

Umbonowethu

Support Group Stomps HIV Stigma

USM will use their new HIV/Aids support group to break through the stigma and barriers that exist around the illness. According to Rachel Calitz, Occupational Nurse and project leader, the shame and stigma around HIV/Aids is what often prevents education and support reaching those affected.

"It's our aim to use the team of trained support group workers from within USM to give counselling and spread prevention communication to employees and their families that are impacted by the illness," she says.

Seen here are the USM HIV Support Group members.

The First Word

It is with pride that I can report that Management and the Unions both agreed that ethics and honesty needed to be more visibly promoted in the work place and concluded that it was time to upgrade USM's anti-corruption hotline. Whistle Blowers company was subsequently appointed, an outside independent professional service provider that employees, contractors, suppliers, customers and the public can anonymously report illicit activity without fear of victimisation. An ethical and honest culture is the foundation of a great working environment, something the entire USM Team values. Well done to the Management / Union Assembly meeting for initiating this improvement (all the contact details are presented to the right and throughout the USM site).

This volume of the Umbonowethu is filled with inspiration. If we as individuals are going to make a difference in this world, it starts with influencing the people around us. Well done to the HIV Support Group for reaching out to USM employees and their families. Having HIV doesn't mean you are a bad person, breaking down the stigma of HIV is a worthy cause. HIV is preventable and treatable and a little bit of encouragement from us is sometimes all it takes. Well done to the women who were willing to share their stories in this volume. Courage, ambition, perseverance and other wonderful qualities abound within the USM Team. It is wonderful reading these stories because success breeds success, we have much to learn from one another. Being part of the USM Team is all about encouraging others and being encouraged, let's keep it up.

These same qualities of courage, ambition and perseverance have also been visible during the off-crop. The time pressures of getting the off-crop work done properly and finished on time has been compounded this off-crop by the additional USM recapitalisation initiatives. The most noteworthy 'pressure pots' were the DCS upgrades and the USM packing plant upgrade but the off-crop for all of us is never without pressure. Re-attaining USM's international FSSC 22'000 food safety certification has been a specific focal point during the off-crop and the final stage 2 audit is scheduled soon after we start crushing. This accreditation is extremely important for many of our customers. It's even more important for the USM team because it means we are globally competitive; an achievement some of our local competitors are envious of and something the USM Team can be very proud of. It doesn't stop here. USM's recapitalisation initiatives continue into the 2017/18 financial year. We don't tolerate mediocrity, we don't aspire to be average and we aim to be GREAT! I have been inspired by this edition of the Umbonowethu, let's start crushing and together as the USM Team, let's MAKE IT HAPPEN.

As always, work smarter, work together, have fun and be safe!

Adey

ETHICS WITHOUT FEAR OF VICTIMISATION

In an effort to promote ethics and honesty in the workplace, Umfolozi Sugar Mill has secured the services of an independent information company WHISTLE BLOWERS to whom employees, its contractors, suppliers, customers and the public can report illicit activity without fear of victimisation. Please assist USM in our endeavour to eliminate dishonest and unethical practices from our industry, promoting strong business relationships towards a successful future.

YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS:

The protected Disclosures Act, Act 26 of 2000 makes provision for employees to report unlawful conduct or practices while providing for the protection of the employee. *Whistle Blowers can only guarantee the protection of a person's identity if they do not share the fact that they have reported an activity with others that may compromise their anonymity.*

USM WHISTLE BLOWERS CONTACT DETAILS:

Web: www.whistleblowing.co.za
e-Mail: usm@whistleblowing.co.za
Toll Free Number: 0800 222 230
Fax: 086 522 2816
SMS: 33490
WApp: 079 512 9361



Housekeeping Vigilance

The safety department's Ben Calitz, Safety Contractor and Nokuthula Manukuza, Safety Assistant extended a word of thanks to all USM Employees, FTC's and contractors who worked diligently all through the off crop period to make sure that we do not have major incidents.

