

# PRESS RELEASE

30<sup>th</sup> June 2009



## BISHOP PRESENTS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Over 170 invited guests gathered at the Bishop's Palace gardens last night in Exeter to celebrate the achievements of volunteers across Devon as part of local charity, Devon Community Foundation's Volunteer of the Year Awards.

To date, Devon Community Foundation has awarded over £6.5 million in grants to over 1,900 small voluntary and community groups run by Devon's volunteers. It is these groups which are often in the frontline in helping local people in need and building better, more inclusive local communities.

Awards to the eight finalists were made by The Rt Revd Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter and the evening, which was hosted by BBC Radio Devon's David Fitzgerald, included a charity auction and DVDs of the winners produced by the Twofour group.

The eight finalists from groups supported with grants from Devon Community Foundation included:

**Helping People with Different Needs:** Marlene Schuster for her work with the About Time skills bank project which allows the asylum seeker and refugee community to exchange skills with the local community;

Jan Halifax who runs the All Stars community theatre group for adults with learning disabilities;

**Helping Young People:** Brian Sawerbutts who acts as a mentor as part of the New Horizons Mentoring Group for young people struggling in their last two years of school;

Jose Shepherd who acts as a host for the Nightstop project based in Exeter. She provides overnight stays in her own home for young homeless people;

**Young Volunteer of the Year:** Carrie Lacey-Donahue who won the Young Volunteer of the Year Award for her work with Young Devon;

**Helping Older People:** Rose Abbot who helps to run the Young at Heart club for isolated elderly people in Torbay and Pat and John Kinsman who run a lunch club for elderly people in Plymouth.

Small Green Steps Awards were also made to five community groups which are taking steps to tackle climate change and make a difference to global warming on a daily basis.

Bishop Michael said, "It is humbling and inspiring to see how much these volunteers give back to their local communities – they are ordinary people doing extraordinary things to make Devon a better place for everyone."

Eric Dancer, HM Lord Lieutenant of Devon and president of Devon Community Foundation commented, "Building better, more inclusive communities and helping local people in need is what Devon Community Foundation is all about."

"Tonight is a fantastic example of why it's so important that, as Devon's local charity for local people, we support the small voluntary and community groups which local volunteers run and which have such an impact on the lives of local people."

As part of its Grassroots Challenge, Devon Community Foundation currently has £1 million available from the government for voluntary and community groups in Devon if it can raise a matching £1 million by March 2011. Anyone who like to find out fundraising on behalf of the

Challenge should call Kathy on 01884 235887 or visit [www.devoncf.com](http://www.devoncf.com). Any group which would like to apply for a grant should email Heidi on [Heidi@devoncf.com](mailto:Heidi@devoncf.com) or call 01884 235887.

Prizes for the charity auction were provided by Michael Spiers Jewellery, the Old Bag Company, Langage Farm, Bovey Castle Hotel, Le Frog catering, Bovey Castle Hotel, Devon Life, Langage Farm, local artist Peter Randall-Page and Steve Hindley, CBE.

- ends -

Press enquiries to Sarah Gunn on 01752 509581 or 07703 317 759