



A NEW JOURNEY BEGINS

Graduation

On 27 March 2026, Sondela Academy proudly celebrated the graduation of our 2025 students. Families, staff, and friends gathered to mark this milestone and cheer on our learners as they closed one chapter and stepped into the next.

The ceremony was filled with proud smiles, heartfelt speeches, and plenty of photos. Our graduates showed resilience, growth, and community spirit throughout their time at Sondela, and we couldn't be more proud.

And to those whose time with us has come to an end:
We can't wait to see the next step in your journey. Once a Sondela student, always part of the family!





2025 Award Recipients

Skills Year

- Traumatized EMS Best First Aid Group - Orange Group: Lerieze du Plessis, Danielle Swiegelaar, Katelyn Smith, Jordan mhuys, Zandre Nel, Rethabile Kgabi, Mmsorney vd Westhuizen, Deacan Coetzer, Juan Luis Gomez, Euan Jennings, Lindokuhle Nhlapo
- Skills Accommodation Services Student of the Year - Juan Luis Garcia-Morato Gomez
- Skills Food & Beverage Services Student of the Year - Danielle Swiegelaar
- Skills Reception Services Student of the Year - Morgan Stone
- Skills Food Proficiency Student of the Year - Jordan Damhuis
- Skills Event Support Student of the Year - Chelsea Geyser
- Skills Handyman Student of the Year - Morney van der Westhuizen
- Captive Animal Care Giver Student of the Year - Abigail Wood
- Nature Site Guide Student of the Year - Rowdean Clark
- Field Ranger 1st Year Student of the Year - Elandri Trusler
- Certificate Accommodation Student of the Year - Mbalenhle Motau
- My Business I - Starting My Business Students of the Year - Abigail Wood, Zandre Nel, Chelsea Geyser
- ILM Award in Management & Leadership - Zandre Nel
- Personal Development and Leadership Skills Student of the Year - Sakkie Ndlovu
- Skills Year Academic Student of the year - Lerieze du Plessis
- Skills Year Practical Student of the year - Juan Luis Garcia-Morato Gomez





Specialization Year

- Diploma Accommodation Services Student of the Year - Tianette Geringer
- Diploma Food & Beverage Services Student of the Year - Leandri Grobler
- Diploma Reception Services Student of the Year - Zandria Geel
- Game Ranch Management Student of the Year - Hendro Fouche
- Captive Animal Management Student of the Year - Megan Chambers
- My Business II - Managing My Business Students of the Year - Thandeka Masango, Tinisha Jansen van Vuuren, Berintia Vermeulen
- ILM Certificate student of the Year - Tertius Doman
- ETD Student of the Year - Hendro Fouche
- Personal Development and Leadership Spec Student of the Year - Reandri Burger
- Specialization Year Academic Student of the Year - Tinisha Jansen van Vuuren •
- Specialization Year Practical Student of the Year - Eloise van der Walt



Professional Development Year

- First Aid Level 3 Student of the Year - Heinrich Hirschhorn
- PDY Game Ranch Management Student of the Year - Mornies Bezuidenhout
- My Business III- Growing My Business Student of the Year - Izandri von Stade, Jeska Tiersma
- ILM Diploma student of the Year - Heinrich Hirschhorn
- PDY CAM student of the Year - Izandri von Stade
- Personal Development and Leadership PDY Student of the Year - Chezaan van Rensburg
- PDY Academic Student of the Year - Heinrich Hirschhorn
- PDY Practical Student of the Year - Anru Lewis



General Trophies

- Most Personal Growth - Student of the Year - Ashmornay Jaars
- The Abri Meyer Bok vir Sports Student of the Year - Christiaan Breytenbach
- FGASA Student of the Year - Travis Anderson
- Junior Manager of the Year - Chezaan van Rensburg
- Guide of the Year Student of the Year - Reandri Burger
- Conservation Student of the Year - Christiaan Breytenbach
- Hospitality Practical Student of the Year - Thandeka Masango
- Hospitality Student of the Year - Leandri Grobeler
- Culinary Arts Student of the Year - Mapula Letsoalo
- Sondela Academy 1st Year Student of the Year - Zanre Nel
- Sondela Academy 2nd Year Student of the Year - Hendro Fouche
- Sondela Academy 3rd Year Student of the Year - Anru Lewis



Congratulations to the Class of 2025!





Exploring the Wild: Inside Our FGASA Course

Our students have been diving into the world of nature guiding with the FGASA course, and it's been nothing short of incredible. The course blends classroom theory with hands-on bush experience to create skilled and confident guides.

During the course, students learn about the environment and the theory behind all life in our ecosystems. They study animal tracks and signs to read the stories written in the sand, practising field interpretation to bring the landscape alive for guests. Students discover plants, their medicinal uses, and the cultural beliefs connected to them. They also develop practical guiding skills, including how to conduct professional game drives, and explore 'eco-linking' — the principle of understanding how everything in the universe connects. They build life skills that go beyond guiding and learn to prioritise safety for both guides and guests during every guided experience.





Exploring the Wild: Inside Our FGASA Course



A huge thank you to our amazing facilitator, Gerhard van Niekerk. Gerhard has a gift for teaching these skills in a way that's clear, practical, and seriously fun. His passion for the bush is contagious, and he makes even the most complex topics feel exciting and accessible. We're lucky to learn from him!

Quotes from the khakis:

- "This experience has ignited a passion in me for not just nature but sharing it with the world". -Zanré
- " FGASA has really inspired me to follow my dream of being a guide, it's amazing" - Chelsea
- "Doing the FGASA course is the best!" - Juan-Luis
- "FGASA is a real eye opener, it helps you see the bigger picture of nature" -Elandri
- "From first light to last call, tomorrow's guides are learning to see the bush with new eyes."- From the legend himself: Gerhard



Hot Cross Buns & Safari Suns

Easter weekend holds a special place at Sondela. It's a time of renewal and connection: when our reserve comes alive with families, guests, and students celebrating together. This year, our amazing students went above and beyond to make the weekend run smoothly. Their hard work and positive energy set the tone for the whole weekend.

A special highlight was seeing our FGASA students step up to help with game drives. They used the opportunity to put their new knowledge into practice

To every student who gave their time, energy, and heart this Easter: Thank you. You made the weekend memorable for so many people, and you showed exactly what the Sondela spirit looks like in action. We're proud of you!





A Journey through the Vine

Our students recently stepped into the world of wine, learning how to taste, describe, and serve it with confidence. The sessions covered food and wine pairing, service etiquette, and how to share the story behind each bottle with guests. It's a key skill for future hospitality professionals.



Hostex 2026

Our hospitality students recently attended HOSTEX, one of Africa's biggest food, drink, and hospitality trade shows — and came back inspired. The expo gave them a front-row seat to the future of the industry, with access to new products, technology, and trends shaping hospitality today.

One student shared: "Our experience at HOSTEX was both inspiring and informative. It exposed us to the latest trends, innovations, and products in the hospitality industry, while also giving us the opportunity to engage with professionals and gain real-world insight. We were able to learn new ideas and practical skills that we can apply in our future careers. Overall, the experience broadened our perspective, motivated us to grow, and strengthened our passion for hospitality."

