

PRESS RELEASE

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Mother of three lands top heavy-duty driver award

Hailed as one of the finest Bulk Vehicle Operators (BVO), Cynthia Noneka Thala (40) is the IVECO #ThankYouTrucker top award winner for 2023.

Thala, who started her career as a bus driver, was first employed within the Unitrans Total Alrode Operations in 2019. She is the first female BVO at Total Witbank.

Her cash award for winning the #ThankYouTrucker award totalled R50,000, which Thala says she will share with her family, including an orphaned child she looks after, and the rest she intends to invest.

Gerhardus (Pikkie) Klaase from Koegelenberg Transport BK in Vredendal placed second, receiving R10,000 in prize money, and Nkosinathi Peaceman Chiliza from ACT Logistics in Gauteng landed in third place, securing a R5,000 award.

The drivers are nominated by company owners, operations managers, direct line managers or fleet managers. Only South African drivers in the local road freight industry may be nominated. In addition to the cash prizes handed to the three winners, this year, an additional award of R10,000 was allocated to the individual who nominated the winner.

The winners were announced in October 2023.

“I feel abundantly blessed and I also feel the love of God is with me always. I will never stop believing in Him; He is a miracle maker. Thank you, IVECO for making things happen,” remarked Thala enthusiastically.

Samuel Makgoba, who is Thala’s Operations Supervisor, lauded the mother of three as one of the finest BVOs who executes her duties with precision and unwavering commitment.

Her track record includes:

- Delivering 11.4 million litres without incident, with zero crossovers and spills.
- Completing 855 trips and 952 drops.
- Achieving 651 days without injury, ensuring her personal safety.
- Maintaining 651 days without violating life-saving rules.

Having dedicated four years of her life to her position at Unitrans, Thala is well-versed in her responsibilities and duties as a driver.

Makgoba said while she possesses robust administrative skills, it is also obvious how much she loves and enjoys her job.

Described by those who know her as “vivacious with a magnetic personality,” Thala’s dream is to co-own a trucking business, and as such, she will be using her R50,000 award to obtain her National Certificate in Professional Driving, which she hopes to complete by the end of 2023. The course is designed to further the understanding of the trucking business among women.

Thala says her fascination with the trucking industry began when she was employed as a bus driver. Despite discouragement from friends who thought being a BVO was “unconventional” for a woman, she was determined to follow her dream.

In 2020, she was named BVO of the Year.

The #ThankYouTrucker campaign, in partnership with the Road Freight Association (RFA), was started three years ago. Its specific aim is to recognise the expertise of outstanding truck drivers who go above and beyond the call of duty in their daily activities.

Iveco’s Product Marketing Manager, Elvis Mutseura said the annual award is aimed at paying tribute to those truckers who keep the country’s logistics industry moving, raising awareness about the important contribution the drivers make, and providing motivation for those who want to follow a career in the industry.

He added that truck drivers carry a great deal of responsibility, not just in making sure deliveries remain profitable and are delivered timeously, but also in terms of road safety.

According to Gavin Kelly, CEO of the RFA, “Any incentive that leads to responsible behaviour in trucker performance will have many unseen consumer benefits.”