

# Top achievers honoured as Growthpoint GEMS Scholarship Programme marks ten years of investing in the next generation

Growthpoint Properties (JSE: GRT) celebrated the academic achievements of 15 outstanding students at its annual GEMS Top Achiever Awards ceremony, marking a milestone moment for a programme that has consistently changed lives since its inception in 2016.



The ceremony brought together scholars, students, graduates, families, partners and Growthpoint leadership to honour the dedication and resilience of young people whose academic journeys are supported, in full, by the company.

The GEMS programme was launched in 2016 as a scholarship initiative offering financial support to children of Growthpoint employees earning below a certain threshold, with an initial focus on providing children access to schools that offer quality education.

Over the years, the programme has evolved significantly, most notably in 2018 when GEMS expanded beyond scholarships to embrace a holistic three-pillar model encompassing academic support, psychosocial development, and personal and leadership development.

Today, multi-lingual interventions also include parents' workshops that help GEMS families navigate the challenges of modern parenting, extending the programme's care well beyond the scholars and students themselves.

Most recently, GEMS introduced social entrepreneurship workshops delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy team as a direct response to South Africa's high unemployment rate and the persistent gap between graduate qualifications and meaningful job opportunities. These workshops equip students with the tools to create their own businesses, solve social problems and generate employment in their communities.

### **Realising potential, recognising excellence**

The 2025 awards recognised five top achievers in the primary school phase and five in the secondary school phase, in addition to the five tertiary graduates celebrated this year.

This year's primary school top achievers are Lethabo Bambo (Grade 4), Reitumetse Maluleke (Grade 5), Cealon Thwala (Grade 7), Mpumelelo Maila (Grade 7) and Ntuthuko Maila (Grade 6).

The secondary school top achievers are Mufunwa Raliwedzha Tshikovhi (Grade 8), Lukhanyo Ngumbela (Grade 11), Luyolo Ndongana (Grade 9), Ayanda Mzila (Grade 8) and Nosihle Nolwandle Khawula (Grade 11).

This year's tertiary graduates, whose qualifications represent years of sustained effort and commitment, are Keamogetse Ramere (Bachelor of Information Technology: Business Systems), Kamogelo Mashigo (National Diploma: IT Software Development), Thandaza

Ndinga (Bachelor of Commerce in Law), Siyamthanda Khawula (Higher Certificate: Software Development) and Keenen Thwala (BSc IT Software Development).

Growthpoint's leadership was present at the ceremony to mark the occasion, underscoring the company's commitment to the programme as a core expression of its values.

### **Three children. Three education stages. One family's story.**

Few stories illustrate the generational reach of the GEMS programme, and what is possible when opportunity and support meet ambition, as vividly as that of the Thwala family.

Cayton Thwala joined GEMS while still in high school. He went on to study at the Vaal University of Technology, where he completed an Advanced Diploma followed by a Postgraduate Diploma. In 2025, he joined the Growthpoint Graduate Programme and, in 2026, was permanently appointed as a Junior Applications Analyst at Growthpoint. He has graced the GEMS awards stage for several years throughout his studies.

His brother, Keenen Thwala, achieved fifth place in the tertiary phase this year, Keenan is in the second year of his BSc in IT Software Development degree. Their sibling Cealon Thwala, now in his second year on the programme, claimed third place in the primary school phase.

### **GEMS shone brightly in 2025**

Among the inspiring stories that define this year's ceremony, several stand out for the depth of their journeys.

Lukhanyo Ngubela has been on the GEMS Programme since its inception and overcame a significant language barrier when she changed schools. She has gone on to earn top achiever status consistently.

The Khawula sisters, Siyamthanda and Nosihle, are no strangers to the GEMS awards stage. Siyamthanda earned first place in the secondary school phase at the 2024 awards, having also earned recognition at the 2023 awards alongside her sister Nosihle. For 2025, both sisters ranked in the top five, Siyamthanda in the tertiary phase and Nosihle in the secondary school category.

