

WILTSHIRE SKILLS STARS SHINE AT 'LEARNING OSCARS'

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Wiltshire skills stars lit up the South West Skills Awards with three winners and two 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.

Denise Going from Chippenham won the 'Learner of the Year' category for her commitment to learning through her Skills for Life course. Leaving school in Canada without qualifications she was determined to gain new skills after she had raised her family in England. Denise is now learning new computer skills and is looking into suitable careers.

Mark Wilkinson Furniture Ltd from Bromham won 'Medium Employer of the Year' for their dedication to developing apprentices.

Jo Winslow, training provider for Mark Wilkinson Furniture Ltd at Wiltshire College, said: "The company have been instrumental in developing the College's furniture making Apprenticeship over the last 5 years. As a company they expect high standards from their apprentices at work and at college. They are an exemplary employer because of the time and commitment they give to their apprentices."

Swindon based construction company Beard won 'Train to Gain Medium Employer of the Year' for their staff development and training programme. The company signed the 'Skills Pledge' and made a commitment to train all of their to

Level 2 standard (equivalent to five good GCSEs). Beard is continuing to grow and gain more repeat business, which is undoubtedly because of its skilled workforce.

Other highly commended finalists from Wiltshire were Kim Slade from Corsham and Warminster based Defence Support Group.

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 Wiltshire 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 Wiltshire 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

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

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

Highly Commended – Defence Support Group (Warminster)

- **Learner of the Year:**

Winner - Denise Going (Chippenham)

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

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

Winner– Beard (Swindon)