

## **ACA and Club 21 Celebrate the Inclusiveness of Sport on World Down Syndrome Day**

*For immediate release*

On the eve of World Down Syndrome Day (21 March 2018), the organisers of the Arnold Classic Africa (ACA) multi-sport festival are honoured to announce the participation of Club 21, a non-profit learning centre catering to the education and development of people with Down Syndrome, in this year's event.

One of the key messages behind Arnold Schwarzenegger's vision for the Arnold Classic series of global events is the inclusive nature of sport, and the fact that sport allows a vast variety of talents and abilities to shine. "Club 21 does much to encourage active participation in sport and has several regional and national sports stars within its fold," says ACA organiser, Wayne Price. "We look forward to seeing them in action at the Arnold Classic Africa in May". While much of the prowess of the Club 21 Sports Academy athletes is on the athletics track and in the swimming pool, Price is referring to the sports, such as table tennis and the Fun Run, that will invite competitors in a range of categories at the ACA in 2018.

Anel Waugh, the Principal at Club 21 explains their approach to guiding learners into a world of sport, "Club 21 Learning Centre always aspires to dream big and create opportunities for all of our learners of different ages. In doing this, we celebrate their uniqueness and talents. This is no exception with regard to our sport activities. All of our classes have an opportunity to participate in structured sport-activities on a weekly basis, assisted by our Sport Coach. Fundamental basics for athletics training are being coached during these time slots. The focus is on specific goal-orientated exercises, to create positive body awareness, efficient motor planning and muscle strength, all of which plays an integral role in our children's development. Currently we have two students following an integrated Sport and Academic programme. This is the result of their natural athletic ability that was first identified during our daily school sports periods. We are truly blessed and excited for what the future holds for our Sports Development Programme and athletes in training".

Asked what message she would like to extend to South Africa this World Down Syndrome Day, Waugh replied, "That all our children are able, motivated and determined to show the world how talented they are. Their unique and special extra chromosome does not inhibit their gifts and with hard work and dedication they can and do excel."

Waugh adds that there is a lot that the sporting communities can do to promote inclusiveness of people with Down Syndrome, beginning with breaking away from labels and assumptions and then to "Create well organised and structured events for learners with Down Syndrome, and give each child an equal opportunity," she says.

On working with the ACA, Waugh says, "They are looking after all our needs and answering our abundant questions with patience. They are also providing new opportunities outside the programme, taking special consideration for our learners and optimising their experience at the ACA. We are very excited about the 'Come and Try' events and other possible sporting and competing options that are being opened for our learners' specialities.

Amongst the Club 21 athletes who will be present at the Arnold Classic Africa from 18 to 20 May 2018, who all have recognition from the South African Sports Association for the Intellectually Impaired (SASA-II) are:

- Pieter Starke (24) medallist in the SASA-II championships for swimming in 2017; medallist in tennis at the 2016 world championships; gold medallist in table tennis at SASA-II 2017 and best male player for 2017; and record breaker and gold medallist for discus at SASA-II championships in 2017.
- Jan-Herman Els (18), medallist at the World Trisomy Games (Olympic Games for athletes with Down Syndrome) in 2016 for swimming and Inas World Swimming Championships in 2017, as well as Down Syndrome International Swimming Organisation (DSISO) Junior world records and 24 DSISO Africa records.
- Jonathan Bester (17), silver medalist for table tennis at SASA-II championships in 2017.
- Tiaan Esterhuizen (15), SASA-II athletics in 2017
- Minette Swart (22) representing South Africa in swimming and athletics
- Cindy Bezuidenhout (27), representing South Africa in athletics at the World Championships in 2017 and 2018
- Duncan Craigie (15), who has beaten the Africa long-jump record for senior men.

Club 21 will be marking World Down Syndrome Day (also Human Rights Day in South Africa) by hosting the first of its 'Colour Ride' in Tshwane on the beautiful Hazeldean Valley trails in the east of Pretoria. This will be a MBT 10km and 20km fun ride and a children's ride with extreme and exciting activities along the way. Participants will receive special bangles made by Club 21 learners with the message, 'Giving back to the community, our heart's call upon unity'. Registrations are open on [www.bouttime.co.za](http://www.bouttime.co.za)

Ticket options for the Arnold Classic Africa range from day to weekend passes, covering some or all of the contests. Visit <http://arnoldclassicafrica.com> for more information and a link from which to buy tickets.

Ends

[835 words]

### **About the Arnold Sports Festival**

Named for its co-promoter, legendary bodybuilder and film star Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Arnold Sports Festival USA was founded in Columbus, Ohio, in 1989. The festival has expanded into the world's largest multi-sport fitness weekend since its debut as the Arnold Classic, a one-day professional men's bodybuilding competition. Now celebrated on six continents, the event showcases an increasing number of physical and mental sports, making it accessible and relevant to audiences within and outside of the bodybuilding arena.

### **About the Arnold Classic Africa**

Three years ago, four South African bodybuilding and sports enthusiasts collaborated to make the Arnold Sports Festival a reality on the African continent under the broad theme '*My Sport, My Passion*'. In partnership with the Gauteng Provincial Government and the SA Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC), Arnold Classic Africa affords athletes the opportunity to compete in an international competition, against participants from all continents, in Africa. Like its global counterparts, the African rendition embraces numerous sporting codes and promotes these through demonstrations, contests, record attempts and sports celebrities over three days each May.

## **About Club 21**

Club 21 is a non-profit learning centre which specialises in the education and development of people with Down syndrome. There is currently no institution in South Africa that caters specifically for the education and development of children with Down syndrome. Only a small percentage of children with Down syndrome have the ability to be successfully included in the inclusive system of education in South Africa. Together with parents, teachers, therapists and experts we follow a holistic approach to ensure that each learner with Down syndrome bears optimal fruit and has prosperous future.

### **Media Contacts:**

For Arnold Classic Africa

Taryn van Olden

082 779-1314

[taryn@spadesnaces.co.za](mailto:taryn@spadesnaces.co.za)

For Club 21

Anel Waugh, Principal

071 355 9564

[anel.waugh@gmail.com](mailto:anel.waugh@gmail.com)

### **Facebook Message**

Club 21 is a learning centre for developing the abilities of people with Down Syndrome. This includes developing learners from an early age to eventually enter their sporting programme. Several Club 21 athletes will be present at the Arnold Classic Africa, competing in events such as table tennis. Here is a shout out to them on World Down Syndrome Day, Wednesday, 21 March 2018!

### **Twitter Message (embargoed until 21 March 2018)**

ACA sends a high five to Club 21 Sports Academy athletes and all other sports people with Down Syndrome on World Down Syndrome Day today.