

## Beating the odds



Joseph Makame (34) was only 16 when he became parentless.

While he tried hard to juggle school and assume the new responsibility of parenting his siblings – an 18-month toddler and a young teenager – this soon proved impossible. At the end of 2005 he failed Grade 10 and made the difficult decision to quit school and put away the dreams that young adults have of their future, to raise his brother and sister. Today he is the Human Resources Officer at Beefmaster Group in Christiana and one of Kimberley’s largest private employers.

What makes Joseph different to thousands of other South Africans who have been unable to escape a life of difficulty and desperation?

Although destined for a difficult life, Joseph, who was unlike most people in his position, did not accept the life that was forced upon him, or to become a victim of circumstance. An ambitious man who saw the value of education, he went back to school and completed Matric, and got a job at a company who saw his potential. Today he has a family of four; a wife and two daughters.

“When I suddenly had to take on this responsibility of being a single parent to two kids when I myself was a kid, life became really difficult. As a child I had a dream of becoming an international motivational speaker, but that was not meant to be my path,” says Joseph.

After completing secondary school, he joined Beefmaster Group as a welder. He says that throughout his career at Beefmaster Group, he was pushed outside of his comfort zone to reach his personal success.

“Later, due to hard work, discipline, and dedication, I was promoted to an administrator and then later to Human Resources Assistant, followed by Payroll Coordinator, and then to my current position,” says Joseph, adding that with these increased duties and responsibilities, doors were opened for him.

Beefmaster Group helped transition Joseph from being a welder to his current position by providing him with training – both long and short courses as well as learnerships.

“Today, I am in the process of studying towards a national diploma in human resources management, a qualification that has been on my vision board for quite some time. I never dreamed that I would be able to study further, let alone finish school!”

While Joseph enjoys many things about the job and the company where he works, his favorite part is motivating employees to do better and interacting with them.

And what does he believe is the one attribute that has allowed him to beat the odds and climb the corporate ladder?

“Self-discipline. This is the ability to control and motivate yourself and your emotions, as well as to stay on track and do what is right. I wouldn’t be where I am today if I didn’t apply this rule.”

He says that his best advice for anyone who wants to overcome their own personal circumstances is to grab opportunity with both hands.

“People may judge you for the choices you make, or for the opportunities you want to pursue, and this pressure can make you stray from the path that determines your brightest future.” And, while his dream of becoming a motivational speaker may not have come true, what is true is that Joseph’s story of resilience in the face of adversity will motivate many others to pursue a life free from the prison of circumstance.