

Digital Doorway opens minds

I've always believed that education is the solution to any country's economical and social problems, and most of these problems seem to affect our poorer communities. Unfortunately, due to high food prices and the general increase in the cost of living, these people battle to feed their families, never mind educating their children. That's why it makes me really proud to hear of projects such as The Digital Doorway, which is the brainchild of The Department of Science and Technology and The Meraka Institute of CSIR.

So you are probably wondering what exactly The Digital Doorway is. One of modern day's most powerful educational tools, the Internet, is not only informative and amazingly interactive but also costs a lot of money and in this case it's money that our disadvantaged just don't have. Thanks to the sponsorship of companies like Syngenta and Manjoh Ranch and the vision of a few talented engineers from The Meraka Institute The Digital Doorway was realized. Basically this is an internet terminal that is directly connected to The Meraka Institute, where its content is regulated, ensuring that users are exposed only to the most up to date and useful information, which could include anything from modern farming techniques to Ancient Egyptian history. The terminal is kept secure in a very rugged steel

structure, even the keyboard and mouse scrolling ball is made of steel to prevent the computer from being damaged by vandals.

The original Digital Doorway unit was installed on the Manjoh Ranch farm in Nigel, but it was soon realized that this doorway was not being utilized to its full potential. It was decided by the management of Manjoh Ranch to move it to a nearby disadvantaged community in Alrapark. The Human Resources Manager of Manjoh Ranch, Josinta Moos, contacted the caring people of Syngenta and together with Manjoh Ranch invested in building a safe platform to install The Doorway, The Almac Community Centre.

On Thursday 26 June The Digital Doorway was officially launched in Alrapark, Gauteng. The unveiling ceremony consisted of words of excitement and encouragement from dignitaries, such as the

master of ceremonies and Syngenta representative Mrs. Kate Tucker, The Department of Science and Technology's General Manager for Social Impact, Dr Simphiwe Mimi, The General Manager for the Meraka Institute, Mrs. Kagiso Chikane and Manuel da Costa, Director of Manjoh Ranch. The days formalities ended off with

a poem reading from Lyanda, a student from the local Alra Park High School. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held and Clarissa Clements, Head of the Almac Community Centre, handed the Digital Doorway terminal over to eager students of all ages.

Andre da Costa

