

COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARDS 2024

PROGRAMME

FRIDAY, JUNE 07, 2024

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Good luck to all tonight's finalists

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Telegraph

COMMUNITY
CHAMPION
AWARDS 2024

WELCOME

Tonight we gather once again to celebrate the very best of Inverclyde in this, the sixth Greenock Telegraph Community Champion Awards.

These awards are filled with good news stories that will inspire and make you feel proud to live and work here.

My favourite part of this job is being able to fight for our area and shout about our good news.

Nothing makes the team here happier than being the first with a story that will make a difference to local people or show our fantastic wee corner of Scotland in the best light.

Previous events have been fantastic and we couldn't have been happier to bring Community Champions back last year after the Covid pandemic, and tonight we once again recognise great community groups and amazing people of all ages.

You will hear of stories of tenacity, generosity and the overwhelming sense of community spirit found throughout Inverclyde.

Our team has thoroughly enjoyed bringing all of the stories to the fore, both in print and online, and honouring our next batch of incredible community champions.



DAVID GOODWIN
EDITOR, GREENOCK TELEGRAPH

For one night, our unsung heroes from sport, business, charity, music, schools and everyday life will enjoy their moment in the limelight - centre stage - and deservedly take the plaudits for their achievements from those they have helped the most - the people of Inverclyde.

Welcome to the 2024 Greenock Telegraph Community Champion Awards.



Download the full version of your programme with details on all of tonight's finalists.



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HOST

Jennifer Reoch is a Scottish Television and Radio presenter best known for being on Heart Radio Breakfast Show on weekdays across Scotland and has been on your screens on BBC travel show 'Getaways', ITV's 'This Morning' and STV shows such as 'Live at Five', 'Edinburgh Festival 2018' and the 'Scottish Children's Lottery'. After graduating with a Law and French degree in 2011, she went on to spend a year as Miss Scotland which allowed her to travel and take part in some incredible challenges including climbing Kilimanjaro and running the London Marathon; as well as going on to proudly represent Scotland on the international stage at Miss World placing 7th.



JENNIFER REOCH
TV & RADIO PRESENTER



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ITINERARY

6.30PM Drinks reception

7.00PM Call to Dinner

Live Music Finalist Performance
– Riverside Youth Band

Welcome and Introductions –
Jennifer Reoch, Event Host

Opening address –
David Goodwin, Editor,
Greenock Telegraph

Award presentation – Part 1

1. Sporting Champion of the Year
2. Champion Teacher of the Year
3. Youth Community Champion of the Year
sponsored by Clyde Eats
4. Little Champion of the Year
sponsored by Platinum Paving

Live Music Finalist Performance
– Maria McMaster

Dinner Served

Live Music Finalist Performance
– Home for Joy

Award Presentation – Part 2

5. Health & Care Champion of the Year
6. Senior Community Champion of the Year
7. Business Champion of the Year
8. Charity Champion of the Year
sponsored by Arnold Clark

Live Music Finalist Performance
– Chol Riak

9. Live Music Award
10. Community Champion of the Year
sponsored by RCH Group
11. Heart of Gold
sponsored by A&I Geotechnical
12. Judge's Special Recognition Award
13. Outstanding Contribution to the Community
sponsored by Vango

Closing remarks, Jennifer Reoch

11.00PM Carriages

*please note the timings are approximate



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MENU



STARTER

Roasted Red Pepper & Tomato Soup



MAIN

ADULT MAIN: Steak Pie

CHILDREN'S MAIN: Chicken Goujons and Chips



DESSERT

White Chocolate & Raspberry Brulee Cheesecake

*Dietary options by pre-ordered request

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JUDGES



DAVID
GOODWIN - Chair
Editor,
Greenock Telegraph



FRAZER
MACDONALD
Community Police Officer,
Police Scotland



STEPHEN
McCABE
Leader,
Inverclyde Council



CHARLENE
ELLIOT
CEO, CVS Inverclyde



LIZZY TODD
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Good luck to all the finalists!



