



## **27 Winners announced at last Month's Business & Community Awards!**

**Thursday 18th January and Wednesday 31st January marked the launch of the annual South West and Thames Valley Business and Community Awards ceremonies which celebrated both region's most ambitious, inspirational and exciting businesses, charities and individuals.**

Among the 27 winners were entrepreneurs who had created unique solutions to the problems they faced, sunk their heart and soul into improving their industry and overcome personal and professional hardship to triumph in business.

The South West Business and Community Award 2018 Winners Are:

Business of the Year: Purpol Marketing  
New Start-Up of the Year: Belmont Leisure Investment Ltd  
Apprentice of the Year: Ben Bronsell  
Contribution to the Community of the Year: Swindon 105.5 FM  
Lifetime of Achievement of the Year: Paul Hurt  
Charity of the Year: Jessie May & Inner Flame UK  
Leisure & Tourism of The Year: The Steam Museum  
Networker of the Year: John Raine  
Young Entrepreneur of the Year: Matt Greenwood  
Female Entrepreneur of the Year: Samantha Cox  
Male Entrepreneur of the Year: Stuart Pearce

The Thames Valley Business and Community Awards 2018 Winners Are:

Business of The Year: Acorn Engineering Group  
Life Time of Achievement: Gwen Mason  
Charity of The Year: Dingley's Promise  
Leisure & Tourism: The Hilton Reading  
Networker of The Year: Amanda Ayres  
Young Entrepreneur: Tim Brownstone

Male Entrepreneur of The Year: Mark Tongue / James O'Malley

Female Entrepreneur: Kran Sondh

New Start-Up: Nest Homecare Ltd

SME of The Year: Active FM Ltd

Apprentice of The Year: Polly George

Outstanding Courage Award: Gaurav Vahi

Special Recognition Award: Julianne Ponan

Outstanding Contribution to Community: Laura Wilkinson

Paul Hurt was awarded Lifetime of achievement awards after spending the last 50yrs teaching over 7,000 students from across the region.

This year, the standard of entrants was so high that we shortlisted a record-breaking 176 from 600 nominations across both awards.

Both awards evenings were huge successes and together raised £11,000 for the following charities: Swindon 105.5 FM, Cherishers, Sue Ryder Hospice Care and Prostrate Cancer UK.

We have received feedback from some of the charities on how the money has made such a huge impact already for them already:

- Swindon 105.5 FM were desperate for funds for the essential upgrade of equipment – which they have now been able to do.
- Cherishers have been able to offer a 12-month adult carers apprenticeship for a vulnerable adult that has been out of employment for a considerable amount of time, enabling them to expand their social care programme.
- Sue Ryder Hospice Care can pay a nurse's salary for 16 days.

The Awards judging process saw a range of esteemed entrepreneurs come together to scrutinise our finalists and select the short-listed nominees from the 600 nominations and then decide on the winners.

James Phipps, Chairman of Excalibur, was part of the judging panel and said: "Judging this year's awards was tough. Every entry was of a very high standard, and each one was unique, which made the decision harder. I'm very proud of the quality of businesses that we have in this region and these awards give them the true recognition that they deserve."

One of Europe's best Tina Turner impersonators, Tiny Tina Turner and her six-piece band provided fantastic entertainment throughout the night. She had the voice and the mannerisms which truly did **reproduce the stage charisma of Tina**. Tiny Tina did capture simply the best moment as she sang throughout the night, "You're Simply The Best"!

Guests were motivated by an inspiring keynote speech from Dragon's Den 2017 Superstar Julianne Ponan. Juliane is an Award Winning Young Entrepreneur and Branding Expert who secured a £75,000 investment offer from Deborah Meaden in the Den. Julianne shared her story with guests - how she had almost died (with only 4hrs to live) when she was 9yrs old and how she has strived to overcome personal difficulties to win The Guardian's "Business Leader of the Year award" and "Young Person in Business Award" from the FSB.

Alec Jones-hall, Director of Great British Expos and both Award's, said "We are proud and excited to have celebrated the most outstanding achievements across the region and rewarded those who are making a huge impact throughout the South West and Thames Valley. We are delighted that these awards have raised thousands of pounds for charity. We have seen the business community come together to celebrate the accomplishments of those shortlisted and the deserving winners of each category. Tonight we have all played a vital role in the success of our regions and are confident that future achievements will be built on the foundations we have laid tonight."

The main sponsor Paul Waite, founder and chief executive of Aspen Waite, said: "Aspen Waite is delighted to have sponsored the inaugural South West and Thames Valley Business and Community Awards, an area with a diverse range of ambitious businesses which we are passionate about supporting. We believe companies of all sizes deserve great advice - and those that strive to be the best should be recognised for their efforts."

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