



# Twitter Blanket Drive

4 June 2011 18h00

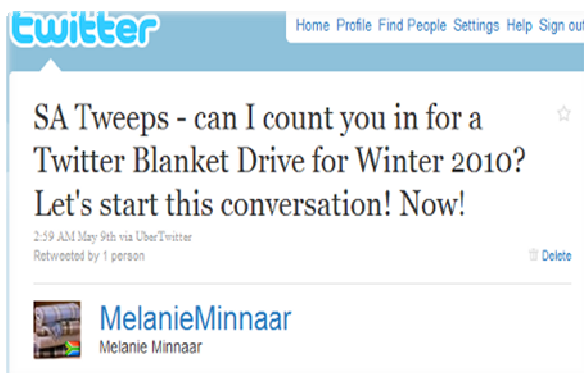
## TWEETING A VISION

Twitter Blanket Drive, South Africa. [www.twitterblanketdrive.co.za](http://www.twitterblanketdrive.co.za)

In 2009 I signed up for Twitter. Hardly an early-adopter. I lost interest very quickly as no one was apparently interested in what I had to say, and 'they' were downright rude as they didn't even acknowledge my presence on the social media platform. It took 6 more months before someone explained to me how Twitter worked.

It was only in January 2010 that I really started exploring the bustling social media platform. I was on maternity leave, it was a cold autumn day. And as I was lying warm in my bed a thought crossed my mind that it may be a very uncomfortable winter for many less fortunate people. By this stage of my maternity leave I was already firmly glued to my BlackBerry and more importantly to the Twitter community (albeit only about 200 followers at the time).

So, I did the natural thing and tweeted a call to action... In May I posted this Tweet:



... And an amazing thing happened;

In just 1 week the thought grew into a full blown national initiative by the South African Twitter community. 7 regions from Pretoria to the Overberg all confirmed their participation through 9 events all to be held on the same day and time across the country.

Nothing in it for any of the participants and organisers except to be a part of the 1<sup>st</sup> national social media fundraising initiative in South Africa. Venue sponsors came out of the Twitverse, as did volunteers to assist with things like website design (who knew we needed a website?), drop-off points and PR. We even received support through ReTweets and messages of support from various NGO's in the USA and UK who have a focus on Africa.

My Twitter vocabulary was growing by the day – as was my fascination with what was unfolding.

Then, just as things seemed to be under control; a Tweep had an idea to take #TBD to the rugby at Orlando stadium/Soccer City for the game between the Blue Bulls and the Stormers. Suddenly, #TBD went mainstream.

We ended up being talked about on various blogs, sports columns, news articles and podcasts. We knew we were a part of something awesome. In the end we collected over 500 blankets and loads of bags of old clothing. Cash donations were also made directly to the beneficiaries selected. More than 200 Tweeps attended the TBD TweetUps and many more Tweeps made contributions at the various additional dropoff points.

(My father-in-law still jokes about me being interviewed on a rugby show – me, of all people who couldn't tell you the difference between Butch James and Butch Cassidy. It is Butch James right?)

Here we are in 2011 and the blanket drive is back on the road and in full swing.

Events take place on Saturday, 4 June 2011 in the following centres:

Province	Area	Venue	Time	Twitter host
<b>Gauteng</b>	Sandton	Crowne Plaza Hotel, Rosebank	6pm – 10pm	@MelanieMinnaar
	Benoni	The Coffee Shop, Rynfield	6pm	@jackiejvr
	West Rand	SilverStar Casino	6pm	@ReneeEverett
	Pretoria	The Blades	6pm	@sdiedericks
<b>Western Cape</b>	Cape Town	NewsCafe at Artscape	4.30pm	@alambchop
	Hermanus	OCF offices, Gateway Centre	6pm	@talitharabie
	Plettenberg Bay	Fynbos Ridge Country House	6pm	@fynbosridge
	Somerset West	TBC	6pm	@Helderberginfo
	Knysna	Mitchell's Brewery beer garden	2pm – 4pm	@marleneboyce
<b>KwaZulu Natal</b>	Durban	Luna Rossa, Gateway S/C	11am - 4pm	@waewest
	Durban north	Livingstone Gastro Pub, Glenore Centre	6pm - 8pm	@askashe
	South coast	The Bistro, Ramsgate	6pm - 8pm	@SouthCoastLive
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	East London	TBC	TBC	@slummiesgirl
	Port Elizabeth	Vovo Telo Pizzeria	6pm	@mon_tays

RSVP's are encouraged and can be done online via the official #TBD website; [www.twitterblanketdrive.co.za](http://www.twitterblanketdrive.co.za)

For anyone wishing to donate but who cannot attend any of the events, Williams Hunt dealerships nationwide are once again drop off points for blankets and clothing (no cash donations). Follow them on Twitter - @Williams\_Hunt

As much as I resist formalising the initiative I am asked more and more to talk about #TBD, something which I find soul fulfilling. The bottom line is: "want to collect blankets – I don't care how we do these and what ideas individuals/corporates come up with to collect a many blankets as possible (legally).

What is most probably important to note is the vision that I carry in my heart for this project which is centred around the following pillars:

- Community for community. In this instance – Twitter community for local communities where events will be held.
- Friends with benefits – we will always endeavour to give back to charities represented on Twitter first, likewise – we will always look to support establishments with Twitter presence by selecting them as venues for our #TBD tweetups
- Uphold integrity of social media environment – #TBD will never belong to any one sole sponsor, the Twitterverse is diverse in its constituents and we will always be true to all our followers' preferences. My preference will always be to drive promotion in the virtual space first.
- Anyone with shared goals can participate – this is not an exclusive project, the goal is to collect blankets for charity in the cold South African winter. If you can assist – we appreciate and welcome your efforts and will recognise these efforts – there will be no financial reward.

Most importantly, the spirit of #TBD is a bunch of people coming together around a common cause. That's it. #TBD is not a registered NGO or charity – it is a facilitator of helping real people to do the good deeds that they wanted to do in the first place. (Earl would be proud: "Do good things and good things happen" – NBC sitcom)

Hope to see you on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June – or in real life somewhere where another vision is being fulfilled ☺

Melanie Minnaar

(Follow me on Twitter @MelanieMinnaar)  
18 May 2011