

TooMuchWifi sponsors scholarships to UCT Online High School

TooMuchWifi, a relatively new internet provider bringing affordable Wi-Fi to the Cape's townships, is sponsoring two scholarships worth R125,000 each to the UCT Online High School. These life-changing opportunities are offered by TooMuchFoundation - a charitable entity set up by TooMuchWifi CEO, Ian Thomson and his wife Ceylan Thomson.



Ceylan Thomson (middle) with scholarship recipients Asemahle Gama (L) and Ithnathi Khusela (R)

TooMuchWifi is driven by a social impact approach, not only by providing affordable Wi-Fi, but also by hiring previously unemployed people from the areas it serves and providing relevant, up-skilling internship programmes. Their latest social action is the Gato Thomson Scholarship that gives two high school students who have lost their parents and live in communities served by TooMuchWifi an opportunity to attend UCT's private online high school.

Scholarship recipients

Two female pupils, Ithnathi Khusela from Langa and Asemahle Gama from Khayelitsha, have won this fantastic opportunity after a rigorous selection process focused as much on values as academic achievements. Gama says, "I feel overjoyed to have got an opportunity like this, and I am really excited to start learning. I was adopted by my aunt and uncle at 6 years old. I live with my aunt and uncle and many cousins. I was attending a public high school, but I didn't enjoy it that much. I love UCT because you work at your own pace and you don't get rushed," she says. "I would love to be a doctor because I want to help people all over the world and empower other girls so that they can also reach for the stars, despite their background."

Khusela says, "My brother told me about this scholarship, and I applied because they wanted children who have no parents. I feel excited and blessed to have won it. I think they chose me because they knew that we are great people and we submitted the application at the right time and we will work hard," she says. "I want to be a doctor to help people. This gives me opportunities to learn hard and be what I want to be."

Supporting youth development

The scholarship honours Ian's father, Gato Thomson, whose own parents died when he was only 13 years old, and the community that supported him during this pivotal time in his development. Thanks to the community support he received, Gato was able to lead a remarkable life, despite this massive setback in his youth. Ceylan Thomson says, "The scholarship intends to support the development of young people, like Gato, who are entering high school without the guidance, love and support we expect from a parent, by giving them access to a supportive, world-class education."

On top of having their school fees paid, the students will each receive a laptop, an uncapped 10mbps internet line and all the other materials they'll need to complete their coursework. Thomson's father, Gato, will provide mentorship as he, more than most, understands what they are going through as they try to succeed in their studies without parental support. During their school holidays, they will also be able to take part in TooMuchWifi's paid internship programmes.

Applicants were nominated by TooMuchWifi customers, and in addition to checking their academic results, were asked questions around their definition of accountability and honour. "These are core values of the TooMuchWifi brand," says Ceylan Thomson. "Although academic results are important, we were looking for pupils who share our ethos. Every year we hope to double up the scholarships we can offer, so next year we plan to sponsor four scholars," she says.

The foundation is funded by Ian and Ceylan's own TooMuchWifi founding equity, personal contributions and various fundraising events.

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