

Nomawethu Hlazo - *The Fossil Chronicles Comics*

Audio category:

First place: Marike Louw - *Rainbow Nation on a Sub-Antarctic Island*

Second place: Ntanganedzeni Ramugondo - *Are Drones the Future for Africa?*

Video Category:

First Place: Darryl Herron - *Imagine South Africa without trees*

Second place: Marike Louw - *Denizens of Marion Island*

Indigenous Language Category:

First Place: Chwayita Ncedana - *Ubukrelekrele be ndalo-akulahlwa mbeleko ngakufelwa (isiXhosa)*

Second place: Humbelani Muofhe - *Oh, No gudela zwa matombo? (Tshivenda)*

Commended:

Molly Czachur - *Finding Fish (Afrikaans)*

Nkululeko Khanye - *Umhlaba Oguqakayo (isiZulu)*

Top entries are available to view on SAASTA's website at
www.saasta.ac.za/competitions/young-science-communicators/

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ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN AGENCY FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.saasta.ac.za

ABOUT THE NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF):

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation

of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za