According to Manukuza, the mill did not have any major incidents since December 2016 before the start of the off crop period. "We've had a few minor first aid cases reported and some fire incidents but all without harm to anyone. The main reason for the low incidents can definitely be attributed to the high standard of housekeeping during the hustle and bustle of maintaining our 90-year old mill," says Manukuza.

Going forward into the new season the safety message from the safety pair is for everyone to try and keep the plant as clean as possible. The safety motto for USM in 2017 is 'a place for everything and everything in its place', says Manukuza. "If we can always remember this slogan, then we are sure that we will minimise the rate of incidents. Remember, she says " we are responsible for our own safety, nobody else."



No rest at USM in off-crop

There was no rest for the USM team during the past off-crop season, with a hive of activity going on around the numerous projects that had to be completed in time for the new season.

This includes repairing equipment in dire need and enhancing the mill's capacity and workload with new installations as well as kick-start the full automation of the plant.

We sat Alan Williamson, Operations Executive, down to, first hand hear more about the most important off-crop projects this season at USM.

Replacing DCS in boilers and front end

The current DCS in the factory is no longer supported by the supplier and will be replaced and updated. In 2015 the tender was awarded to Yokogawa- the Raw house system was installed in 2016 as phase 1, while phase 2 entailed the upgrade to the boilers and extraction system. These are the first steps in upgrading the automation of USM over the next few seasons to enable more control over the plant by the operators, resulting in improved efficiencies.

Retubing evaporator vessels

The sugar department is busy retubing some of the evaporator vessels which became blocked as a result of the low throughputs and time efficiencies during the 2016 season. It is necessary to retube these vessels to ensure the evaporators are operating at their highest efficiency. Poor evaporator performance will result in low brix syrup which will increase the coal burnt and the undetermined loss. The low brix will slow down the throughput on the Pan Floor eventually resulting in a slower crush and longer season.

Vapour and juice piping replacement

The vapour, cooling water and juice pipes in the factory corrode over time due to the various products, resulting in energy (steam) losses and high undetermined losses as well as a safety risk to personnel. The LTA is directly impacted especially when the plant has to be stopped to replace a section of piping or to repair steam and juice leaks. To rectify this problem and alleviate down time and loss of production, USM has embarked on a programme whereby pipes are identified during the season and replaced during the upcoming off-crop. A scope of works is defined and it may require an external contractor to be contracted. At present the cooling water piping requires attention. This is the large bore piping feeding cooled water to the Pan and evaporator floors to create vacuum for respective vessels. The leaking pipes consume many labour hours on a stop day

and leaking products end up on the floor or in other products. With a major failure the factory will have to be shut down for repairs taking 10 – 24 hours.

Diffuser chain inspection and maintenance

The existing diffuser chain was installed in the 2012 off crop and has run for four seasons. The life expectancy was 5 - 7 years. Towards the end of the 2017 season the diffuser chain was tracking towards the south side - a sign that the chain is beginning to stretch and individual chain components (pins and bushes) are starting to wear. After an inspection with consulting experts the decision was to run it for one more season. During this off crop, random pins and bushes have been removed to confirm the wear rate on the components. The excessive wear on pins and bushes need to be addressed urgently. Those that have been identified as critical will be replaced now and the maintenance staff will continue to replace the lesser worn pins and bushes during the season.

Sugar screening

The sugar screen was installed in 2011. Since then the quality demanded by our customers and accreditation bodies necessitate a relook of USM's screening process. The existing rotary screen was below standard and the redesign of a flat vibrating screen was installed. The flat screen has a higher efficiency and lumps cannot bypass this screen as before. The bypassing of lumps is a major concern to our customers, resulting in USM reworked 2 200 tons of sugar at a cost of R105 per ton.

84" improvements

Major work was done over the last off-crop season. This off crop a flat plate will be installed.

New primary cane knife rotor installation

Rotor was sent away for refurbishing and was installed as normal maintenance.

Spent bagasse carrier chain

Normal off-crop maintenance will take place.



WOMEN AT WORK



Ray of this Rose reaches far

As her name suggest, Rose Woolmore is like a delicate flower with a strong presence. One who beautifies her environment but must be handled with respect.

