



Left Friends Xolisa Mahasana, Sakhumzi Nduku and Siyabulela Dfilamga were the first three entrants in the Uphinda-phindo game last Saturday.



Right: Hout Bay Recycling Co-op manager Nokwanda Sotyantya explains the rules of the recycling game to its first entrants.

# Rewarding kids for collecting trash

ANGELA SAYER-FARLEY

The word had got out and, by 1pm on Saturday, about 30 eager children and some mothers were lined up with their bags and crates of recyclable materials. They wanted to be part of the new TrashBack Uphinda-phindo (Xhosa for "repeated

returns") initiative, which promises to match their efforts with rewards in kind. By the end of the afternoon, 92 people had registered, and 360kg of recyclables had been collected.

Participants have a double chance to win: every two weeks top collectors (by weight) are guaranteed a prize, and there is

also a lucky draw.

Weights are recorded electronically, against individual collectors' cellphone numbers so they can be kept updated by SMS of their "scores".

The initiative is fully sponsored by local supermarkets, restaurants and businesses, and prizes are impressive: items of

clothing, supermarket vouchers, restaurant vouchers, stationery, books, and more.

It all began after three UCT graduates, Nicholas Wiid, Andrew McNaught and Terence Goldberg, whose specialities range from environmental management to applied maths, saw the documentary *A Convenient Truth*, which records the solutions that the Curitiba community in Brazil devised in the face of dire economic hardship. In Curitiba, recycling was essential, and in fact became official barter, most notably for public transport vouchers.

So inspired were the students that they devised a "rewards for rubbish" idea and presented it to Hout Bay Recycling's Nokwanda Sotyantya and Zero Waste Hout Bay's Bronwen Lankers-Byrne, who saw its potential. The team of enthusiasts who pooled their combined skills grew, and included a new NPO, Thrive, which provided a laptop. A branding workshop, a sponsorship drive, interviews in Imizamo Yethu, and many meetings later, and TrashBack was launched.

Of course, rewarding children for collecting recyclable waste has been done before, if on a rather less sophisticated basis.

Hout Bay's "queen" of recycling Sheila Hofmeyr did it in 2004 from her swap-shop caravan, handing out donated stationery and clothing to Imizamo Yethu children on a weekly basis in exchange for the bags of cardboard, plastic, tins and bottles they had collected.

Then, in 2009, the City of Cape Town's solid waste department reluctantly agreed to a three-month pilot organised by Zero Waste Hout Bay, which encouraged members of the

community to take their recyclables to Hout Bay Recycling Co-op in return for donated toys - when these were available.

The Co-op workers found they had to put a lot of leg-work into trying to sustain the "Think Twice" pilot, going door-to-door in the designated areas to encourage people to separate their recyclable waste. Results improved when two independent educators were hired for a month to support the project.

However, after the Co-op won a cash boost for their business in a competition organised by a retail chain and aimed at recognising community environmental initiatives, things turned sour. Somehow, the community felt they should have shared in the Co-op's award.

The lesson has been learned. In an impoverished community where unemployment is high, any effort needs to be rewarded, and Uphinda-phindo aims to do this - in a spirit of competition.

But like the initiatives that have gone before it, Uphinda-phindo has serious objectives - not only to direct more waste away from landfills, and introduce a culture of recycling in informal areas, but also to turn apathy into action, proving that effort can bring about positive change. The TrashBack organisers are also hoping that a cleaner environment will instil a sense of pride and dignity among residents.

However, by the excitement on the face of entrant number two, Xolisa Mahasana, 12, these lofty ideals were clearly less real than the hope that something wonderful would come his way soon - as a direct result of his own efforts at simply cleaning up.

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SHIRE CPOA

### What's On

**Masquerade Ball**

The Ambleside School of Hout Bay has organised a masquerade ball at the Suikerbossie Restaurant, Hout Bay on Friday September 16 from 7pm until 1am. Tickets are R250 each (including a three-course meal and wine). Proceeds go to One child at a time subsidy programme for school education. Contact the school at 021 790 4449.

**Social bridge**

The Hout Bay Social Bridge Club, established 18 years ago, is looking for new players. Members of the club play on Thursday evenings at private homes around Hout Bay. The environment is relaxed and informal and all players, except outright beginners, are welcome. Contact Tim at 082 491 4180 or Alistair at 083 628 9390.

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