

DEVON SKILLS STARS SHINE AT 'LEARNING OSCARS'

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Devon skills stars swept the board at the South West Skills Awards with seven winners and eight highly commended finalists who received their awards from TV's Ben Fogle.

Described as the 'Learning Oscars', the prestigious ceremony, which was held on April 24, was organised and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) South West to celebrate the exceptional achievements of individuals and organisations throughout the region.

Steve Murphy an employee at City College, Plymouth won the 'Inspiring Others to Learn' category for always going the extra mile for his students through the e2e and Prince's Trust team programme.

Steve's manager Julie McLean said in his application: "Steve has managed to keep many learners engaged in training when others have given up on them, he always sees the best in learners and when talking to them he is always positive and full of praise towards them and their abilities."

Kirsten Moran won the 'South West Apprentice of the Year' category for her dedication in her 'Mechanical Engineering Services Plumbing' Apprenticeship at Treco, Tiverton.

Apprentice Jacob Stimpson from Plymouth based Princess Yachts won 'South West Advanced Apprenticeship of the Year' category after being described by his Training Co-ordinator Diane Eckland as 'an excellent tradesman and an excellent ambassador for apprentices'.

Plymouth based N.E Vehicle Repairs and Torquay based Sherwoods won 'Micro Employer of the Year' and 'Small Employer of the Year' respectively for their Apprenticeship schemes.

The Duke of Cornwall Hotel scooped 'Medium Employer of the Year' and one of their apprentices Kirsty McDonald picked up a highly commended award in the 'South West Advanced Apprentice of the Year' category.

Exeter based Mid Devon Community Recycling won the 'Train to Gain Small Employer of the Year' category after implementing a highly successful training programme with the help of Train to Gain, which helps businesses easily access information, advice and support on training.

Three other learners were highly commended – Charlotte Barber from Barnstaple in 'Achieving Skills for Life', Kylie Critchley from Plymouth in 'South West Learner of the Year' and Sean Duff from Plymouth in 'Inspiring Others to Learn'.

Four companies were also highly commended – I.R.T Construction (Kingsteignton), L & J Electrical (Plymouth), Bonnet Electrical (Ivybridge) and Kawasaki Precision Machinery UK (Plymouth).

Malcolm Gillespie, Regional Director, LSC South West said: "Last night's ceremony was a fantastic celebration of learning and development across the South West. We received a record number of entries, so our Devon winners and finalists can be very proud of their achievements."

"The awards enabled the LSC to showcase the outstanding contribution that individuals and businesses are making to raise skill levels and improve productivity and competitiveness throughout the region."

Intrepid explorer and TV presenter Ben Fogle presented the Devon winners and finalists with their awards following his motivational speech to 170 south west apprentices, adult learners and employers at Sandy Park Stadium in Exeter.

Ends

Note to Editors:

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers. For more information visit: www.lsc.gov.uk/southwest

For more information, photos or to arrange an interview with a winner or finalist please contact Lindsay, Rebecca or Jenny on 0117 907 3400.

Awards categories, winners and highly commended finalists

- **South West Apprentice of the Year:**

Winner - Kirsten Moran (Newton Abbot)

Highly Commended – Curtis Frewin (Kelly Bray) and Julia Dixon (Wadebridge)

- **South Advanced Apprentice of the Year:**

Winner - Jacob Stimpson (Plymouth)

Highly Commended – Sarah Knight (Yeovil) and Kirsty Macdonald (Plymouth)

- **Employer of the Year (Micro):**

Winner – N.E Vehicle Repairs (Plymouth)

Highly Commended – Flamerite (Penzance) and I.R.T Construction Ltd (Kingsteignton)

- **Employer of the Year (Small):**

Winner – Sherwoods (Torquay)

Highly Commended – Bonnet Electrical (Ivybridge) and L &J Electrical (Plymouth)

- **Employer of the Year (Medium):**

Joint winners- Mark Wilkinson Furniture Ltd (Chippenham) and The Duke of Cornwall Hotel (Plymouth)

- **Achieving Skills for Life:**

Winner - Ceila Smart (Gloucester)

Highly Commended – Charlotte Barber (Barnstaple) and Simon Sibley (Weymouth)

- **Inspiring Others to Learn:**

Winner - Steve Murphy (Plymouth)

Highly Commended – Sean Duff (Plymouth) and Lee Millard (Taunton)

- **Learner of the Year:**

Winner - Denise Going (Chippenham)

Highly Commended – Kyle Critchely (Plymouth) and Kim Slade (Corsham)

- **Train to Gain Small Employer of the Year:**

Winner - Mid Devon Community Recycling (Exeter)