The thorn side of this rose beauty at USM personifies a die-harder who refuses to give in and up. "If I could sum myself up in three words it will be: disciplined, driven and dedicated." And, adds Rose, this is true for her career and at the workplace, indeed for her whole life. So how does such a strong woman cope in a still largely male-dominated society and what challenged her personally? "At times I have felt intimidated but being forced out of my comfort zone also taught me to stand stronger and mature into a more confident lady," she answers self-assured. She is equally clear about what makes women valuable in life. "Empathy and intuition."

Being a strong believer that we are all equal, she preaches equal treatment with respect for all. "I like to believe that I portray that and aim to inspire not only younger ladies but anyone to push their boundaries and grow as we are ultimately responsible for ourselves. "Even though you may have little failures along the way it is these hiccups that prepare you for challenges in the future." And she is living proof, explains Rose. "I studied through Unisa and gave up for a few years but regained by focus, set new goals and started again. It was not easy studying and working but once I have organised and structured my goal everything fell into place and what once looked overwhelming and unreachable became achievable and I did it!"

Rose got her degree. Small victories must be celebrated, she stresses. "One must keep pushing yourself – it works like an energy boost." This mum of two "adorable fur-kids" – Rage and Roxy – is engaged. "My family is very important to me. I also love spending time outdoors. "Working out is a daily routine - it keeps me focused and serves as a major stress reliever. Whether I run early morning with friends, do a session of weight training or simply walking my fur-kids I try to fit in some sort of physical activity daily." Rose firmly believes the only limits in life are those you create yourself. "Believe in yourself." This is the best advice given to her.

By now Rose Woolmore knows how to sidestep the hurdles: she has figured out her route and tempo in life and she happily abides!



Don't mess with 'Mamma Appy'...

Talking about being a true torchbearer for women, especially in male-dominated fields and USM's Drienie Humphreys is an excellent example!

As a qualified millwright with N6 electrical and mechanical under her belt she has been the scaffolding manager in off crop for the past two years. "It's fun. I love having three teams under me and managing them with a senior supervisor, also liaising with the projects and the plant and ensuring my colleagues are happy."

This go-getter, also known fondly as "Mamma Appy" is a standard-bearer for women. She has been working with men since 1999, starting in underground "where you learned to be the best and never ever to give up. As a woman, you had to fight and stand up for yourself.

"No special treatment was given to me when I started out. Today lady colleagues don't have to lift heavy equipment, they have a separate bathroom with sanitary wear and there is protection in the form of a harassment policy, equal opportunities, etc. We also still had initiation those days – that is no longer allowed but it was a great way to bond with your colleagues and we stood by one another as one."

As the only lady and the oldest Drienie protected the younger guys in the early days and they "rewarded" her by calling her "Mamma Appy". That name stuck even when she was later promoted to foreman! Her subordinates' nickname for her was 'Isikhukhukazi', meaning Hen.

Drienie believes being assertive is a sure way to success...

having your goal in front of you and not letting it out of your sight helps you to focus and stay alert.

This mom raised two grown-up sons (now 23 and 27) by herself and is very proud that they are successful and independent adult men. "Maybe they learned something from me. While they grow up my life revolved around them, but now with them out in the world it's my time alone."

Drienie loves her bike and when she has time like to explore places on the road.

Her late father was her mentor and inspiration. "He made me believe I can be whatever I wanted to be and supported me when I became the first female underground as an apprentice. It was not easy – remember there was no special arrangement made for ladies. No bathroom, shower or assistance. I was treated like the men."

Her late mom also supported Drienie. "I took care of her for 10 years after my dad died." Drienie feels women may be soft and kind but inside have determination and willpower not to give up and fight for what they want, especially when the going gets tough.'

The best advice she ever received was from her beloved dad - to forgive people. "It doesn't mean you have to accept their behaviour or trust them. The forgiveness is for yourself to be able to move on in life."

Drienie likes to lead by example to inspire other women. "I teach them you don't have to be submissive and keep quite...empower yourself and talk in meetings and also to be assertive. She also encourages them to complete their studies and to support one another.



