

Local hero William turns business dream into reality

William Kivlin sat in a homeless hostel and had a dream. It was to start a catering company so he wrote a business plan and now that dream is a reality.

He has received over 300, five-star reviews from happy customers and is planning to become a social enterprise to start cooking lessons in hostels to give the homeless something to focus on and offer hope for the future.

Midlothian-born William would also like to own a restaurant one day, but that is in the future.

He currently runs the Old School Takeaway with his partner Destiny O'Neill (picture by *Lee Live: Photographer* courtesy of Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber) from their home in Mayfield and his drive and enthusiasm has already benefited the local area.

Last Christmas, he persuaded a business owner to fund food for Christmas meals.

The local parish church offered their kitchen and church hall and the Old School team, plus a small army of local volunteers, cooked 200 Christmas dinners and donated children's gifts to the local community.

And, this week, he was honoured as a Local Hero in the Midlothian and East Lothian Business Awards run by Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce and hosted at the

Eskmills Venue in Musselburgh. The award is for an individual who has gone above and beyond for the local community.

William admitted to being overwhelmed at the accolade and he has come a long way since committing his vision to paper sitting in that hostel.

He said: "Old School Takeaway is a delivery only food service which runs in Midlothian and we are the first Melville Housing tenant to be given permission to run a food business from home.

"We have been open just over 11 months and it has taken off extremely well. We are hoping to turn into a social enterprise and we have done so much in the year leading up to where we are now.

"It is just overwhelming what we have managed to achieve, especially coming from the situation I was in. I built this business up from being in homeless accommodation, sat in a small box room and put together a business plan.

"I waited on a permanent house and I went straight to the chairman of Melville Housing and was eventually given the permission to open the food business. It has really taken off."

Customers message William on Facebook and and they have joined the What The Fork and the Food Hub platforms and you can order from there or an app or there is a telephone number where you can order direct.

The opening days are Tuesday to Sunday from 10pm to 9pm and he said: "We do everything, our menu is massive. We do breakfast, lunch and dinners and last week we had a Tomohk steak dinner special on we do beer battered fish and chips and we have just introduced milk shakes.

“We have a wide range of healthy, affordable food and we haggis bon-bons with breadcrumbs to fresh, home-made soup, fresh steak pies, fresh lasagne, we have an amazing menu for our burgers but if customers want something that is not on the menu and we have the ingredients in the kitchen we can cater for them as well. We will cater for anybody’s needs and try our best to make what you want for dinner that night.”

He added: “I don’t feel like a local hero. I just feel like we are doing what I have set out to do. I am still blown away. From being homeless for over three years to receiving a business award as local hero is overwhelming and some journey. It is unbelievable.

Other winners on the night were: High Growth Business of the Year: Forth Scaffolding; short-listed: Camerons Strachan Yuill Architects, DTP Southfield, Duct Clean Services.

Best Innovation in Business: Carcinotech; short-listed The Energy Training Academy, NuGen Recycling and Environmental Solutions, Skyrora; Best Environmental Impact: The Premium Bakery; short-listed Beebytes Analytics CIC, Everchargeev, Sisaltech, The Wee Bee Company; Best Commitment to Youth Development: Land Technology; short-listed: Jack and Ivy, Midlothian Sure Start, Randori Dojo; Best Community Impact: One Dalkieth; short-listed Crystal FM, Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home, Old School Takeaway; Family Business of the Year: East Links Family Park; short-listed: The Cavaliere, The Golbin Ha’ Hotel, The Original Rosslyn Inn; New Business of the Year: HeatFix Scotland; short-listed: Ez Riders NB, Mr Melts Wax, YOPLA; Micro Business of the Year: Brand Satellite; short-listed: HM Finance Coaching and Advisory; Learn to Grow, Supersize Media; SME of the Year: The Door Centre; short-listed: Cytomos, Fifth House Design, Tenet and You;