

Cheers as town is voted best

Philippa Francis

MBOMBELA - The public has spoken: Mbombela was officially announced as a finalist for *Kwêla's* Dorp van die Jaar (Town of the Year) competition on Wednesday night, pipping other Mpumalanga towns of White River and eMalahleni to the post.

The city is now one of nine finalists around South Africa for which members of the public can vote from May 24 to 30, with the overall winner being announced on the popular Afrikaans TV programme on June 7. Two other finalists have also been announced; Vanderbijlpark in Gauteng and Tzaneen in Limpopo.

The winning town will receive the ultimate prize of R1 million worth of free advertising on TV channel kykNET and a massive party

to be organised for all residents, with food, drinks and entertainment galore. To top it all off, *Kwêla* will be there to film all the action.

Representatives from the municipality, business and tourism industries is already planning to take hands to ensure Mbombela will be voted the ultimate winner.

Municipality spokesman, Mr Joseph Ngala, said it proved Mbombela is a "community of winners".

"We may not have the sea, but we certainly have the scenery. It does not matter what TV channel is running this competition, it will be putting this city on the map and will do the world of good for us all," Ngala said.

"We're very excited we have come this far. We are a newly constituted City of Mbombela and this is a great opportunity for everyone in the municipality to embrace and be proud of this competition. We're

going to win it!"

Ms Linda Grimbeek, chief operating officer of Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism (KLCBT), said the capital being chosen as the province's finalist could only be seen as positive.

"This came from the members of the public who voted en masse. It is such a compliment to the city," Grimbeek said.

"It's not about the money, it is not about the title, it's about showing how proud we are of our town. And if we win, we will attract more visitors which will benefit local businesses."

Past TJ Maré, chairman of KLCBT, agreed that the competition would benefit everyone in the community.

"It's about all of us who live here and the chamber is behind making Mbombela known to (South Africans). We're going to do anything possible to get (the public) on board to make a success of this, to make us all winners. What we want to see is unity in Mbombela, so that it becomes our city," Maré explained.

For Mbombela to win the competition, however, residents have to vote by sending an SMS with Mbombela or Nelspruit to 33157, but only from May 24 to 30. The town with the greatest number of votes will be crowned the winner.

Mr John Davies of the Nelspruit Local Tourism Organisation said a win would impact the entire community.

"What this means is that we could have more people employed because the more exciting our town is as a tourist destination, the more people will come and enjoy what we have to offer."



Toasting the nomination and in it to win it: Past TJ Maré, chairman of Kruger Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism, Ms Goitsi Tsolanku, Tsogo Sun sales manager in Mpumalanga, Ms Irma Green, national group editor Caxton local newspapers and Mr David Shabangu from the City of Mbombela Local Municipality. **Photo: Nicolene Olckers, digitally enhanced: Jacques Erasmus**