

## Linah Ndala - The Go-Green hero of local recycling

Amidst the challenging issues of job creation and waste management, there are beacons of light as South Africans look to inventive ways to find solutions for themselves. Recycling buy-back centres, where recyclable materials are brought and exchanged for money, play an important role in managing waste by keeping it out of the environment and diverting valuable resources from landfills. Now, entrepreneurs are taking the initiative to start up such buy-back centres, recognizing that they not only contribute to getting valuable resources out of the waste stream, but that they can also potentially generate sustainable income opportunities, both for themselves and others. In doing so, environmental and litter issues are tackled, while communities are empowered and developed from a social-economic perspective. Recently, three such innovative entrepreneurs were recognized in the annual

PETCO Awards for the work they have done in driving sustainability and contributing to the circular economy. They have created formal and informal jobs and income opportunities within the communities within which they operate. Linah Duduzile Ndala is the co-ordinator of the Zonda Insila Programme, based in Msukaligwa Local Municipality. The programme first launched in March 2019, with four buy-back centre projects, and has since grown to an impressive total of 14 projects: five in Nkangala, two in Bohlabela, one in Gert Sibande and six in the Ehlanzeni District.

“People have got very different opinions regarding waste, but there is one that is outdated, which is that ‘waste is trash,’” explains Ndala. “I have come to learn that waste can actually be equated with wealth and money.” The initiative, which collected over five tonnes of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) recyclables in 2021, now employs

240 people. The majority of those benefiting from this project are women, giving them the opportunity to create an income from their recyclable materials. Companies such as PETCO – a Producer Responsibility Organization whose main responsibility is facilitating the collection and recycling of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles, provide support to these entrepreneurs on this journey. “PETCO provides financial and other support to the collection and recycling value chain to increase the street value of PET packaging and stimulate its collection. The majority of these support projects are aimed at recycling partners or buy-back centres through the sponsorship of infrastructure and equipment that allows them to improve efficiency as well as the quantity and quality of the materials they collect,” said PETCO CEO, Cheri Scholtz.

