

# Students raise R7m for bursaries

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In the midst of huge disruptions to campuses due to #FeesMustFall protests this year, a group of Johannesburg students were determined to remain optimistic and contribute to the education of young South Africans.



Those participating in the "Feet4Fees" initiative - who embarked on an epic fee-raising endeavour on their feet from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth - had to endure blisters, sore ankles and heat, walking 20km a day.

But after walking 1000km in 19 days - splitting their "walk-load" between three groups - 15 students from Wits University and the University of Johannesburg, received a warm welcome at NMMU yesterday.

And they had every reason to celebrate, having raised R7-million towards student bursaries and associated costs.

Reuben Oosthuysen, 22, who came up with the idea, said he was touched by the number of students who were struggling and it hurt to see other students having to quit because of financial problems.

"It has not been an easy journey but we made it," he said.

"At the end, the name of the game is perseverance. I don't think I have been this proud to finish anything as I am at the

moment."

Oosthuysen said he was humbled and honoured to have led the team across the country.

"Here we are standing at R7-million raised, which is amazing."

Through their journey the students said they learnt that nothing was impossible and together they could do more.

They also said that truck drivers were the friendliest on the road.

They had to walk from 4am to 10pm every day, sleeping at the nearest bed-and-breakfast or guesthouse.

Charne Lishivha, 20 - a second-year student in mathematics and one of the only three women in the group - said the walk was worth it.

"I come from a rural area in Limpopo and during my primary school days I had to walk a long distance to school and come back and do my homework.

"Some children did not make it to university because of a lack of funds. That is why I jumped at the opportunity of being part of this group so that I can make a change in someone's life.

"It was not easy but we worked as a team. I have ugly blisters, I don't even know how I will wear my heels, but it was all for a good cause. I also had to be strong for my teammates and I was the one offering them massages."

Tshiamo Sebolai, 19, a first-year student at Wits, said there were times when he wanted to quit.

"There were times when we would walk in scorching sun when it felt like I was walking in the desert, but my team gave me life.

"I reminded myself of why I took that first step. There are people who deserve to go to university but cannot because they don't have means.

"Luckily we did not have worn-out takkies - we suffered from blisters but there was a first aid kit with blister plasters.

"I never thought the first time I would get to the beach would be by walking," he quipped.

Murray Hofmeyr, national director at Study Trust - the NGO which backed the initiative - said over the 19 days the team had shown they had the determination to overcome other challenges.

"We are already helping 21 students at NMMU and we hope to help more students," he said.

NMMU Trust chief executive Denver Webb congratulated the students.

"What you have done is amazing and it is a real sacrifice for other people," he said.

The students will be driven back to Johannesburg today.

*Source: Herald*

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