



PRESS RELEASE

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Super Six Receive Carer Friendly Business Award from Forward Carers, a West Midlands not-for-profit supporting Unpaid Carers

Forward Carers Carer Friendly Business Awards has recognised six organisations in the West Midlands who have surpassed themselves to support unpaid carers within their workforce or community. Three carers who have recently been appointed as Carer Ambassadors handed out trophies and certificates at a daytime event held in on 8 December.

Simon Fenton, Forward Carers CEO explained, "A carer's job does not start at 9am and finish at 5pm; it can be rewarding but equally it's often extremely tiring and challenging. Anything a business or service can do to make carers lives easier should be commended and that's what our awards do. It's been heart-warming to know organisations have gone out of their way to help carers especially during the pandemic which has been particularly damaging to businesses in the West Midlands."

Several Carer Friendly Business Award winners exceeded expectations in their support for carers during the pandemic. Leaf Creative Arts CIC won the Dementia category because they found new ways of reducing the loneliness and isolation that dementia carers often feel. Leaf Creative Arts performed surprise pop-up sing-a-grams for carers, organised socially distanced nature walks and created a WhatsApp group for carers.

Brendan Callaghan, Dementia Friendly Engagement Leader at Leaf Creative Arts was a carer himself for eight years. He said, "I know myself how socially isolating, frustrating, empty and lonely being a carer is. The smallest thing can help carers, even if it is just asking how they are or having a cup of tea with them, it can be a massive boost for their morale."

Carer Friendly Employer award winner, The Shrubbery School, supports their staff by offering flexible working. Sarah, an administrator at the school has been able to adjust her hours around her caring responsibilities for her husband who has MS (Multiple sclerosis), her disabled sister, elderly parents and her elderly mother-in-law.

The school has enabled Sarah to work from home or to alter her working days and hours around her husband's medical appointment or caring needs. The independent school in Sutton Coldfield even offered to do Sarah's shopping for her during lockdown.

In her nomination, Sarah said, "They recognise that coming out to work is important to me but that sometimes I need flexibility. I come to work not worrying about having to ask for time off for appointments. I know that my work is valued, as is my caring role and I feel I could ask for help if I needed it, not something I find very easy to do as a carer."

Sumera Naaz, Project Lead for Carers Service at the charity OSCAR Birmingham won the Customer Care category. Over the past 12 months, Sumera has had to juggle work, caring and studying to complete her masters degree. She has done this while being a carer herself to her twins, aged 12 who have thalassaemia (an inherited blood disorder that causes the body to have less hemoglobin than normal). During the second and third lockdowns, she chose to continue meeting carers face to face, and for those families shielding, she arranged emergency food parcels and conducted wellbeing checks.

Mark Wretham, from Developing Active Young Minds in Warwickshire won the new award category for autism/ADHD and St Andrew's Healthcare in Birmingham won the Carer's Champion award. Among the winners was Nigel Macrow, who runs Aston Villa's disability football provision and has been part of the club's community department for over 30 years. Providing accessible football improves youngsters physical and mental health but also offers much needed respite to parent carers.

The independent panel of judges, some of whom are carers themselves, were so impressed with the nominations, that Birmingham Mind, Marks and Spencer (Princess Park), Caring for Carers Sandwell Crossroads, Rainey Community Creations and Carers Support Team- University Hospitals Birmingham, received a Highly Commended award.

The ceremony ended with Simon commented, "I am encouraged by all the nominations, together we can make a difference, together we are creating carerfriendly communities."

Forward Carers was established to make a real difference to the lives of people caring for older frail people, sick or disabled friends and family members. Its aim is to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of carers, young and old, including parent carers, so that families stay healthier and happier together, for longer in a Carer Friendly Community.

The Carer Friendly Business Awards is part of Forward Carers' mission to create carer friendly communities and encouraging businesses, retailers and community groups to sign up for free to the scheme. Further information can be found here: <https://forwardcarers.org.uk/carer-friendly-communities/about-carer-friendly-communities/>. Anyone interested in sponsoring the awards next year should contact chantell.marler@forwardcarers.org.uk

Notes to editors

- For further details, to arrange an interview or more photographs, email bernie.huntingdon@forwardcarers.org.uk or call 07535 737 505
- Carers UK estimates that overnight, an additional 4.5 million people became unpaid carers in March 2020, meaning 1 in 4 (26%) UK adults were providing unpaid care to an older, disabled or ill relative or friend at the height of the pandemic. 1 Carers Week (2020), Carers Week Research
- As well as saving the economy £132 billion per year, 1.4 million people provide over 50 hours of care per week. These figures from Carers UK were from before the pandemic. Before Covid-19, there were 642,257 people in the West Midlands who were providing unpaid care to an older, disabled or seriously ill relative or friend. This figure is thought to have doubled since the pandemic. Being a carer can be incredibly demanding and the pandemic has exacerbated the lives of thousands of carers lives with reduced health and social care services as well as the closure of education provider.