



CLOTHES QUEEN: Costumes add to the magic of the show, says Portia Kewana.

Special course teaches the tricks of the trade

A SPORTING background would be an advantage, and starting young makes it easier.

You must have the courage to pursue your dreams and to continually challenge yourself to learn new skills.

You must be prepared to work hard and help out wherever you are needed. In the circus everyone is expected to get involved in everything – from stage lighting and sound to helping put up the tent and seeing to the equipment.

The circus involves team work, so you must enjoy working with people and be open to new ideas and other cultures.

Qualifications needed: No specific qualifications are needed

Real jobs, real people



- Today: Portia Kewana
- Job: Circus instructor/costume maker
- Qualifications: Dip Fashion Design
- Place of work: Zip Zap Circus

By Sarah-Jane Bosch

Every Monday Sarah-Jane Bosch interviews real people at work in Cape Town.

but a background in sport would be useful, and the Zip Zap training programme would be suitable.

Where to train: Young adults 16 to 25 can do a three-year course to learn all the tricks of the circus trade. The training programme is

especially suited to young people who don't do well at school and would like to make something of their lives.

Expected earnings: You can expect to earn about R3 000 a month. Contact: www.zip-zap.co.za.

Zippering up to give circus zap

WHAT does your job entail? I make the costumes for the performers and also teach the children on the outreach programmes who come to learn circus craft.

Making circus costumes is a team effort, and involves the performers and the circus owner, as well as the costume makers. Part of my job is buying the materials to make the costumes, and to add the finishing touches once the costumes have been sewn.

The performers are mainly young locals who have been trained at Zip Zap from an early age, although we do have interns from elsewhere who come to teach and sometimes join in the show. When the circus tours, the performers see to their own costumes when they need running repairs.

Describe your average work day: I work different hours and carry out different tasks each day. On Tuesdays I make costumes, tidy the costume room and see that everything is in order. I'm also in charge of sorting and handing out the clothes that are donated to the circus.

On Mondays and Thursdays, I teach children in the outreach programmes in Khayelitsha and Bonteheuwel. On Wednesdays, the children collect their medication from the clinic, so we keep them occupied while they wait.

Best part of the job: It's really satisfying to see the kids develop.

Worst part of the job: When children stop coming to classes due to challenges at home.

Why did you choose this ca-

reer? My mother was a housekeeper for Zip Zap founder Brent van Rensburg 20 years ago, and I was 10 years old when I first set foot in the Zip Zap dome. I was mesmerised by the trapeze artists and jugglers. It was a magical experience to see the performers train.

I joined the school, and started with basic training on a trampoline. After a year I worked on my own act called Poupée, which was a combination of comedy and acrobatic movements. After that, I went into aerial work with a single trapeze act, then a triple trapeze act and finally settled on a double trapeze cradle act with a female catcher. This gave me the opportunity to tour overseas, visiting the Netherlands for the first time in 2006. Since then I have performed in Germany and the US.

When I turned 18, I decided to learn a new skill and enrolled to study fashion design. Once I mastered the skill of sewing, I was appointed as costume maker for Zip Zap. Today I pass on my skills to the younger ones, including my daughter, who regularly comes along to Zip Zap, just as I did as a young girl.

What else would you have liked to do? I would have liked to be a social worker.

Are you paid enough? I'm comfortable, although working for an NGO is not as well-paying as some other jobs.

Rate your work stress on a scale of 1 to 10: I don't find the job very stressful at all.

Travel opportunities? Yes, I've travelled overseas and have been to many countries outside South Africa.