



MEDIA RELEASE

GEORGE AIRPORT TAKES SA'S BIGGEST WHEELCHAIR CHALLENGE TO NEW HEIGHTS

GEORGE, 18 FEBRUARY 2018 – Over 1000 national and international athletes living with disabilities competed at the 2018 Outeniqua Wheelchair Challenge (OCC) in George today in what was the biggest-ever edition of the annual wheelchair race event.

The streets of George were filled with volunteers from early morning as racers tackled a tough new course over the standard marathon and half marathon distances and in the 10km and 5km fun run categories.

The 2018 challenge, held in the heart of South Africa's Garden Route included participants from South Africa, Ghana, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

On hand to congratulate the athletes at the Toyota Halfway finish line was the Mayor of George, Melvin Naik, Western Cape MEC for Cultural Affairs and Sport, Ms Anroux Marais and representatives from Airports Company South Africa: Ms Senzeni Ndebele, Ms Brenda Vorster and Mr Humbulani Netshieneulu.

This year's race took place on a Sunday to allow for the safety of the athletes due to less traffic on the roads, increased participation from the community and less disruption to businesses in the area.

Senzeni Ndebele said: "The Outeniqua Wheelchair Challenge is a favourite event in the Socio-Economic Development calendar of George Airport, and is made possible by the partnerships and cooperation of Airports Company South Africa, local government, businesses and communities who rally together every year to promote the wellbeing and dignity of persons with disabilities."

The event represents Airports Company South Africa's commitment to disabled athletes and the cause of mobility.

“It was very encouraging to be here again this year to witness how this event has grown since its humble beginnings in 2002 and to see the power of sports bringing together communities and people from all walks of life,” said Ndebele.

This year, Airports Company South Africa increased its sponsorship to R900 000, from R700 000 in 2017. The state-owned-company has supported the Outeniqua Wheelchair Challenge since 2011 and it is the most important community engagement for George Airport and its staff.

George Municipality sponsored R250 000 towards the race, whilst Western Cape MEC for Cultural Affairs and Sport donated R50 000. Toyota Halfway House in George provided the venue as well as 2000 bottles of water for the athletes as part of their sponsorship.

An awareness programme presented before the race included learners from local schools and taught children about the challenges of persons with disabilities. Volunteers were given an opportunity to participate in the race through a 5km fun race where they pushed a wheelchair-bound person. The annual OCC also raises awareness for the tourism and hospitality sectors to ensure that their establishments are accessible for people living with disabilities.

“Our ongoing sponsorship of this event recognises the importance of our airport as an economic enabler while demonstrating our commitment to empowering all the communities that we serve with mobility,” said Airports Company South Africa’s George Airport manager, Brenda Vorster.

The overall prize money awarded to athletes was R258 000.

Results of the Outeniqua Wheelchair Challenge:

Men’s 42.2km

Racing Chair: Ernst van Dyk - 1:29:15

Quads: Pieter du Preez- 1:36:37

Hand Cycle: Stuart McCreadie-1:03:45

Women's 42.2kms

Racing Chair: Margaret Banganjena- 2:40:25 (Zimbabwe)

Hand Cycle Female Para: Justine Asher- 1:29:57

Men's 21.1kms

Racing Chair (T53/54): Roodly Gowaseb- 1:10:00 (Namibia)

Racing Chair (T51/52): Spheshile Nzimande- 58:23

Hand Cycle Male Para: Peter West-44:12

Hand Cycle Male Quad: Arthur Abrahamse- 1:44:48

Women's 21kms

Racing Chair (T53/54): Moleen Majoni-1:31:08

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