

SEMBCORP FEMALE ROLE MODELS INSPIRING OTHERS TO ACHIEVE



Jo Potter, left, AVP HR at Sembcorp Utilities UK presents the Inspiring Others Award to Gemma Sands who overcame personal tragedy to set up a charity raising funds for families of children with a rare neurological condition. Gemma later went on to collect the prestigious Mo Mowlam award at the Inspiring Women event at Wilton Centre.

Three inspirational women from Sembcorp joined scores of others from across the Redcar and Cleveland borough area at a special ceremony to mark female achievement held on International Women's Day (Friday 8 March, 2019).

Jo Potter, Ruth Barnard and Claire Evenden were among the guests at the Inspiring Women Awards held at the Wilton Centre.

For the first time in the four year history of the event held in memory of legendary Redcar MP Mo Mowlam Sembcorp sponsored one of the main awards. In total, more than 80 women aged 8 to 80 from across the borough were nominated in 8 categories.

Gemma Sands was the worthy winner of the Sembcorp-sponsored Inspiring Others category.

Gemma set up the charity Remembering Rebecca following the death of her daughter in 2010. She has since raised more than £250,000 for equipment, holidays and support for families of children with a rare neurological condition called lissencephaly or smooth brain which claimed the life of Rebecca at just 21 months.

Later in the evening Gemma was named as the overall winner of the prestigious Mo Mowlem Award.



She's a gem...Left to right: Claire Evenden, Anna Turley MP, Gemma Sands, Jo Potter and Ruth Barnard celebrate Gemma's success.

Julie Donaldson, radio presenter for Redcar's Zetland FM, read a citation which said "Gemma gets family and friends involved with events and fundraising activities so that she can help as many families as possible. She does all this alongside her teaching job at Rye Hills Academy, where she offers extra help and guidance to students who might be finding things difficult.

"There is very little time when Gemma isn't doing something to help someone else. Gemma's other two children also help with the charity and have been told that they are wonderful people who are following in their inspiring mother's footsteps."

Gemma said: "I can't believe I've won this award. I just sat there for a while, thinking 'What? Me?'

“For the last few years, since we set up Remembering Rebecca, we’ve been helping families locally to cope with having a child with a disability or illness. So we help by providing specialist equipment, provide sibling breaks or respite breaks. Anything really which will help the whole family.”

SABIC, PD Ports, Taylor Wimpey and Beyond Housing were among the sponsors of the other awards at the glittering event which gave recognition to women engaged in a number of hugely important community activities.

Carol Dawson won the Individual Achievement Award for overcoming a number of obstacles to engage in voluntary work for addiction and domestic violence organisations, acting as a mentor to other women experiencing difficulties

Eileen Founds won the Volunteer Award for volunteering at St. Leonard’s Church in Loftus for 40 years where she is also a founder member and Secretary of the Mars Estate Residents’ Group;

Victoria Smee won the Woman in Business Award for setting up a fashion boutique, Betty Leigh Boutique, in Redcar’s Northern Quarter where she supports other businesses in the area promoting a collective approach to the regeneration of the town.

Krista Coulson and Liz Edwards won the Community Group Contribution Award for creating the charity ‘Rubies’ working with teenage girls to inspire them, build confidence and inform them of their true self-worth;

Mahlliah Joel won the Young Woman Award for overcoming obstacles to develop an excellent attitude to learning. As well as helping look after her siblings, she is a valuable member of Redcar Town Under 14s football team and a young leader at the Kidz Klub Youth Group;

Councillor Sue Jeffrey, Leader of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, said: “I look forward to this event every year and it was so wonderful hearing all of the stories of these Inspiring Women. It’s fantastic to have such great women as role models and it makes me very proud to know that they part of our borough.

“I’d like to congratulate all the winners and every single woman who was nominated, you all make such a difference in our community.”

Anna Turley, MP for Redcar, said: “Every year we have hosted these awards, we have heard more and more amazing stories from brilliant women and girls who are going the extra mile to support their communities, facing down a personal challenge, or changing the lives of others for the better.

I love our annual celebration of these everyday heroes and I want to congratulate every one of this year’s winners and all of our 2019 nominees as well as the award sponsors. You are all doing Redcar & Cleveland proud!”



Host Julie Donaldson gathers the ladies (and a couple of male guests) together for a group 'selfie' at the end of the celebrations