

Pride of the Forest Awards 2017

Community Star

Sponsored by: Barnwood Trust

This award is for an individual who has made a significant contribution to their community.

Winner

Imogen Hinton – For more than 20 years Imogen has been a volunteer with Forest Talk, the local Talking Newspaper which enables blind and visually impaired people to access news which may otherwise not be available to them. As one of the Editors she oversees the recording content when her team are on duty and never misses a session. She meets new listeners, taking the time to visit them to explain the service and ensure they are comfortable with the technology.

Imogen also runs a Craft Group for people who are visually impaired and volunteers at Forest Sensory Services. Alongside this she supports friends and acquaintances that have been bereaved, had strokes, or are in any way in need of help and always makes time for other people.

Finalist

David Jones – Dave began volunteering at the Forest Upcycling Project, a social inclusion project which provides affordable household items for those in need, in 2015 after the sad loss of his wife. Since then he has become a trustee of the charity and now volunteers almost every day. Dave is a great asset to the project and is the first to arrive most days. He goes out of his way to always make sure the customers are happy and treats everyone fairly. Dave gets on amazingly with other volunteers, some of whom have disabilities and passes on his experience, teaching volunteers things like how to lift correctly and how to secure things on the van safely. Dave is a fantastic volunteer and the nomination said that the charity just wouldn't be the same without him.

Young Community Star

Sponsored by: Lucozade Ribena Suntory

This award category is for a young person (under the age of 18) who has made a significant contribution to their community.

Winner

Toby Niblett – Just before Christmas Toby, aged 6, visited Gloucester with his mum and saw homeless people sleeping outside. He asked his mum if Santa Claus would be visiting them and when his mum said she didn't think he would, Toby suggested buying them presents himself. He spent the next weekend writing cards and buying presents with donations he had received and

then delivered them to the homeless people himself. He took time to sit with some of the homeless and read the cards to them. He shows real compassion, selflessness and kindness to others in need and regularly writes prayers remembering those who are not as fortunate as he is.

Finalist

Amyleigh Brice – As a year 10 Wyedean student Amyleigh has faced many challenges in her life but is courageous, full of integrity and has grown enormously as a result of her determination not to give up. She is a tenacious character and decided to do something positive when her grandfather was battling cancer. She showed incredible leadership and organised a non-uniform day to raise money and awareness for her grandfather's cancer charity. This incredible event raised £1000 and her work has been an inspiration to other students. Everyone is extremely proud of what she has achieved through her hard work and commitment.

Sportsperson of the Year

Sponsored by: Freedom Leisure

This category acknowledges the sporting achievements of a Forest of Dean official, organiser, competitor or team.

Winner

Andy Lewis – Since losing his leg at 16 Andy has worked relentlessly to challenge himself and succeed in his chosen sport of triathlon. He has achieved European and World athlete status, winning Gold at the Paralympics in Rio just two years after entering his first competition. Andy is now visiting schools looking to inspire and motivate young people, raising their aspirations and equipping them with a range of life skills. He covers all aspects of well-being including mental health, fitness, and uses team building as an important tool to demonstrate how to overcome obstacles and help with communication. By demonstrating what can be achieved and sharing his experiences with others, Andy continues to inspire many to be the best that they can be.

Finalist

Cynthia Jones – Cynthia is a great support to Lydney hockey club. She captains two teams, enabling lots of keen young hockey players to train and play every week. Not only does she manage both teams but she also runs training sessions every Wednesday and Thursday. She coaches and encourages young players, going out of her way to ensure they advance in their sport. Managing two teams and ensuring everyone who wants to play is able to is a big time commitment and without her dedication the club would not be as strong as it is today. In addition to on the field support Cynthia also makes the club a friendly and welcoming place, celebrating birthdays on match days and arranging social events. Last year the club was at risk of closing but Cynthia's determination has turned it round and it is now a thriving club.

Young Sportsperson of the Year

Sponsored by: Hartpury College

This award is to acknowledge the sporting achievements of a young Forest of Dean official, organiser, competitor or team (for those aged 18 or under).

Winner

Macy Walby – Macy has been training with Cinderford Town Football Club since the young age of 3. She is now playing in the Under 8's team and has become an extremely important player. She has been awarded the most player of the match awards and scored over 40 goals this season. Macy was also awarded the Players Player of the Year award at the club's awards ceremony earlier this month. As a result of her hard work she has been spotted by Cheltenham Town Academy where she has been offered a permanent place. In itself it is a fantastic achievement but what makes it even more spectacular is that Macy is the first girl to be offered a place in Cheltenham Town's academy system.

Finalist

Ethan Goddard – Ethan started riding with the Royal Forest of Dean Cycling club in 2013 and he has taken part in youth activities regularly since. In March 2016 he signed up to British Cycling's young volunteer scheme and has received training from British Cycling at the annual conferences. He is quickly gaining the volunteer hours required to achieve an award. Ethan often assists with route planning and helps to lead the Royal Forest of Dean weekly Mountain Bike rides under the supervision of qualified leaders. Without young people like Ethan, the youth rides would never attract new riders and would not be such a successful part of the club. He is a valued member of the cycling club volunteer team and an excellent role model for new and young riders.

