

# 2021 Petco Awards winners announced

Petco, the national polyethylene terephthalate (PET) extended producer responsibility body, has announced the winners of the 2021 Petco Awards which recognises individuals and organisations making a tangible impact on sustainability and the circular economy.



GreenUp waste reclaimer

“We are proud to celebrate these extraordinary people and organisations across the country for their contribution. Their success shows that PET plastic waste is not trash,” said Petco chief executive officer Cheri Scholtz.

## 2021 Petco Awards category winners:

### Environmental Education and Awareness Initiative

**Winner:** Giving Them Wings Foundation NPC (Nelson Mandela Bay, Eastern Cape)

Siya Ntsumpa’s Giving Them Wings Foundation helps cultivate an environmental ethos and culture by establishing environmental clubs throughout Nelson Mandela Bay. So far 11 schools and one clinic have embraced the concept of recycling and creating food gardens, with many children starting food gardens and recycling in their own homes and communities, and spreading the environmental message among the wider community.

## Top Woman in Collection and Recycling

**Winner:** Loretta Waterboer of LW Recycling and Trade (Fisantekraal, Western Cape)

Loretta Waterboer started LW Recycling and Trade in 2014, operating out of her backyard, where she collected small quantities of any recyclable material she could find, including PET plastic bottles. With no equipment to assist her, she made do with what she could while working full-time. Despite the challenges, her remarkable passion, humility, and determination paid off. Three years later, Garden Cities approached her to do recycling from their site yard and entered into an enterprise development agreement with her.

## Recycling Partnership Gamechanger

**Joint winner:** African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) and the Bordeaux South Homeowners Association (Johannesburg, Gauteng)

While some residents focused on keeping reclaimers off their streets, Bordeaux resident Angela Schaerer reached out to the African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO) to see how they could work together. The ensuing S@S Programme, for which Petco originally supplied the necessary plastic bags for collection, followed by sturdier bins, is the first resident-reclaimer recycling initiative of its kind in the country.



S@S Programme founder Angela Schaerer of the Bordeaux Homeowners Association

**Joint winner:** GreenUP (Stellenbosch, Western Cape)

GreenUP is a successful public-private-people partnership between Distell, the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs & Development Planning, and the City of Cape Town. It is investing R8.8m a year to enable reclaimers – called “environmental assistants (EAs)” – to reduce post-consumer waste. PET is regarded as a circular polymer and reclaimers make a valuable contribution in this collection phase.

## PET-repreneur

**Joint winner:** Mandlenkosi Nkosi of Man Recycling (Boksburg, Gauteng)

In 2017, Mandlenkosi Nkosi was unemployed and had just started a family. To earn a living, Nkosi and his wife began collecting recyclable material to sell. The couple operated from an open field, collecting three tonnes of PET plastic bottles a month. These days, the Man Recycling Buy-Back Centre operates from a secure building, collects over 18 tonnes of PET a month and employs 30 community members.



Mandlenkosi Nkosi of Man Recycling

**Joint winner:** Matsobane Mawasha of Circular Green (Zebediela, Limpopo)

Matsobane Mawasha started Circular Green with nothing but grit and the determination to succeed. It wasn't easy. He had to sell his car and go into debt to get his enterprise off the ground.

He started as a one-person show, picking up waste on the streets after work every day. Then the idea of upscaling waste collection to benefit more people took root. Although the people of Zebediela were unfamiliar with the concept of recycling, Mawasha was undeterred, setting out to teach people why recycling matters and how to identify recyclable material. His persistence paid off and, in 2019, Circular Green collected almost 61 tonnes of PET plastic bottles, distributing around R122,000 in PET buy-back capital back to the community.

## **Best Community Recycling Initiative**

**Winner:** The ReTrade Project (Nelson Mandela Bay, Eastern Cape)

Started in 2014, The ReTrade Project is run by a volunteer team comprising 80% women and a women-led management board. For founder and director Maria Grewar, the initiative is all about providing a hand up rather than a handout.

