

**CATEGORY | Outstanding Environmental Health
Professional**

WINNER | Wayne Blything, Kick4Life



INTRODUCTION

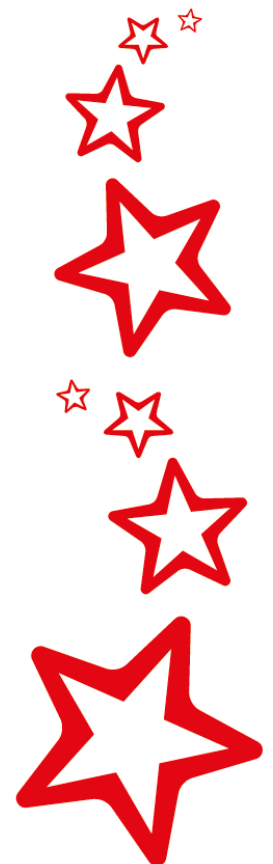
Over the last 4 years, Wayne Blything has made an incredible contribution to the promotion of environmental health in Lesotho - one of the world's most disadvantaged countries. Overcoming enormous challenges in a country where health standards are very under-developed, this included setting up No.7 restaurant from scratch, turning the idea into a profitable social enterprise and training young people to be some of the country's most capable chefs and restaurant professionals. A nutrition curriculum for HIV positive youth was also developed. Today No.7 is ranked No1 on TripAdvisor for the whole of Lesotho – a testament to Wayne's extraordinary vision, resilience and passion.

I first met Wayne in 2010 when he visited Lesotho as part of one of our fundraising tours. It was immediately apparent to me that he was a person with unusual drive and passion for using his skills and experience for social change – even if at that point we hadn't had the idea to set up a restaurant!

As a bit of background to Kick4Life, we are a multi award-winning charity that uses the power of sport to transform the lives of orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho. Lesotho has the world's second highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS at 23.2%. This has devastated family and community structures and has quashed economic development.

Once we had opened our first sports facility in 2011, we saw the potential to open a number of social enterprises that would have two purposes: 1) to generate sustainable income for the charity and 2) to provide training and employment opportunities for young people. We identified the potential for a restaurant, hotel and conference centre, and over the next few years secured funding for the basic structure. Fundamental to progressing this idea was finding skilled and experienced people who could help to turn this dream into a reality. I didn't hesitate to contact Wayne, along with his partner Tessa, and a few months later they were on a plane to Lesotho!

Over the next year, Wayne worked tirelessly to prepare for the launch of No.7, managing everything from interior design and sourcing equipment to marketing, financial planning, developing a supply chain and menu creation. He also set up and managed a vegetable and herb garden to cultivate produce for the restaurant and trained some of our participants to grow their own produce.



Most importantly of all, he identified a group of 13 trainees – young people with no previous experience in hospitality - and developed a training programme for them which covered all aspects of the industry. Each of them was encouraged to specialise in a different area according to their skills and experience – some in cooking, others front-of-house. This was incredibly challenging in a country with no culture of fine dining and hardly any environmental health standards. Wayne delivered extensive education and training on the importance of food safety and hygiene, and helped implement food safety and health & safety systems that met UK standards, even though there was no legal requirement for them in Lesotho.

In August 2014, I was delighted to attend the restaurant's grand opening, with the ribbon cut by the King of Lesotho. I was blown away by the service and the cleanliness.

The restaurant has made a significant contribution to our work at Kick4Life, helping to generate a profit for all of our social programmes. All of the trainees have either progressed to full-time paid positions with us or to opportunities externally. They have become sought after professionals who are helping to drive up standards across the restaurant industry in Lesotho as a whole, including in the field of environmental health. This is Wayne's greatest legacy.