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SPORTING CHAMPION OF THE YEAR



RHYS McCOLE

Champion boxer Rhys McCole, born with heart conditions and learning disabilities, defies odds in and out of the ring. Named Inverclyde's Young Citizen of the Year, Rhys, 22, not only boasts several national boxing titles but also mentors troubled teens, offering support and life lessons. His innovative boxing program empowers youngsters, shining a light on equality and justice.



GLENPARK HARRIERS

Alan, a dedicated coach with Greenock Glenpark Harriers for 25 years, epitomises the club's ethos of inclusivity and excellence. Leading by example, Alan fosters a welcoming environment for over 300 members, helping the club to nurture talent and foster a family-oriented community. The club's commitment to expert coaching reflects their longstanding legacy of success and camaraderie.



GREENOCK WANDERERS

Greenock Wanderers, celebrating 150 years, stands as a beacon of community spirit and sporting excellence. With teams spanning all age groups and genders, the club prioritises giving back, organising fundraising events for local causes. Through rugby, the Wanderers instill values of teamwork and community engagement, leaving a lasting impact on Inverclyde.



PAUL McNAUGHT

Paul McNaught, a resilient swimmer registered blind in one eye, dives into charity efforts to support Turning Point Scotland Inverclyde. Despite personal challenges, Paul, 56, completes a swimming challenge, highlighting his dedication to giving back to the lifeline charity. His commitment to fitness and fundraising embodies the spirit of resilience and community support.



EDDIE McCLUSKEY MBE

Eddie McCluskey MBE, a dedicated swimming coach for over half a century, has transformed lives through the Port Glasgow Otters. Despite not considering himself a proficient swimmer, Eddie's coaching prowess has led four athletes to Paralympic gold medals. His impact extends beyond the pool, shaping futures and fostering a community of champions.



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CHAMPION TEACHER OF THE YEAR



CALUM EDENBOROUGH

Calum Edenborough, Clydeview Academy's acting depute of humanities, walked 23 miles to support students raising funds for Children in Poverty Inverclyde. His dedication helped the school's social justice group raise nearly £1,400, demonstrating his commitment to fighting poverty and injustice alongside his pupils.



MAY HUGHES

May Hughes, a beloved dance teacher, has inspired generations of children over her 70-year career. Starting her passion at age four, May, now 86, remains dedicated to her students. Inverclyde's 'grand dame' of dance is cherished as an adopted mother by all her pupils.



LINDA JACKSON

Linda Jackson, from the Jackson Academy of Dance, is nominated for her dedication to her students and community. She organises charity events and performances at care homes and local events in Inverclyde. Described as an inspiration and a lovely lady, Linda truly goes above and beyond.

YOUTH COMMUNITY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

sponsored by *Clyde Eats*



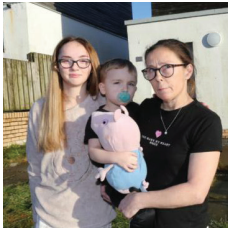
BEN KANE

Award-winning Clydeview Academy pupil Ben Kane is championing better bereavement support for children in Inverclyde. Inspired by his own experience of loss, Ben initiated a support group at his school and received a Rotary UK Young Citizen of the Year award. He continues to advocate for wider implementation of bereavement support across all Inverclyde schools, ensuring that no child faces grief alone.



INVERCLYDE AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB

Determined young swimmers from the Inverclyde Amateur Swimming Club are embarking on an ambitious fundraising effort to upgrade their pool. Their goal is to install six new racing blocks at the Waterfront Leisure Centre's pool in Greenock. With a target of £12,000, they aim to cover half the distance from Greenock to Paris, symbolising the journey of aquatic athletes.



JADE McDONALD

Fourteen-year-old Jade displayed remarkable bravery during a devastating fire on Wren Road in Greenock. Alerted by the fire alarm while delivering food to her neighbours, Jade, along with her mother Linda, rescued a woman and her daughter from the blazing property. Her quick thinking and courage in the face of danger saved lives, earning her praise and admiration from her community.