The ReTrade Project changes lives and restores dignity to communities in Nelson Mandela Bay. It encourages community members to bring recyclables to a depot in exchange for essential items such as food, toiletries, clothing and blankets. Simultaneously, the local community is becoming more environmentally aware and learning about recycling, what constitutes waste, how to use it, clean it and sort it. This is vital if we are to recover PET plastic bottles and work to create a circular economy.

## Best New End-Use Products

**Winner:** Palletplast (Pty) Ltd (Blackheath, Western Cape)

Out-of-the-box thinkers Christopher Smith and Steph Le Roux Clarke are repurposing materials that are not traditionally recycled, converting them into pallets made from 97% rPET.

Barrier layer material, darker colour PET and other materials not derived from plastic bottles would previously have gone to landfill. Now they are converted into fully recyclable pallets that are lightweight, stackable, easy to transport, and cost effective. The patented pallet design includes three PET straps which enable the pallet to rack 1 200kg – vital during cold storage in the fruit sector, which exports over four million pallets from the Western Cape alone each year.

## Design for Circularity

**Winner:** The Mpact Versapak company (Paarl, Western Cape)

Part of the waste challenge is the linear 'take-make-dispose' model of consumption, which means products are manufactured, bought, used briefly, and then thrown away. However, Mpact Versapak's thermoformed punnet is the first food-approved punnet in South Africa to be formulated completely from 100% post-consumer rPET.

By using a post-consumer formulation of rPET, Mpact Versapak is supporting a more circular economy in South Africa – by ensuring that this material is diverted from landfill to be reused and recycled into new and useful materials, thus maximising its value.



Dawid Maritz - national sales manager of agricultural products at Mpact Versapak



Christopher Smith of Palletplast

## Media Spotlight

**Winner:** Pippa Hudson, Cape Talk Radio (Cape Town, Western Cape)

Cape Talk journalist Pippa Hudson is recognised for her outstanding contribution to environmental awareness and consumer education. Hudson works tirelessly to fundamentally shift understanding among South African consumers of issues pertaining to waste reduction, reuse and recycling. She understands that well-informed consumers can dispose of packaging correctly and use their spending power to choose well-designed packaging. Hudson understands the role of producer responsibility organisations such as Petco and challenges consumers and retailers alike to be more mindful and find better, more creative ways of protecting the environment.

## Best Community Recycling Initiative

**Joint winners:** Belville Recycling and Trolley Project (Cape Town, Western Cape)

Petco sees the training and mentorship of informal reclaimers as critical to improving working conditions and assisting waste entrepreneurs to grow and sustain their businesses, thereby stimulating economic growth, job creation and development in our country. The Belville Recycling and Trolley Project does this by facilitating access to recyclable waste and therefore a more predictable income, providing valuable economic and social services support, and access to training. This project's value is that it supports businesses in reducing the amount of waste they send to landfills, recycling more and simultaneously helping the community.



The Belville Recycling and Trolley Project

## Local Authority Recycling Innovation

**Joint winner:** City of Cape Town (Cape Town, Western Cape)

The City of Cape Town (CoCT) is making inroads into the circular economy through many interventions to minimise waste and reduce the amount that ends up in landfills. They're speeding up recycling, championing SMMEs and driving economic development and growth. The outcome is cleaner communities and, importantly, job creation. On average, over 24,000 tonnes of dry recyclables a year have been diverted from landfill, including PET.

**Joint winner:** The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA)

(KwaMhlanga, Mpumalanga)

Environmental officer Linah Ndala from DARDLEA works with private companies, government and municipalities in Mpumalanga to divert material from landfill, support job creation and uplift communities. The project attests to the power of partnerships and collaboration.

For Ndala, the starting point is teaching communities about the possibilities of a greener economy, coupled with awareness workshops about recycling – how to sort and turn recycled material into products to earn a living.



Linah Duduzile Ndala of the Department of Agriculture

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