

# WONDER WOMAN!



## I got a PhD while working

By **NOKO MASHILO**

**MATHS is seen as a difficult subject, but this didn't stop Dr Hloniphile Mthethwa from studying it.**

She's a maths lecturer at the University of KZN.

Hloniphile said maths is a universal language.

"I realised I could do maths problems without a struggle and challenged myself by working out problems for higher grades.

"This was when I knew I was doing something good."

Hloniphile is proud to have completed a PhD in applied maths this year while working full time.

"I had to play different roles and make sure it was well balanced.

"I still managed to publish four research papers in journals.

"I also managed to supervise two honours and one masters student."

Hloniphile was this year selected as a Wonder Woman in Science candidate.

"This is the university's initiative to showcase its support for National Sci-

ence Week and Women's Day. It showcases passionate, pioneering and persistent heroines who make waves and stand as examples."

Hloniphile, who grew up in Esigodini in Edendale in Pietermaritzburg, was the first in her family to obtain a PhD.

Her aunt Nonhlanhla Sithole encouraged her to study.

She had to balance work while studying and went the extra mile to prove herself.

"For centuries it was socially unacceptable or impossible for women to study maths at the highest levels," said Hloniphile.

"The history behind the gender gap mustn't stop us. We still have a lot to achieve in various fields of science.

"A good example was Iranian Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman to win the Fields Medal, the highest honour awarded to mathematicians under 40 for their contribution."

**Hloniphile Mthethwa is a Wonder Woman in Science candidate.**