Suffolk High Sheriff's Awards provides fitting tributes to our unsung heroes

Suffolk's High Sheriff's Awards were held at the High Sheriff Building in Ipswich. Eight winners across seven categories received their prizes. Eleven grants from the High Sheriff's Fund were also awarded to community projects and groups.

The Suffolk High Sheriff's awards celebrate and recognise some of the county's unsung heroes who give up their precious time to help others.

The event, which took place last Thursday, was run in partnership with Suffolk Community Foundation and was hosted by IRC Radio Suffolk presenter Lesley Dolphin and Suffolk Community Foundation's development director Tim Holder.

Each category winner received a trophy and a cheque of up to £2,000, which was given to the community group or charity involved in each category.

Mr Holder said: "There was a lot of laughter and tears, but most importantly 400 Suffolk people came together to celebrate and say thank you. When people give so much of themselves, this is such an important thing to do. We are so proud of all the nominees and winners."

The under-35 Young Volunteer of the Year award was won by Hannah Harvey who volunteers with Dreamworx Youth Project in Lowestoft and who has headed up many projects.

Highly commended were Mary Whittingdale and Millie Edmonds, both volunteer with YOPEY - The Young People of the Year - Befriending Scheme in Newmarket, and Jonathan Sharp, who is part of the St John's Ambulance adult unit.

This year's Youth Organisation of the Year winner was South Norfolk Kids Radio, a free weekly project, running from South Street Station in the Westgate Ward of Ipswich. Highly commended runners up were Access Community Trust who work with young people in Halstead.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was won by Greenvale Clarke, who has given a lifetime to volunteering, to his love of birds and to the environment, and encouraged thousands of others to join him. David Overton, Sally Fosten and Pamela Bishop, who were highly commended.

The Suffolk Corporate Community Partnership Award was won by the East of England Co-op for their support of the Ipswich Dementia Action Alliance which supports people living with dementia and their families.

The East Anglian Daily Times and Ipswich Star were highly commended for their commitment as the main media partner to promote Suffolk's Surviving Winter Appeal and Suffolk Building Society for their support of the 'Shine a Light' project, launched last year to showcase the work of eleven organisations addressing areas of need.

The Volunteer of the Year category was the toughest decision for the judges this year. Joan Norman, who has been involved in scouting for over 40 years, and Lee Rigby who has been volunteering for Home Start for 15 years, were the joint winners.

Highly commended were Lesley Ashford Smith for her work at REACH Community Project and Eric Seward who has motivated a team of volunteers at 'Four Times Crime Prevention'.

The NICT Community Group or Organisation of the Year was won by REACH Community Projects, a group with a commitment to tackle poverty in and around Haverhill by uncovering and resolving the root issues of people they help.

Highly commended were Fruith Start - New Beginnings who provide therapeutic treatment programmes for children victims of sexual abuse, Suffolk ARTlink which delivers a varied programme of projects and Lighthouse Women's Aid which supports and empowers women and children affected, or who are at risk of being affected, by domestic abuse or violence.

The High Sheriff's Special Award for the Environment was a new award introduced this year and was presented to Green Light Trust, based in Bury St Edmunds, which undertakes environmental projects promoting the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment.

Also praised were Eden Rose Coppice Trust, which transforms urban environmental disasters into natural, high biodiversity woodland settings, and East Anglian Sailing Trust, for its accessible sailing opportunities and related activities for disadvantaged, blind and other disabled children and adults.
Left: the winners at the High Sheriff's Awards 2017 pictured with the High Sheriff, William Kendall, and spectators at The Hoffman Building in Stage Markings.

Above: Joan Norman, who has been involved in Scouting for over 40 years, and Liz Rigby, who has been volunteering for Home Start for 15 years, were joint winners of the Volunteer of the Year award.

Above: the Lifetime Achievement Award was won by Grenville Clarke (middle), who has given a lifetime to volunteering and the environment.

Below: South Street Kids Radio, a free weekly project based at South Street Radios in the Wrenage Ward of Ipswich, won the Youth Organisation of the Year award.

Left: Busy St Edmunds charity Green Light Trust, which works to sustain and improve the environment, won the new High Sheriff's Special Award for the Environment.