SKYE McCABE

From the age of six, Skye has been a beacon of generosity, ensuring deprived children in Inverclyde receive gifts at Christmas. Now 14, she has raised substantial funds through various initiatives like selling reindeer food and hot chocolate cones, along with bake sales and raffles. Skye's annual efforts ensure all young people in the district experience the joy of Christmas.



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LITTLE CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

sponsored by *Platinum Paving*



ABBIE MARSHALL

Abbie, a resilient young girl from Gourock, defied the odds after surviving a severe bout of meningitis as a baby. Despite facing challenges such as delayed speech and sensory issues, she thrives today. In a remarkable act of resilience, Abbie completed a charity walking challenge for Meningitis Now, raising £2,250 to support others affected by the disease.



ALYSSA McLELLAN

Alyssa, a spirited seven-year-old from Greenock, made a splash for a cause close to her heart by sitting in a paddling pool filled with Heinz beans. Her creative fundraiser, inspired by her love for baked beans, raised awareness and funds for Young Lives vs Cancer, earning praise for her ingenuity and compassion.



HARRIET McCONWAY

Seven-year-old Harriet showed remarkable bravery when her mother experienced a diabetic episode, becoming unresponsive. Despite her fear, Harriet took charge, caring for her mum, making crucial phone calls, and tending to her younger siblings, aged two and three, until help arrived.



NAOMI RANKIN

Kind-hearted five-year-old Naomi from Greenock used her crafting skills to raise funds for vulnerable individuals. Spending hours creating Christmas tree decorations, she sold her creations at local fetes, raising £500 for homeless and impoverished individuals. Naomi's compassionate nature shines through as she continues to make a difference in her community.

HEALTH & CARE CHAMPION OF THE YEAR



ANDREW NISBET

Andrew Nisbet, 62, from Greenock, has saved countless newborns through his blood and platelet donations since the early 1990s. Honoured by the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, he recently learned that parents of the babies he helped save want to thank him personally for his life-saving contributions.



DANCE FOR PARKINSON'S

The Dance for Parkinson's class at the Beacon Arts Centre, a joint initiative with Scottish Ballet and Dance Base charity, provides regular exercise and social interaction for those with Parkinson's. These sessions enhance confidence, balance, and coordination, and include social time with tea and cake, tackling isolation and loneliness.



INVERCLYDE ROYAL HOSPITAL STAFF

The exceptional care from Inverclyde Royal Hospital staff, including clinical nurse specialist Lesley Ann Glancy and consultant Dr. Sylvia Brown, inspired former patient Betty Murray to raise over £8,000. Their calm and caring approach during challenging health issues led Dumbarton based Betty to remain in Inverclyde for treatment and give back to the unit with her fundraising efforts.

HEALTH & CARE CHAMPION OF THE YEAR



MAN ON! INVERCLYDE

Since 2020, Man On! Inverclyde has supported over 700 people, preventing numerous suicides. Through dedicated trustees, staff, and volunteers, they have expanded their services. Their community hub thrives, offering crucial support and hope to members who credit the charity with saving their lives.



SKYLARK CENTRE - INVERCLYDE ROYAL HOSPITAL

The Skylark Centre at Inverclyde Royal Hospital, transformed by Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity, now offers a bright, welcoming space for 800 young patients annually. The £36,000 refurbishment includes vibrant murals, new furniture, and a TV, plus £9,500 worth of sensory equipment, enhancing care for various paediatric conditions.



YOUR VOICE INVERCLYDE

Your Voice, driven by individuals with health and caregiving experiences, enhances Inverclyde's community wellbeing. Addressing challenges like Long Covid, they've created one of the first support groups. Recently praised by a Member of the Scottish Parliament, their work proves crucial in building resilience and improving health outcomes.