Mechanic with smile, style

Nobuhle Ndlela or better known at USM as “Smiley”, is the first female mechanic in training at USM. Her current title is mechanical assistant.

And this girl on the rise is all smiles and soft femininity as part of her strong armour when she talks about her job shoulder-to-shoulder with her male colleagues.

“I’m a maintenance worker who love working as a mechanic. I also believe working as a female in a traditional male environment makes you super strong,” is how Nobuhle describes herself and a typical working day at USM.

“Yes, it is hard work, physically too and sometimes in a ‘dirty’ environment to the boot, but somehow it suits and also boost me as a person and woman,” she proudly declares.

According to Miss Smiley she knew from a young age that women can be anything they aspire to be.

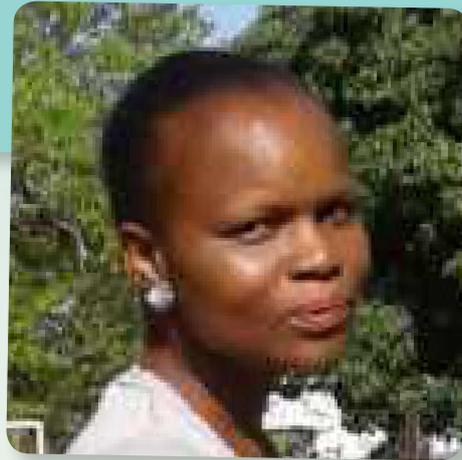
“Since I always liked working with my hands this was the clear path waiting for me. I’ve jump at the opportunity to do this and also be an inspiration for my fellow sisters.” And she just loves being part of the USM team, adds Nobuhle.

This mechanic with style has definite ideas on women in workplaces, especially male-dominated ones. “I want to stay true to my gender and still like to do girlie and feminine things like dressing-up, also for work, wear make-up and show my softer side.”

Her message to young women who must still make their mark is simple but straightforward: “There is no job for men only”, she insists.

Sistas can really do it all. But it is important to look after yourself as a woman on your career path.”

“You have to be smart, know your dreams and follow it with dedication and passion,” adds Nobuhle with that beautiful smile, indicating here is one determined woman on her way. Watch out, guys!



Ntombi drums it up nicely...

If names are anything to go by, Ntombi Ntshangase is on target to a drum roll...

Not that noise will steer achiever Ntombi away from her clear goals at USM – she considers her ability to stay calm in heated situations as her best attribute.

Deservedly so, because this 35-year-old woman is tuning it up to another level at the mill. She is the first female artisan in the Instrument Department at USM.

Ntombi cites her mother as a real role model who inspires her to reach for the stars in all she endeavours.

“She raised and guided me to be the proper and ambitious woman I am right now. She also taught me to stay positive in all situations that may cross your path in life. This has stood me in good stead through the years.”

Ntombi feels strongly that sometimes men can take women for granted when it comes to heavy duties.

“As women we are sadly still too often being reminded that we do not have a voice. But we do in fact.

“Personally I choose to remain calm in such tricky situations and then fight for my position and right.”

Ntombi is by no chance a man-hater. She believes in giving credit where it is due and can appreciate men’s role and contribution anywhere.

A good example is her brother who gave her the best advice she has received so far: to study electrical engineering!

Away from work, Ntombi is a single lady and enjoying her single status a lot.

In her free time she focuses on her two other passions: church and the gym.

“It does not only make me happy, but also strengthen and armour me to pull through tough times,” she says.



With a wink and a wing women can fly

Thobile Ntuli is another of the trailblazers for women at USM.

This bright lady knows what it takes to the top and she takes her job as electrician at the mill and specifically as role model for women in traditional male environments very seriously.

Thobile strongly believes women can do anything. “We face challenges head on and give it a wink and then we fly. Part of the reason why I want to excel is because it reflects also wider on women and open gates for them. If I shine, the company won’t hesitate to give another lady a chance in whatever position.”