Carer of the Year

Sponsored by: NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

This category is for a carer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Winner

Joan Selway – Joan first met her husband Ken in 1975, when she spotted him from the window of her bookshop, searching for scraps among the rubbish from a nearby chip shop. Back then Ken was sleeping rough in stations and shop doorways, but Joan realised that he could be one of the many ordinary people slipping through the welfare state safety net. For a long time Ken refused all offers of help and money, but Joan's father finally convinced him that the whole family were concerned about his welfare.

Joan has now been caring for Ken, who suffers with mental health issues, for 40 years, and in 2016 when they moved into the same care home they decided to get married. The couple were wed in 2016 on Joan's 88th birthday.

Finalist

Sue Knight – Unfortunately Sue is unable to be with us tonight but she is a full time carer for her husband, who has Motor Neurone disease. His mobility is severely restricted so Sue is his main carer. She is a caring and loving person, who never complains and always makes sure his needs are met. Being a full-time carer is a challenge for anyone, but Sue insists she is not doing anything special, something which I think we can all disagree with.

The George Read Community Award

Sponsored by: Glevum Conservatories

This award, named in memory of Councillor George Read, is for the local community group that has done the most for its community or delivered the best community project. The winner will also receive a cheque for £250 to use for the benefit of its community.

Winner

Bathurst Swimming Pool Volunteers – Bathurst pool was given as a gift to the 'inhabitants of Lydney and Aylburton' by the Bathurst family in 1920. The pool is a 38 metre outdoor pool in Lydney, which is run by volunteers and open for at least ten weeks during the summer each year. The water and surrounding area is kept clean and hygienic, a great achievement considering that the only paid staff are the trained and qualified Lifeguards. Without the volunteers the pool would not be able to operate, they run the shop, man the ticket office, clean the site of litter and clean the toilets and changing rooms. Recently the volunteers have established grassed areas and put up sun sails and have been working on the pool during the closed season to make improvements and get it ready to open in May.

Finalist

Berry Hill Community Orchard – Berry Hill Orchard Committee is a group of Berry Hill residents who formed to create a community orchard on an area of Forestry Commission land. The orchard provides fruit, herbs and edible flowers which are accessible to the whole community. It was officially opened at a Community Event in April this year, involving a number of local organisations including schools, the Church, Berry Hill Hut, Berry Hill Band, Hot Pot Pottery and Berry Hill Rugby Club. Many of these local organisations and business are involved in the orchard and contribute to its success. The Campaign For The Protection of Rural England has identified the orchard as a leading community project in Gloucestershire.

The Citizen Readers' Choice Award

Sponsored by: The Citizen newspaper

This award is voted for by the readers of the Citizen newspaper. This year readers could choose from 6 nominations and the joint winners were:

Jemma Roberts – In December 2016 Jemma sadly lost her daughter, Sydney-May, at just three months-old from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Despite grieving, Jemma is working tirelessly to help prevent other parents from having to go through the same experience. She has set up the Sydney-May trust and is working with the local community to raise money to purchase Angel Mats. These mats monitor a baby's body temperature and movement through the night and alert parents if there is anything wrong. Jemma has been providing these to parents who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford them in order to help reduce the risk of SIDS and potentially save lives. Longer-term, Jemma hopes to be able to provide the local GP surgeries with mats that they can loan out to other parents.

Jo Revill – Jo has been instrumental in many community projects particularly in Berry Hill, she works tirelessly to make things happen. Jo does not just talk about what we can do but gets out there and does it. She is happy to actively lead on any community project and has played a huge part in the success of many. She was involved in the West Dean Neighbourhood Development Plan, Berry Hill Community Orchard, Berry Hill Christmas tree and Celebration and The Orchard Wassail. Without Jo's contribution these projects may not have been as successful as they are. She really is a great member of the community.

The Chairman's award

Andrew Morgan-Watts

My award winner has been chosen for his tireless commitment to the local community both in the Lydney area and the wider Forest of Dean. He is a kind, community-minded person who volunteers for a number of charities and community activities and will gladly help anyone in need. In 2016 he set up a local Scout Group in response to an overwhelming community need as all nearby groups were full and had waiting lists. This gave children and young people in the community the opportunity to join Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. He spent many hours of his own time supporting the new group leaders and parent helpers in their volunteer role, led on the purchase of resources and equipment, ordered uniforms, organised training and established policies and practices for health and safety and safeguarding.

Additionally he also volunteers for Lydney Foodbank, Crossroads Care and his local church and is involved with organising the Woolaston Carnival.

Not only is he volunteering in the community where he lives he is a great supporter of the Forest of Dean Dementia Action Alliance, helping to raise the profile of dementia friendly communities through dementia friend's sessions, the development of dementia walks and in many different community settings including schools, lunch clubs and activity groups across the Forest of Dean district.

All this is done at his own expense, in his own time and without hesitation whilst additionally caring for his partner.