In honour of Women's Day, PPS today announced Lindiwe Hendricks as the winner of the PPS Professional Woman of the Year (PWOTY) award and presented her with a R50 000 donation towards her Non-Profit Organisation Indibano, which assists rural communities in the Eastern Cape to derive commercial benefit from their natural resources.

According to Mike Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of PPS, the PWOTY award aims to acknowledge a female PPS graduate professional member who has made an outstanding effort to contribute towards increasing levels of employment in a particular community, especially among the youth.

Through the Professional Confidence Index, a quarterly survey conducted among over 200 000 PPS members, the company realised that the high rate of unemployment is a major concern for graduate professionals in the country, says Jackson. "In addition to this, PPS also become aware of several job-creation initiatives driven by PPS members. As a response to these two factors, PPS established the competition to further assist those women who are making a difference in their communities."

Hendricks, a professional Attorney, donated funding for the establishment of Indibano which assists a community in Queenstown called Zulukama whose main financial income is heavily reliant on the selling and shearing of sheep. "Each village has its own stone built shearing shed. However, most of these are dilapidated and are hard to use, so most of the farmers have resorted to home based shearing due to lack of security, equipment and the poor state of the shearing sheds," says Hendricks.

Indibano mobilised various stakeholders to support a commercial Wool Production Project where shearing sheds in 36 villages are being revived and equipped, says Hendricks. "The youth are trained on co-operative governance and various aspects of small stock farming, sheep shearing and wool management."

She says the state of wool production continues to decline each year due to high mortality rate among sheep farmers combined with declining stock numbers due to poor productivity. "Therefore, the project empowers the youth to become experts in sheep farming whilst creating wealth and much needed jobs for the broader community."

In order to win, nominees had to show how the R50 000 will be applied to make a meaningful difference to the success of their respective initiatives. In addition to the financial award, PPS is also offering free financial planning services to the winning project.

Applicants were judged by a panel which was chaired by financial journalist Adri Van Zyl included: Dr Sybil Seoka, Deputy Chairperson of the PPS Holdings Trust, Dr Dominique Stott, Executive: Medical Standards and Services at PPS, Philisiwe Precious Nduli, Chairperson of the AWC (Actuarial Women's Committee), Sue Ludolph, Project Director: Financial Reporting at SAICA (*South African Institute of Chartered Accountants)* and Tiffany Boesch, Financial Director of PPS

Hendricks says the R50 000 prize will be used to purchase more sheep as well as new equipment to ensure shearing sheds are fully functional. "Currently the agricultural initiatives are benefiting 190 young people that are involved in community commercial farming."

"We are thrilled that we can assist Hendricks with her initiative and trust that the award will boost the community in which she operates and motivate other women out there to develop and drive similar initiatives that promote employment," says Jackson.

Khanya Rajuili and Gerda Janse van Rensburg, the PWOTY runner up award winners, will also receive R10 000 each to be used towards their projects which include: Eco-A Institute, a project that provides enterprise training skills to disabled persons, and the House of Hope, a safe house which assists children infected or affected by HIV/Aids who have been abandoned.

For more info and to watch the Skype interview: Please visit the PPS Facebook Page:
https://www.facebook.com/PPSforProfessionals