Although Thobile has suffered emotional abuse during training at the workplace she learned from it and then used it to get stronger. “I’m a straightforward and self-motivated person and also a good listener who can solve problems, especially for women.”

She adored her late dad – a man rich in heart – and he was also her absolute role-model. He was a fine man and motivator with whom she could talked just about anything, says Thobile. According to her he raised her to believe in herself and her dreams...and to be a strong, independent woman, willing and able to make a difference in life.

“There is only one Thobile, run your own race,” he used to advise me. That stays with me ever since, stress Thobile.

It was helping her dad from an early age to fix cars and using tools that she realised she was good with her hands. “Also in wanting to be like him, I was steered into this direction in my career and that’s why I probably ended up in a male-dominated field.”

Away from work, Thobile is a happy human being, feeling blessed to be able to live the life she has been praying for and to provide for her angel daughter, Londeka (11).

Her motto is: “if you can dream it, you can do it”. This lady clearly walks the talks...

Food safety – road to recovery

One of the core and vital aims for USM in 2017 will be to obtain the vital international food safety first certificate once-again.

Last year turned out bittersweet for the North Coast sugar company when the mill, unfortunately, lost its FSSC 22000 certificate in June 2016. This came after three major findings were noted and recorded: the bird control system, i.e. inadequate drainage system, inadequate sugar dust extraction and poor housekeeping.

It has to be seen in perspective, explains Julie Armugam, quality assurance specialist, at USM. "These projects were in dire need of capital for improvement. The mill also had to impose water restrictions due to the ongoing drought; hence the housekeeping was not up to standard."

Adding salt to the wounds, the loosing of this prestigious certificate made certain customers unhappy and USM had to swallow the bitter pill of losing supplying some of them with sugar.

However, the USM senior management team braved the storm and decided to be proactive and fight back. The bold and wise decision was made to re-apply for the FSSC 22000 with the DQS accreditation body.

The stage 1 audit of re-application took place on 22 November 2016 and was successfully completed, says Armugam. It allowed USM to proceed to the next stage for certification. This audit is scheduled for 16 to 19 May 2017.

In order to meet the requirements and ensure USM are on the road to victory, the following action steps were implemented during the 2017 off-crop season:

- Phase 1 bird netting was installed to prevent or reduce birds entering the pan floor and continuous pan area - this was completed in January 2017.

- The sugar dust extraction to eliminate sugar dust in the packing and sugar bin areas is currently being installed and will be completed by 7 April 2017.
- The drainage system in the food safety areas are being re-designed and will be completed by April 2017.

Armugam adds that while the USM team is working very hard to implement the necessary steps, management has taken a further giant leap in renovating the entire packing station. This includes rotary screen replacement with a flat vibrating screen to eliminate hard lumps in sugar, a new conveyor system to eliminate sugar spillages, flooring resurfaced with epoxy, new and only one strict access control with the food safety standards, two new offices, foreman and shift supervisors, an eating room, store room and new ablution facilities.

Furthermore, the packing station staff will be issued with different colour clothing (overalls) from the factory staff. This project is set to be finished by the first week in April 2017.

In the meantime, the bagging area has been separated from the palletising area. According to Armugam the two pre-pack machines and a new baler machine will also be added to the new renovated packing station.

In order for all USM staff to understand the importance of adhering to the food safety standards and requirements, training on food safety awareness was held for the entire factory including Admin, Human Resources, Cane Supply and the Clinic staff on 15 to 17 February this year.

All that remains is to be focused and committed to obtain the certificate again. Armugam views due diligence, excellence and applying attention to detail vital in attaining this important goal.

She extends a huge thank you to all her committed colleagues who have helped and still stay determined to "make this important goal happen".



New extraction units will eliminate sugar dust in the packing and sugar bin areas.



Re-designed drainage system in the food safety areas.



Renovations under way in new packing station.



Bird netting was installed to prevent or reduce birds entering the pan floor and continuous pan area.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD TIMEKEEPING

by Vusi Tembe

Being punctual especial at work or meeting matters, at least in today's Western societies. Being on time, every time, conveys far more than just a good sense of timing. It tells people that you're on top of things, that you're organized, that you can be counted on, that you value and respect those around you and ultimately that you value yourself.

