

Ubuntu Beds provides healthcare workers with a place to lay their head

 By Nicci Botha

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With her tourism business hard hit by the Covid-19 travel restrictions, and having recovered from the virus herself, entrepreneur, Kim Whitaker, came up with [Ubuntu Beds](#). A win-win concept where public healthcare workers are provided with free accommodation in B&Bs, lodges or self-catering apartments close to where they work.



Kim Whitaker, founder of Ubuntu Beds

The health system is preparing for the Covid-19 peak, and healthcare workers are at risk of exposure, not only in their work environment, but many also have long commutes on public transport which is also contributing to the spread of the virus. "After speaking to a doctor in Lombardy, Italy, about how they could have prepared better for the peak of the virus, he said if only they could have housed healthcare workers in empty hotels to keep them from taking the virus home," she explains.

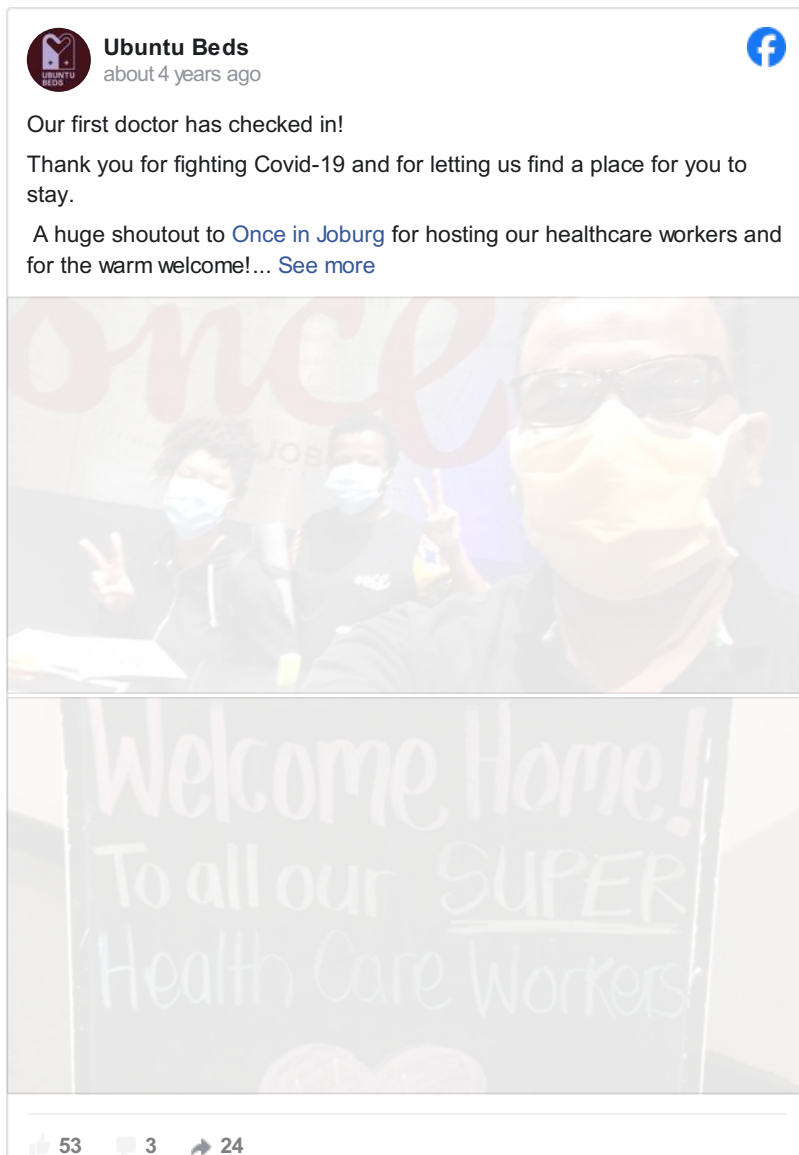
As the co-founder of [Once Travel](#) and the youth tourism academy, [Khwela](#), she realised she was in a position to make rooms available to healthcare workers.

“ [#ThankfulThursday](#) - Thank you to hotel owner Kim Whitaker who launched Ubuntu Beds. This initiative unites hospitality businesses that now stand empty with healthcare workers who are fighting the virus on the frontlines. [#ShareTheLove](#)   <https://t.co/onUCeGqWMG> — Premier Alan Winde (@alanwinde) [May 28, 2020](#) ”

"They sign up on our website and we will send them a date request link. The link is available to them anytime they wish to request a room. When they choose their required dates we match them with an accommodation nearby their hospital and then they check in. It's really easy. The date request link doesn't expire, so we suggest signing up now and then when they know their requested stay dates they can fill them in. Our healthcare worker placement team is available anytime and are really happy to help. We have received some really beautiful feedback from the healthcare workers we have placed so far and it's been incredibly rewarding," Whitaker says.



At the end of May, 869 establishments with approximately 15,000 plus rooms situated across the country, close to hospitals and clinics, have signed up to the platform. The average stay is between seven and 14 days. Healthcare workers have access to self-catering facilities and in some instances wi-fi, TV, and laundry services.



The accommodation is paid for through donations from the the public, and corporate sponsorships like Rand Merchant Bank's First Rand Spire Fund. "We are continuing to raise funds and aim to raise R16m over the next few months in order to house a total of 2,500 healthcare workers," she says.

"The spirit of Ubuntu has been particularly prevalent amongst South Africans during this time. Ubuntu Beds has given us a way to show our gratitude to the healthcare heroes while supporting local tourism businesses,"

Cleanliness is of utmost importance and all accommodation providers need to adhere to a cleaning guideline developed by Ubuntu Beds, and based on standards set by the Department of Health for self-isolation and self-quarantine accommodation. Specialist cleaning companies do a deep clean post-stay, which includes a Covid-19 fog, to ensure no cross-contamination occurs. Healthcare workers are aware of the risks, and scrub-off and scrub-on between the hospital and the accommodation.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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