The Maila siblings, Mpumelelo and Ntuthuko, joined the programme in 2025 and immediately made their mark among the top achievers in a remarkable debut.

Keamogetse Ramere joined the programme at its inception, and this year occupies first place in the tertiary phase, completing the final year of her degree. Her father, John Ramere, a long-serving Growthpoint employee, will be retiring at the end of this year, making her achievement a fitting tribute to career that has created a positive impact for a family for generations to come.

In another milestone achievement, GEMS alumna Lesego Maponyane has been admitted as an Advocate of the Johannesburg High Court. **Advocate Lesego Maponyane**, says, *“My journey with GEMS began when I was in Grade 11. At the time, I was ambitious and hardworking but ultimately lacking in direction and confidence. Gems helped me obtain my law degree, with all the costs relating to my tuition, textbooks and other resources covered by Gems. Although I am undoubtedly still a fledgling in the legal field, I would not be on this career path without GEMS’s guidance.”*

### **A decade of transforming lives through education**

This year's awards carry particular significance as GEMS celebrates its tenth anniversary, having supported 570 students and invested R63.25 million since 2016.

Today, the programme now supports 110 learners, growing from its first intake of 35 children. Clinton Bvumbi was among the inaugural GEMS intake and became one of the programme's first graduates in 2018. Clinton went on to find employment at Giving Wings SA, a former

programme partner, where he remains employed today. From the start, GEMS was designed to invest in and honour the families of those working Growthpoint, where, Clinton's father, Stanley Bvumbi, has been an employee for 25 years.



*"GEMS is one of Growthpoint's most meaningful commitments to our employees and the next generation they are raising," says **Norbert Sasse, Group CEO of Growthpoint Properties.***

*"Over ten years, we have watched children grow into graduates, graduates grow into professionals, and in some cases, professionals grow into colleagues. GEMS embodies the kind of company Growthpoint strives to be: one that creates space to thrive, for everyone connected to us."*

**Lungelo Buthelezi, GEMS Programme Manager at Growthpoint Properties,** explains that often, scholarship programmes invest significant resources in students, including sending them to development camps. However, the challenge is that students usually return to the same home environment, which may not support them in applying the skills they learned. *"At GEMS, we address this gap by hosting parent workshops that equip caregivers with the tools to better support their children. While parents play an important role in guiding their children, it is equally important for them to listen to their children, as each child has different needs."*

The programme's three pillars of academic support, psychosocial development and personal and leadership growth work in concert to ensure that GEMS students are academically equipped, emotionally resilient and personally empowered. The social entrepreneur workshops reflect Growthpoint's recognition that formal employment is not the only measure of success.



**Shawn Theunissen, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility and Head of Transformation at Growthpoint Properties** emphasises that young people with the right tools can create opportunities not only for themselves, but for others. *“Our GEMS programme is firmly focused on the children of employees, but the results it is delivering are far reaching — they are exponential and generational.”*

Just as Growthpoint GEMS recognises that a young person’s educational success depends on more than school fees, it also understands that the programme’s success depends on carefully selected specialist service providers. Its expertise and valued partnerships have evolved over time to remain aligned with the programme’s goals and the deeper understanding gained over its decade-long journey.



**Engelbert Binedell, COO of Growthpoint Properties,** says, *“What we see the Gems Awards each year are young people who have learned to believe in themselves, families who have become involved in their children's growth in new ways, and a network of support that extends well beyond the classroom. Together, these elements create something truly powerful, broadening the horizons of future generations within our employees’ families.”*

In his closing remarks, **Clifford Raphiri, Non-Executive Director at Growthpoint Properties,** highlighted the importance of the programme and urged other corporates to adopt similar initiatives, noting that it addresses a critical need in South Africa. He expressed confidence that all those involved would continue working hard to build on its success and make it even more impactful over the next decade.

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