



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

JALA PEO FOUNDATION – EMPOWERING YOUNG CYCLISTS

PPS Professional Woman of The Year Winner

07 August 2015: In honour of Women's Day, PPS today announced Cindy Ross as the winner of the PPS Professional Woman of the Year (PWOTY) award. As part of the award, Ross was presented with a R75 000 donation towards her non-profit organisation the *Jala Peo Foundation*, which empowers underprivileged youth from the Diepsloot community through cycling, enterprise development and life skills programmes.

According to Kim Austen, Head of Sales Training & Development at PPS and chairperson of the judging panel, the PWOTY award aims to acknowledge a female PPS graduate professional member who has made an outstanding effort to contribute towards social change in a particular community, especially among the youth. "PPS became aware of several social initiatives that are driven by PPS members. As a response to this, PPS established the competition to further assist those women who are making a difference in their communities."

Ross, Director and Company Secretary of the NGO of the *Jala Peo Foundation* and an attorney by profession, explains that the *Jala Peo Foundation* is made up of two academies, namely the Diepsloot Mountain Bike Academy (DMA) and the Muldersdrift Academy. The DMA was started in 2006 with the intention of helping children to use their time constructively and it has now grown into a place where they can learn the value of hard work and self-belief.

"The purpose of the DMA is to provide the youth with a positive outlet of expression and also encourage them to invest their energy in healthy activities, such as cycling. These efforts consequently help to reduce the levels of crime, alcohol abuse and violence against women and children in the surrounding areas," says Ross.

She states that their long-term vision is to develop each athlete into a well-rounded and skilled individual, empowered to move beyond their current circumstances and pursue their dreams. The DMA is also funding or facilitating a number of bursaries for those students who excel.

Ross says the project is run every weekend on both Saturdays and Sundays, consisting of two hours of cycling, a team lunch and tutoring sessions. Maths is tutored on Saturdays and English on Sundays. "The team also appoints club captains, identifying students with leadership potential and then giving them the responsibility to lead a team during the training sessions."

As part of the entry process for the Awards, nominees had to show how the R75 000 would be used to make a meaningful difference in the success of their respective initiatives. Ross explains that the prize money will be used to grow the project in order to reach more children. They will use the money to employ full time staff

and to build a BMX track in an effort to accommodate younger children in these communities. "Cycling is an expensive sport and the DMA children have to compete in an arena that is mostly reserved for privileged children. We realise that there is a further need to expose more children to the sport," says Ross

"We are thrilled that we can assist Cindy Ross with her initiative and trust that the award will boost the *Jala Peo Foundation*, as well as motivate other women out there to develop and drive similar initiatives that promote and develop their surrounding communities," says Austen.

Alta-Mari Grebe, the PWOTY runner up winner, will also receive R25 000 to be used towards her Non-Profit Organisation, the *RoleModels Foundation*. "The organisation built the first Imfundo Educare facility in the country. It provides foundation education to children from disadvantaged communities who are between three and six years old. The organisation also gives the children breakfast and lunch. Currently there are facilities in the Free State province, as well as Boksburg, Port Elizabeth and Worcester, where more than 200 children are receiving much needed education and balanced meals on a daily basis," says Grebe.

Grebe says her prize money will be utilised to create additional facilities in the country. "The exposure would hopefully make people aware of the need in South Africa and the work that has been done to assist the children to become future leaders. We also hope to secure major corporate sponsors that will assist in purchasing farm land in Worcester. The farm will be utilised to create jobs for the local people in Worcester and surrounding areas and the produce will be used in the facilities for meals."

Applicants of the PWOTY were judged by a panel that included Austen as the chairperson, Dr Dominique Stott, Executive: Medical Standards and Services at PPS and Zimkhitha Saungweme, Executive: Social Media at PPS.