

Cosmo Training Academy: now stronger than ever

African Fusion talks to Cosmo Academy's new trainer and facilitator, Rozanne Herion, who is introducing international welder training with code tests to the Academy's offering, giving local fabricators access to welders with international qualifications and successful candidates access to the international welding workplace.

Rozanne Herion joined Cosmo as the Academy's in-house welder facilitator in March 2023, having spent several years honing the ideal skills set for the challenge.

"After completing my matric, I went on to do a diploma in metallurgy at the Vaal University in Vanderbijlpark. I was on a bursary, though, which got cancelled due to a recession in South Africa, so I had to abandon my studies just seven credits short of a diploma," Herion tells *African Fusion*.

"From there I started working for a local laboratory that provided destructive weld testing services for coding welders. Weld test specimens were sent to the laboratory to make sure they conformed to the specifications required. We did a range of mechanical tests, we looked at the macros and then compiled a test report. This experience gave me my first taste of what welding was about.

"I then approached ArcelorMittal, which was still called Iskor back then, to get onto its engineering training programme, which was set up to help people to finish their qualifications. Unfortunately, applications were closed when I applied, but the training manager invited me to switch to a trade

instead. I asked him what trades were available and I chose welding, because of my metallurgical background and my experience with weld samples in the laboratory.

"So I started as an apprentice and immediately fell in love with welding. I did a full apprenticeship at ArcelorMittal and qualified as a Red Seal welder back in 2013," she says.

On qualifying, Rozanne Herion went to work for company called Azam, which was responsible for the maintenance work for mining company, Samancor. "We were doing the fabrication and weld maintenance work for them, on the structural side and for the ladles for their foundries, for example. We also did a lot of work for Afrisam, where we built the large cement silos, along with installation jobs for BHP Billiton and Multotec.

"I started out as a welder and was then placed in a quality control role, which involved overseeing a small group of welders, inspecting their work, and offering advice. I began training welders to help them pass their code-tests when the inspectors came in," Herion relates, adding that she was coded in flux-cored welding as well as MIG/



Rozanne Herion (right) receives the JouYster Solidarity award for the Best Trades Person of the Year, 2023.

MAG processes.

While at Azam, Rozanne Herion was contacted by global training giant, City and Guilds, which was developing a welder training course in Johannesburg. "They wanted me to help them develop training material for their welding training course. They already had the theory in place, but they needed someone to develop the practical side of the training. It was there that I really began to shift over to the training side. They persuaded me to join them permanently, so I moved to Johannesburg and started a practical training course that included all the common processes: MMA/stick welding, MIG, Mag and Flux-cored welding as well as TIG or Argon-arc welding," she says.

"Through them, I completed the SAQA Facilitator and Assessor qualifications, South African requirements from the ETPD SETA, which is mandated in South Africa to promote and facilitate Education, Training and Development in the areas of education, training and skills development.

"City and Guilds was bought by the MSC Artisan Academy, who do the full suite of South African learnerships and apprenticeships. On the welding side, I began to deliver the SAQA Welder training programme, but I was also part of the board of people chosen to develop the toolkits for QCTO Boiler making, Welding and Electricians artisan programmes," she says.

After being retrenched in 2018, Herion joined a TVET college in Boksburg and continued to deliver welder training, initially based on the SAQA requirements but soon transitioning over to the new QCTO-based curriculum. "I was also part of the team delivering the old NATED N2 to N6 engineering courses. And I still do the online welding courses for them," she says.



Three Cosmo apprentices demonstrating their skills in down hand (left), vertical up (centre) and overhead welding (right).

Due to Covid, Herion was again retrenched, so she joined a school that worked with people with learning disabilities. "I was in the welding workshop teaching these kids to weld. It involved a lot of creativity, because they had to build things that could be sold at the end of the year to make money for the school. So we made braais, chairs and tables, based on their own design ideas. I was teaching them how to bring ideas from their heads onto paper and then to translate that into actual products," she tells *African Fusion*.

"From there, I went to work at the Olifantsfontein Trade Centre, assessing candidates coming for their Trade Tests. During that time I started doing my Moderator course, which I completed earlier this year. It was while working at Olifantsfontein that I first met people from Cosmo, who came to show us the training equipment and welding machines they had on offer.

