

MEDIA LITERACY AND CULTURE OF READING SUMMIT

The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is convening a Media Literacy and Culture of Reading Summit from the 30th March – 01st April 2012 at the Council Chambers, Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality, Free State. The theme for the summit is “Basic Media Literacy Education – Constructing Views of Reality”.

The MDDA has a mandate to create an enabling environment for media development and diversity that is conducive to public discourse and that which reflects the needs and aspirations of all South Africans. Further, Section 3 (v) of the MDDA Act requires the Agency to support initiatives which promote literacy and a culture of reading. Accordingly, the MDDA is holding this summit as an attempt to support initiatives that promote literacy and a culture of reading amongst diminished language groups and inadequately served communities.

In this regard, the MDDA has formed partnership with the Department of Education (DoE), Free State provincial government, Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality, Dihlabeng, Maluti-A-Phofung, Phumelela, Setsoto, Nketoana Local Municipalities, Institute of the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ), The Star – Newspaper in Education (NIE), Hlasela TV, Qwaqwa FM, Department of Communications (DoC) and Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) to introduce the culture of reading and basic media literacy amongst learners in schools, to promote debate and dialogue on media for learners and encourage learners to be involved in producing their own and a career in media.

The Summit will begin with a launch addressed by the Executive Mayor of Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality – Clr. Dr. B.E Mzangwa and attended by dignitaries such as the Press Ombudsman – Mr. Joe Thlolo, DoE, Maluti-A-Phofung mayoral committee, MDDA Board member Ms. Louise Vale and others. There will be a roundtable discussion which will be led by the Press Ombudsman, Mr. Joe Thlolo. The Press Ombudsman will guide the summit through issues pertaining to democracy, constitution and the role of media. Media practitioners from local media houses will form part of the respondents at the roundtable.

Ten (10) high schools are selected to participate in this Summit, from the five (5) Local Municipalities in Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. The participating schools are Boitumelo, Glen Ash, Thiboloha, Evungwini, Ikaheng Zakheni, Ipokelleng, Dinare, Kwetlisong, Esizibeni and Clocolan High Schools. Fifty (50) learners from those schools will be attending with their educators. It is expected that at the end of the Summit, the learners would produce a pro-forma cover page of a newspaper.

The MDDA and its partners have identified a gap in the market and have decided to launch the 4th Summit at Thabo Mofutsanyane District Municipality in the Free State. The deficiency of a culture of reading is a major concern in South African society and indeed in the Southern African region. Media education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy.

The long term goal for MDDA and its partners is to see the Media Literacy and Culture of Reading programme included in the school curriculum and schools (particularly in the poor and rural areas) producing their own media products. The intention is to assist young people to be more critical consumers, producers and owners of media as well as to stimulate an interest in the media as a field of study. It is envisioned that through this initiative a platform will be set to develop media literacy skills which can be used across the curriculum, thereby contributing to the upliftment of educational standards and promotion of a culture of reading. The promotion of a reading culture amongst South Africans will extend the pool of creativity and communication skills in the country. There is an immense hunger amongst the South African youth for information which they can use to improve their lives and empower them to have an effective say in governing.

Issued by:
Lumko Mtimde, Chief Executive Officer