SENIOR COMMUNITY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR



EDDIE McCLUSKEY MBE

Eddie McCluskey MBE, an inspirational swimming coach, has dedicated over four decades to empowering young people with disabilities through the Port Glasgow Otters. Despite not considering himself a proficient swimmer, Eddie's coaching prowess has led four athletes to Paralympic gold medals, including Margaret McEleny MBE and Kenny Cairns MBE. As president and mentor for 40 years, Eddie's passion for coaching has transformed lives and left a lasting impact on the Port Otters community.



JIM HEARL

Lieutenant Commander Jim Hearl, a cornerstone of the Greenock and District Sea Cadets Corps, has devoted over 50 years to shaping the lives of young people in Inverclyde. Jim's leadership has earned T.S. Tidesurge national recognition as one of the top sea cadet corps. Despite challenges, including the allure of street gangs in his youth, Jim found his calling in the sea cadets, where his passion for sailing and nurturing young talent continues to thrive. With 42 current members, Jim's legacy of leadership and mentorship endures, ensuring future generations benefit from his guidance.



SADIE MARTIN

Sadie Martin, one of Ardgowan Hospice's most dedicated volunteers, has selflessly served the charity for 35 years, despite battling health issues. Despite her own struggles, the 71-year-old community stalwart remains committed to grassroots causes, contributing to initiatives like the Tail o' the Bank Credit Union and the award-winning Belville Community Garden. Sadie's unwavering dedication reflects her deep-rooted connection to her community, where she has lived for over half a century.

BUSINESS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR



BELVILLE COMMUNITY GARDENS

Belville Community Gardens' Dinky Diggers program offers children hands-on outdoor fun, from bug hunts to marshmallow toasting. Led by environmental officer Don Thomas, this project invites families and nurseries to explore nature, fostering creativity and learning through engaging activities in Greenock's great outdoors.



GLOW BAMBINO

Jade Gilbride's Glow Bambino provides an inclusive, interactive baby group for new parents and grandparents in Gourrock and Kilmacolm. Despite her own health challenges, Jade's dedication has kept the award-winning classes running, creating a beloved community resource that continues to grow and thrive.



JOHN LAIRD

Greenock-born entrepreneur John Laird, with his wife Michelle, has donated £150,000 to causes like Children in Poverty Inverclyde. His £3,500 gift provided summer holidays for local children. Raised in Bow Road, John remains dedicated to giving back to the community that shaped him.



PLATINUM PAVING

Platinum Paving has thrived post-COVID, evolving from a local business to a commercial contractor for major brands like Starbucks and Burger King. Their success, marked by a 50% turnover increase, enables them to support local charities and sports teams, reflecting their commitment to community and growth.



CHARITY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

sponsored by Arnold Clark



DIANE REBECCHI

Greenock pub landlady Diane Rebecchi, along with her husband Ciano, established a food and clothes bank at the Burns Lounge to help locals during the cost-of-living crisis. Partnering with Children in Poverty Inverclyde, they provide essentials to support their community during challenging times.



HELEN COYLE

Helen Coyle battled back from serious illness two years ago to continue her fundraising efforts for Inverclyde causes. She and her Tuesday Belles have raised an astonishing £80,000 for local organizations, including Branching Out Parklea and Mind Mosaic. Helen is known for her generosity and selflessness.



JAMES CRAWFORD

James Crawford, a dedicated Greenock fundraiser, has raised over £50,000 for local causes through social media raffles and competitions. In just three years, his efforts have supported 40 charities and community groups, showcasing his commitment to helping those in need in his community.



KAREN TAYLOR

Inspired by personal experiences, Karen Taylor participated in a charity fire walk to raise funds for Moving On Inverclyde. Her brave effort supported the charity's mission to help people recover from addiction, demonstrating her deep commitment to this vital local cause.



TONY PHILLIPS

Tony Phillips, from Greenock, overcame personal struggles to raise £100,000 for good causes. His efforts have supported the Friends Forever Club, aided local families, and created holiday and Christmas dreams for children. Tony's dedication to giving back has made a significant impact on his community.