Punctuality Shows Mastery - Being on time consistently shows everyone around you that you are the master of your life. It demonstrates foresight, the ability to predict possible hang-ups and adaptability. It shows the ability to change your plans to accommodate those hang-ups.

Punctuality Shows Competence - Someone who shows, over and over, that they are the master of their time is someone who will be taken seriously in areas far removed from time management. That foresight and adaptability that gets you where you need to be, when you need to be there, tells the people around you that you can handle whatever is thrown at you.

Punctuality Shows Integrity - Punctuality is also a trust issue. When you make an appointment, you are making a commitment to be where you said you'd be when you said you'd be there. The only way you build up other people's trust in you is by consistently meeting your commitments and that starts with being punctual. The person who is always on time is someone others can trust to be as good as their word.

Punctuality Shows You Value People - People are busy, too busy to be waiting on you while their other work goes unfinished. Being punctual shows, clearly and truly, that you value their time and, by extension, that



Employees who showed up for work, over and over for years receive their long-service awards from CEO, Adey Wynne (right back) are (left) Lawrence Gengan (10 years), Sylvia Zulu (20 years), Albert Peters (20 years), Ben Nel (10 years), Robert Mafuleka (40 years), Robin Pillay (25 years), Ravi Vandayar (25 years) and Thulani Buthelezi (10 years).

you value them as a person. It says, "Let's make this time we've arranged as productive as possible so we can both get on with all our other important stuff."

Compare that with the attitude of the chronically late person who, when confronted, says, "But I'm always on time for the things that are important." The message this sends is that, when I'm late, it's because I really don't feel that whatever I'm late for is all that important. If it were a date with a cute woman or man I met in Cape Town, I'd have been on time; if it were a concert, I'd have been on time; but since it's just a meeting about the status of the big project I'm working on, I feel I can be late.

Punctuality Shows You Value Yourself - Finally, being on time shows you value your time and yourself. First of all, being repeatedly late is a self-destructive behaviour. Why else would you risk not landing the big client, losing your job, or insulting those around you? And everyone knows that most self-destructive behaviour follows from low self-esteem. Even if it's not true, that's the perception you're allowing others to think of you.

Seedlings nurture youth

Summer seedlings were donated to five USM Madiba Day beneficiaries in the Mtubatuba area during February. Healthy little beetroot, spinach, onions, peppers, chillies, tomatoes and cabbage seedlings were delivered to five crèches in the area by Senzo Mahlinza, Cane Supply Manager seen here in the photo with Mrs Madlala from Sensokuhle Orphan Care Centre in Dukuduku.



SPORTS DAY 2017

Sports day organiser, Esther Bwambale, HR Generalist, described the start of this year's sports day on 17 March as 'the most beautiful blue sky day with a sun that looked ready to play with us.' The day's fun started with a 5km run from the sports grounds through the Riverview Village and the Country Club and back. In the first place was Nkosinathi Khoza (shift), followed by Siyabonga Thabethe (day shift) and in the third place was Bongani Timamu (shift).

According to Bwambale the darts was a riveting show of skills which saw both the shift teams walking away with the men's and ladies' first place. 'We then held the first ever Tug of War contest between management and shop stewards and it was tough, but in the end the shop stewards firm footing pulled themselves into a winning position. Other sports played were Netball and Volleyball with the day shift and shift teams walking away as winner respectively. Reigning as victors in the soccer was the day shift team which saw them walking away with the sought after soccer floating trophy.

'We had interesting activities going on throughout the day and the newly added two pool tables were especially popular throughout the day. It was fun day with great participation and the sports day committee would like to thank the company for being a great employer and our suppliers for support during the day,' said Bwambale.



Sports day tug of war contest (battle) in action.



'Proudly USM' branding by employees at the annual sports day.

Shape-up in tough times...

Despite challenging circumstances, USM has a set of targets and goals to be achieved during the current Umbonowethu, says Alan Williamson, Operations Executive.

