

Fantastic anti-plastic swimmer makes history

HISTORY was made recently as Durban North resident and physiotherapist, Sarah Ferguson, became the first South African woman and first woman from the continent of Africa to complete the 46km Kai'wi Channel between the Hawaiian islands of Oahu and Molokai.

What made the feat even more impressive is that Ferguson had to swim an extra 17 kilometres because of the strong current on the day.

The 35-year-old decided to do the swim to create awareness of the importance of eliminating the use of single use plastic. She recently arrived home to promote awareness about marine conservation.

She recently set up an organisation, called Breathe, soon to be registered as an NPO.



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"Flying over the channel before my swim I was in awe of how big the ocean is 70 per cent of our earth is made up of the ocean. We have only explored 30 per cent of what it has to offer and yet we are destroying it with every straw we use, every plastic bag we buy at the shops and every single use plastic item that we consume.

"You may think this plastic problem is too big for you as an individual. How can you not using a straw or buying a plastic packet make any difference to our ocean and planet? But if you add up every single straw and plastic packet you said no to over a month or even a year, you will be shocked at the difference just you can make.

"That's why I established Breathe. The word holds so much significance. Breathe is the essence of life. You need breath to live and we need environment to survive. One of the projects we've launched is to ban straws at restaurants in Durban. So far Afros and Durban Underwater Club (DUC) have banned the use of straws which is fantastic. We are hoping by June next year to stop the use of straws around Durban. Together we can change the statistic that says that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the sea than fish," she said.



MAIN PHOTO: Durban North resident, Sarah Ferguson, during her 63.7 kilometer swim which she finished in 17:54:25. PHOTO: Submitted

Finishing in style

Speaking about the swim, Ferguson (*below*) said the entire swim took her close to 18 hours to complete. She also had two experienced hands at the helm. On a kayak, was seconder John McCarthy, also from Durban, while a boat with coach, Sarah Houston on board gave her additional support.

"Sarah had the job of feeding me every half hour. I wasn't allowed to touch the boat, and Sarah had to keep throwing me food. There were times where I really struggled to eat because of how salty the water was but I was determined to finish. As I spotted the finish line on Makapu Bay, Sarah and John jumped into the water alongside me. I could not think of a more fitting way to end off my swim flanked by them as we swam the last mile over the reef against a current into Makapu bay. They worked tirelessly and selflessly to get me here. I did my final two butterfly strokes to finish off my swim before Sarah dared me to catch a wave to the finish. I catch the perfect wave and float to shore, hop up and I was met by my boyfriend and a

TV crew. It was surreal feeling and one that I'll never forget," she said.

