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UCT award recognises society's unsung heroes

Charline Little, an English teacher at Maitland High School, and Amina Nordien, a drama teacher at Alexander Sinton High School in Athlone, are the joint winners of this year's University of Cape Town Stella Clark Teachers' Award.

Established in 2005, the Stella Clark Teachers' Award acknowledges the work of exceptionally talented teachers – society's unsung heroes – who go beyond the call of duty to motivate and inspire their learners to perform well and rise above their circumstances.

This year's winners have an outstanding record of achievements, often accomplished under difficult circumstances. Nominations for the Stella Clark Teachers' Award come from UCT students who put forward the names of teachers they believe helped make it possible for them and others to pursue their tertiary education dreams. The committee bases its selection solely on the evidence presented in these nominations.

Mrs Little, a dedicated teacher for over 24 years, was nominated by Vuyisani Bisholo, a first-year Construction Economics student. In his motivation Mr Bisholo said: "Mrs Little's task is made harder by the fact that she teaches English (as a) home language to students for whom it is a second language. I witnessed her love for English and her yearning to impart her knowledge to her students". Encouraged by Mrs Little to "read whatever you can lay your hands on, be it a newspaper or a magazine of interest", Mr Bisholo says he applied this lesson to other subjects. "This helped me broaden my horizons in learning and pushed me into loving engaging with text in a way I had never been able to before; I guess that was a contributing factor to my coming to UCT."

In her motivation, Lia Jacobs, a first-year BA student said Ms Nordien was a teacher who went the extra mile to help struggling learners. "She challenged and inspired her students and inducted them into drama through exposure to live theatre performances and by starting her own theatre at the school," says Ms Jacobs. "Thanks to Ms Nordien's guidance, I had increased confidence, not only on stage during performance but in my personal life as well. I valued myself more and doing Drama also helped me to mature and grow in compassion for people around me."

The teachers' award was established in honour of Stella Clark, an extraordinary UCT lecturer who was based at the Centre of Higher Education Development's Academic Development Programme. Her husband, a UCT Chemistry professor, and children established the award in

honour of her dedicated service to teaching and to mentoring students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Through this award, UCT has for the past nine years applauded remarkable teachers from across South Africa, such as Mrs Little and Ms Nordien, who have made an impact on the lives of those they teach.

The award is made possible by donations from friends, family, colleagues and corporate companies.

ENDS

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