

PETCO's 2019 recycling champs announced

The PET Recycling Company (PETCO) recently unveiled its 2019 recycling champions - people and organisations making strides in sustainability at grassroots level across South Africa.



L-R Helen Adendorff, executive director, Thrive; Rocco Antonio Da Silva, The Future Kids Club; Takunda Chitaka, PhD student, University of Cape Town

The annual awards were made across 11 categories, with Western Cape Winners scooping nine awards, followed by Gauteng with two, and one each from the Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and Limpopo. Recipients varied from a nine-year-old eco warrior to a recycler who overcame three fires on her premises, and an award-winning consumer journalist.

PETCO chief executive officer Cheri Scholtz said the organisation's greatest asset was "the remarkable network of partners we work with every day."

Scholtz said the 98,649 tonnes of PET plastic bottles recycled in 2018 had only been achieved through their collective dedication and efforts, enabling PETCO to expand its collection network, build relationships with recyclers, and seek new opportunities to develop and support entrepreneurs.

"We are therefore delighted to be able to recognise and celebrate the significant efforts made by our 14 worthy Winners towards the recycling of post-consumer PET in South Africa."

Category: Waste Reduction Youth Warrior

Winners:

Rocco Antonio Da Silva, The Future Kids Club (Cape Town, Western Cape): Nine-year-old Rocco started the club to create awareness and get the youth in his area to commit to participating in monthly beach and community clean-ups. Over the last 14 months, members have collected in excess of 950kg of rubbish off a local 400m stretch of beach.

Rotondwa Musitha, Trash Converters (Limpopo): Musitha, 24, is a business school graduate who started her recycling business after her research showed that just 2% of all recyclable material in Limpopo was being recycled, creating a gap in the market for waste buy-back centres. Working on foot, she and her three employees collect approximately eight to 11 tonnes of waste per month. She plans to expand into other provinces.

Watch the video interview with Rotondwa Musitha [here](#).

Category: Top Woman in Recycling

Winner:

Jocelyn Van Der Ross, Green Spot Recycling (Franschhoek, Western Cape): Buy-back centre Green Spot Recycling has overcome the odds, with owner Jocelyn Van Der Ross starting from scratch three times. Van Der Ross started the business with two employees in 2005 and today has 15 staff collecting and sorting over six tonnes of PET plastic bottles a month.

Watch the interview with Jocelyn Van Der Ross [here](#).

Category: Media Spotlight

Winner:

Wendy Knowler (Cape Town, Western Cape): Award-winning consumer journalist Wendy Knowler has been recognised for her role in helping to shed light on the importance of conscious consumption and recycling, while taking a balanced approach to the plastics issue. Knowler's factful print, digital and radio journalism has helped audiences better understand a complex topic. The award recognises her attempts to create awareness about recycling issues, dispel myths, shame companies who continue to design packaging without recycling in mind and to motivate consumers to do their bit.

Category: Excellence in Academia

Winners:

Takunda Chitaka, University of Cape Town (Cape Town, Western Cape): Chitaka is in the fourth year of her PhD studies, and was nominated for her work on the nature of the plastics found on Cape Town beaches, which was published in an international scientific journal this year. She determined litter wash-up rates for five beaches and classified 36,000 items by weight into 372 distinguishable item types across 10 material types and 19 functional type categories. Her studies are dedicated to better understanding the nature of the problem of plastics in our coastal environment, and how solutions based on the principles of life-cycle management could be developed for moving the plastics economy forward.

Watch the video interview with Takunda Chitaka [here](#).

Melanie Samson, University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, Gauteng): Academic Samson works closely with informal reclaimers who see themselves as the last line of defence before the rubbish hits landfills, extracting recyclables from waste and redirecting them into the recycling value chain. According to the CSIR, they save municipalities up to R748m a year in landfill space. Yet they are only paid the price of the recyclable, and not for the collection service they provide or the environmental and economic benefits they generate. To ensure that they receive the benefits they deserve, Samson is currently completing the three-year “Lessons from Waste Picker Integration” research project funded by the Department of Science and Technology’s Waste RDI Roadmap and the Department of Environmental Affairs, which includes facilitating a participatory stakeholder process to develop DEA’s forthcoming Guideline on Waste Picker Integration for South Africa.