LIVE MUSIC AWARD



CHOL RIAK

Despite teaching himself piano through YouTube videos, 17-year-old Chol Riak has emerged as one of Inverclyde's top young musicians. His stunning performance of Chopin's Fantaisie Impromptu at the Inverclyde Music Festival earned him the prestigious George Parkhill Prize for Piano. Despite recent sheet music reading skills, Chol masterfully plays some of the most complex piano pieces ever written.



HOME FOR JOY

Home For Joy, part of the Hit The Road initiative's tenth season, headlined at the Beacon Arts Centre in March. This project offers young people aged 14-19 the opportunity to tour their music, gain industry experience, and connect with new audiences. Joining Low Tide and Adam and the Observers on tour, Home For Joy brought their Radiohead and Muse-inspired music to great success.



MARIA McMASTER

Despite losing her father as a baby, Maria McMaster, a singing sensation from St Columba's High in Gourrock, is pursuing her dream of opera stardom. Featured in an American rapper's video viewed 24 million times, Maria secured a coveted place at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Selected to appear alongside Post Malone in his Loch Lomond video shoot, Maria continues to soar towards her musical aspirations, defying all odds.



RIVERSIDE YOUTH BAND

The Riverside Youth Band has achieved remarkable success recently, with both its youth and training bands crowned Scottish champions on the same day. The youth band's historic entry into the senior section earned them qualification for the 2025 European Youth Championships. Representing Inverclyde with pride, they continue to excel on stages near and far.



COMMUNITY CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

sponsored by RCH Group



FUNDRAISING INVERCLYDE

FUNdraising Inverclyde, a group of four dedicated women, has raised over £500,000 for local charities, including Glasgow Children's Hospital. They organise fundays, Christmas pantomimes, and holiday treats for the community, making a significant impact on smaller charities and bringing joy to families with their heartfelt efforts.



HAMMY'S OUT OF SCHOOL

Hammy's Out of School Care, which served Port Glasgow families for over 20 years, has left a lasting legacy by donating £5,000 to various charities after closing. Led by Ruby Anderson, the trustees ensured the remaining funds benefit causes like Children in Poverty Inverclyde and Food Angels.



HOME START INVERCLYDE

Dad's Group Home Start Inverclyde runs a vital group for fathers and children, providing a welcoming space with fun activities every Saturday. Led by Michelle McKechnie and volunteer Ruth Tosh, this group addresses the need for affordable, community-focused time for dads and their kids in Inverclyde.



TOTS AND TEA

Pamela McCarn, inspired by her own isolation during the lockdown, launched Tots & Tea at St John's Episcopal Church in Greenock. This group provides a social space for mums and babies, ensuring no one feels alone and fostering a supportive community for new parents.

HEART OF GOLD

sponsored by A&I Geotechnical



ANDREW NISBET

Greenock's Andrew Nisbet, 62, has been a lifesaver for newborns by donating blood and platelets over 200 times since the early 1990s. His O negative blood type is crucial for emergency treatments, and he's proud to have reached such an incredible milestone.



BRENDAN HAMILL

Brendan Hamill saved his sister's life by selflessly donating a kidney. She now thrives as a nurse after suffering severe kidney, liver, and heart failure. Brendan's bravery has inspired many to consider organ donation, showing the profound impact one act can have.



CLAIRE FORDE

Claire Forde, who lost her sight suddenly ten years ago, has transformed her disability into a strength. Despite setbacks, she became an award-winning advocate for disabled rights. Her resilience and determination serve as an inspiration to many in overcoming adversity.



JIM GANNON

Jim Gannon dedicated 28 years to driving hospice patients in memory of his late wife Margaret. At 81, he's stepping down from his role with Ardgowan Hospice, where his commitment and compassion have made a lasting impact on countless lives in the community.



RICHARD COURTNEY

Firefighter Richard Courtney also saves lives off-duty by donating stem cells to cancer patients. Inspired by a visit from a local leukaemia survivor and her donor, Richard has made a significant difference, helping patients survive and thrive through his generous contributions.



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For further information on The Greenock Telegraph
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