"We began to collaborate when Olifantsfontein had a big group from a Seta coming to us for trade test training. We could not accommodate the entire group, so I went to Cosmo and met Emma, Head of Training, and Eduan, former facilitator, to try and see how they could assist us. That is how we first met and shortly afterwards, they persuaded me to join them," she adds. She also completed her diploma in Project Management in 2023.

In 2023, Rozanne Herion was nominated for the South African Trade Union, Solidarity Best Trades Person of the Year competition. Out of more than 1 000 nominations



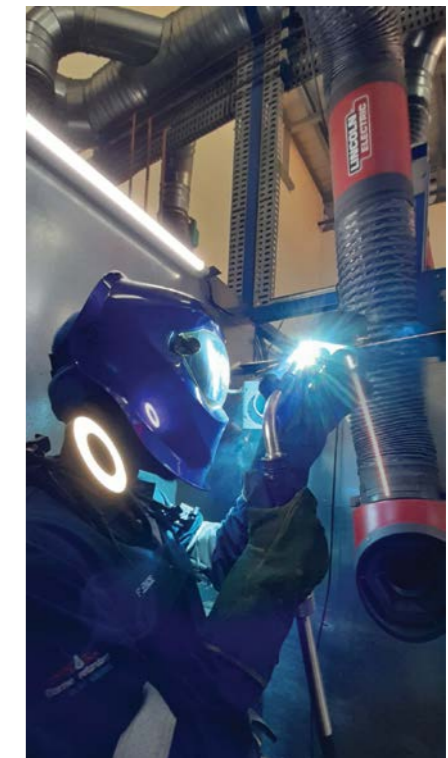
across all trades spanning South Africa, she was the first welding artisan and the first female artisan to reach the top five. She then won the competition, further raising the profile of women and welding in South Africa.

Exceptionally well qualified for welder training, Rozanne Herion says the job is her passion. "I absolutely love what I do" she exclaims.

International qualifications for local youngsters

On the welding side, the Cosmo Training Academy is an SAIW-accredited Authorised Training Body (ANB) for the delivery of the IIW's International Welder (IW) training courses. Rozanne Herion was invited to join Cosmo off the back of an Air Products-sponsored project to give local talent from rural communities this international welding qualification.

"These are guys and girls are from previously disadvantaged rural areas that do not have many employment options. Cosmo goes into these areas to find potential students that are willing to be evaluated. Of the first group of 20 students we evaluated, we found six that met all our criteria for success, three men and three women. Air Products Funded these young welders, including all the training costs and PPE, tools, travel and daily provisions for the duration of the course. They have now completed a seven week IIW training course and were all successfully Code tested in July and awarded IIW Fillet Welder diplomas in MAG



Welding of Carbon Steels," Herion informs *African Fusion*.

These students are now available to work in the local fabrication industry. "We keep their CVs at Cosmo Academy and we get a lot of clients who call asking us to recommend skilled welders that we know well," she says, adding that a second group of six – also including three women – began training in August and completed it in the first week of October."

For the rest of this year, the Cosmo Academy is fully booked with other training courses: companies that need young welders to be coded for a particular process, and a steady stream of students who come to Cosmo for Red Seal Trade Test preparation. "We are still waiting to see, but we believe Air Products wants to try to take more groups of welders through the IIW programme next year," notes Herion.

"Cosmo is a very people-oriented company. I really like the way they get involved with their staff and customers. A big thing underpinning our growth is word of mouth communication about our services. When people buy machines from Cosmo, we train them on the machine so they know how to use it properly. As a result, we then get people calling for training on their own machines, which leads to code and qualifications' related enquiries.

"We have developed excellent community connection as well. Cosmo and the local community are very supportive of each other," Rozanne Herion concludes.

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The second group of six Air Products-sponsored Cosmo apprentices – three women and three men – began training in August and now have IIW International Welder Diplomas as coded and certified Fillet MIG Welders. From left: Teboggo Kgomo, Dolph Mashele, Samson Ngobeni, Calvin Lekoakoe, Mitchell Moekwa, and Fortunia Selolo.