Category: PET-trepreneur of the Year

Winners:

Makhabisi Recycling and Trading Co (Boksburg, Gauteng): The Boksburg-based Makhabisi Recycling and Trading was founded by Anna Hartebeest in 2007 and has been reducing landfill, creating community awareness and providing much-needed employment ever since. The 100% black female-owned business is dedicated to being an inclusive green business, supporting the creation of social equity and generating decent jobs. It now employs 60 people, who sort and grind 200 tonnes of plastic preforms and 60 tonnes of sorting bales such as PET, HDPP and PVC per month. Makhabisi collects 18 to 20 tonnes of PET every month.

Watch the Makhabisi Recycling video [here](#).

Nzima Recycle Centre (Humansdorp, Eastern Cape): Nzima started out in 2006 with owners and founders Tommy and Jeanine Glad having just R50 in their pockets but armed with a real desire to make a difference. In 2014, their business was destroyed in a fire and, two years later, the land they were using was sold from underneath them and they had to begin again. Today, the business employs 14 people and handles 20 tonnes of PET plastic bottles per month.

Category: Local Authority Recycling Innovation

Winner:

Drakenstein Municipality (Paarl, Western Cape): Drakenstein Municipality has transformed the Wellington landfill site from a crime hotspot into a safe, thriving recycling concern, providing a source of income for 30 entrepreneurs. The project has been so successful that the municipality has been approached by Metsimaholo Municipality in the Free State to establish a similar project.

Watch the Drakenstein Municipality story [here](#).

Category: Recycling Partnership Gamechanger

Winner:

Fair Cape Dairies (Cape Town): When Fair Cape Dairies changed its packaging from a white PET plastic bottle to a clear one, it received feedback that recyclers were not accepting the milk bottles, which ended up in landfills. The company

responded by embarking on an 18-month research project to find suppliers that could help to keep the shelf life constant in a bottle that could be recycled. Today, each clear bottle is not only recyclable, but is also made with 50% recycled PET (rPET).

Watch the Fair Cape Dairies story [here](#).

Category: Recycled Product of the Year

Winner:

Corruseal (Cape Town, Western Cape): As a national manufacturer and supplier of packaging to a wide range of industries, Corruseal made the decision to use only locally sourced and recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) strapping. Corruseal sources the strapping from Cape Town-based supplier Propet, which uses locally sourced post-consumer PET bottles in its manufacturing process. What is exciting about rPET strapping is that it can be made from green plastic bottles, which have had a limited end-use market to date.

Category: Best Community Breakthrough Initiative

Winner:

Angels Resource Centre (De Aar, Northern Cape): Eddie Kampher set up a recycling opportunity for under-resourced communities in the Northern Cape. His Waste to Art programme teaches people how to sort, clean, bale and even create functional furniture and art. A total of 30 entrepreneurs, who were previously homeless or unemployed, are now selling to local buy-back centres and earning a monthly income. The programme provides them with new opportunities within the waste management and recycling industry, cleaning the environment whilst creating employment and better health and safety in their communities.

Watch the video interview with Eddie Kampher [here](#).

Category: Public Campaign of the Year

Winner:

Thrive (Hout Bay, Western Cape): Thrive was born in 2004 out of a needs assessment run by Imagine Hout Bay, which identified the community's top three priorities as its people, conservation of its natural beauty, and local economy.

Recycling and waste management projects were a natural outcome of these ideas and provided a practical course of action. Thrive works with local schools to adopt more sustainable practices and rewards the greenest schools for their efforts. It also connects them with buy-back businesses for the collection of recyclables separated by the students, which allows the school to generate additional income.

Watch the interview with the Thrive team [here](#).

Category: CEO Special Award

Winner:

John Kieser, environmental manager, Plastics SA (Cape Town, Western Cape): Kieser is a conservationist with a specific interest in marine debris pollution, leading beach and community clean-ups across South Africa. He first noticed that plastic was a growing problem 20 years ago and, after resigning from his previous governmental role, was asked by the Plastics Federation to continue his work on plastic pollution. For him, the critical component is teaching poor people that plastics have economic value and how they can earn a living by selling to buy-back centres and working in recycling.

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