According to Williamson the impact of the drought is severely affecting the USM's output. "Although the goal of USM is to crush 1.3 million tons cane in 36 weeks at 260 tch, the impact of the drought has meant that there is only 970 000 tons cane available to crush this season. "The target is therefore to crush 970 000 tons cane in 32 weeks starting on 19 April and finishing on 26 November 2017." He adds that during the season the factory will be tested at throughputs in excess of 260 tch for a period of at least four weeks to prove the sustainability of a higher crush. To complete the season in 32 weeks the focus will be on achieving a daily crush of 5 500 tons, resulting in a weekly crush of 34 000 tons.

With regards to the three strategic metrics in the operations this year, Williamson states the following:

Tons cane per hour (TCH)

In order to achieve the required throughputs for the season, the hourly crush rate has to be closely monitored to ensure daily targets are met which in turn will move positively towards weekly and monthly targets being achieved.

Lost time available (LTA)

LTA is a measure of the time the factory is standing due to breakdowns, mainly mechanical and operational. The three factory teams, namely sugar, powergen and extraction have been tasked with providing their plans to reduce the LTA in each section. The LTA is under the plant's direct control. Some of the methods used to minimise stoppages are: carrying out inspections, ensuring spares are readily available, planning stop day work correctly and ensuring schedules are completed correctly.

Overall recovery (OR)

Overall recovery is the most important statistic in a sugar factory. This is a measure of how well we recover sugar crystals from the sugar cane. As the sugar in the cane is paid for, any sugar left in the cane is money down the drain. A good recovery is anything over 85. At present, USM is below this, so too much sugar is wasted. This can be in the final molasses, bagasse, filter cake or undetermined loss. Every ton of sugar lost is R9 000 down the drain. If the overall recovery can be improved by 0.5 % in 2017, it will result in extra revenue of R5 million.



This trio (left) Happy Madi, Rosemary Msweli and Zanele Myeni are ready for the mill's new crushing season.

Sugar Cane Supply Estimates

According to Nhlakanipho Dlodlo, Cane Supply Manager the past season has been the worst cane production and cane quality season in the history of USM. Dlodlo states final deliveries for 2016/17 were 760 667 tons cane compared to the first estimate of 960 000 tons. He says that their first estimates for the new 2017/18 season was submitted before the good rains in the cane catchment areas late January/February. "The feeling is that the following estimates will increase considering the physical growth in sugar cane crops after the rains."

On grower relations, Dlodlo commented that despite the poor cane quality last season some growers went the 'extra mile' to ensure that they bring clean cane to USM and to acknowledge these efforts cane quality awards will be held for large and small scale growers. During the awards, all growers will be encouraged to send clean cane to USM to make sure the mill performs and recovers sugar optimally.

Table below depict this season final deliveries and the coming season first estimate:

CANE ESTIMATES 2017/18 SEASON FOR NOTING

SUPPLIERS	2016/17	2017/18	% INCR OR DECR
LSG Trams	550,015	669,162	18%
SSG Trams	12,624	10,000	-26%
LSG Road	198,178	265,276	25%
SSG Road	32,458	32,000	-1%
Home Cane Total	793,275	976,438	19%
Inward Diversion	117,046	155,000	24%
Outward Diversion	149,654	155,000	3%
Management adjustment		16,438	
MILL CRUSH TOTAL	760,667	960,000	21%

FESTIVE JOY

December is always a very happy month at Destiny House (local orphan care centre), this according to house manager Esther Hurter. During December USM employees helped spread that joy by giving the centre a Christmas party with presents, cake and a meal.



Earlier the USM civils team took care of some house maintenance issues such as fixing cots for the new members to arrive.

Go fish!

Every year just when the pressures of the off-crop season gets a bit much a few employees and their families make their way to the lovely iSimangaliso Game Reserve Cape Vidal for serious relaxation and fishing. Congratulations to Shane Vadival and Alida Visagie, overall winners of the fishing competition.



Shane Vadival won the men's category at the fishing competition.



Colleague Johan Visagie's wife Alida was the overall winner in the ladies category.