

Working on Fire:

NEWS www.thevillagenews.co.za

8 May 2019

working for Camphill,

Writer
Raphael da Silva

Whether battling infernos precariously on mountain slopes, marching triumphantly through towns after a successful day's work, completing mopping-up exercises or deploying the latest in home-grown advanced fire-fighting technology, the men and women in yellow shirts have become a familiar and welcome part of the Overberg landscape.

Many residents literally owe their lives and their homes to the determination, professionalism and fearlessness of Working on Fire (WoF). But, in one of their biggest challenges yet, their skills, expertise and fortitude are being put to the test in the Hemelen-Aarde Valley, where a 25-member team has set up a 'base camp' for the next three months, to put out the underground peat fires that have made it impossible for Camphill School children and personnel to return home.

Working in toxic gas conditions that are constantly monitored by meters, smouldering smoke, and ground



Showing off the spike that was developed by Working on Fire are (from left to right) Lester Smith (Overstrand Fire Chief), Lauren Howard-Clayton (WoF Provincial Communications Officer), Shane Christian (WoF: National General Manager), Ray-Yaan Majiet (WoF: Ground Operations Manager), Angelo Aplon (Overstrand Assistant Fire Chief), Melany Duthie-Surtie (WoF: WC General Manager) and Tarron Dry (Overstrand Municipality: Environmental Officer). The spike was developed when WoF was asked to assist the Indonesian government in November 2015 in fighting destructive underground peat fires that had been raging for over six weeks in South Sumatra.

PHOTO: Hedda Mittner