A burning desire to succeed!

Nothing was going to hold back Nocwaka Mazaleni! She started her first business in the clothing trade in Gugulethu more than 30 years ago, is currently the proud owner of three guesthouses – with a fourth in the planning!

Her story of humble beginnings tells of a young girl who was separated from her single mother in the heart of the apartheid years to live with her grandmother in the Eastern Cape.

It was her grandmother’s skill as a garment maker that inspired Mazaleni to learn to sew and stitch with a hand-cranked Singer machine. She was not going to allow adversity to get in her way, and by the time she reached high school she was making and selling clothes.

When she was able to return to Cape Town with her siblings years later, Mazaleni set up shop in her garage in Gugulethu from where she sold garments to the local population. By then she had also completed a diploma in design.

She started to buy from factories to resell, and travelled once a month to the Eastern Cape by bus to make deliveries and take orders in her ever-expanding network. With her eye firmly fixed on the formal business world, Mazaleni took the bold step in the late eighties to open a shop in Athlone, and then in the Cape Town City Centre and Claremont.

What followed was a series of ambitious and relentless attempts to break into the upmarket boutique trade. She was already established among the new African elite, doing a roaring trade at parliamentary openings.

After opening outlets in the Waterfront and later in Canal Walk, Mazaleni’s enthusiasm for the clothing trade was dampened by the flooding of the market with cheap imports. She decided to venture into the hospitality industry and enrolled in a hospitality course.

Her 30 years of business experience served her well. She identified the house in Milnerton Ridge and developed it into the first of her three Kwantu guest houses.
The bank finance barely covered the bond, but she was used to “taking the little you can get, and stretching it”.

She set about furnishing the guest house in her trade-mark African fusion style on a shoe-string budget and with every bit of creativity she had honed over the years.

“I never looked back,” says Mazaleni.

This year, with finance from Business Partners, she bought the property which she was renting for her Kwantu Three guest house, and put down a deposit for another, which will eventually become Kwantu Four.

Website: www.kwantuguesthouse.com