

Press release

Tuesday 24 March 2015

Autism consultant in Stirling wins Lifetime Achievement award

An autism consultant from Stirling won the top prize at the National Autistic Society's (NAS) third annual Autism Professionals Awards on Tuesday (3 March).

Jim Taylor received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of the 35 years he's dedicated to educating children and young people with autism and the impact he's had on the world's understanding of the condition. It was presented to him by NAS President Jane Asher and the charity's Chief Executive Mark Lever at a special ceremony at the Royal Hall in Harrogate.

The awards, sponsored by Axcis Education Recruitment, recognise and reward services and professionals that lead the way in innovative autism practice and make a real difference to the lives of people with the condition in the UK.

Jim is now an autism consultant but spent over 35 years educating children with autism across Scotland, most recently as Director of Education at New Struan School in Alloa, Clackmannanshire. He has deep roots in the area and continues to support some of the families of children he used to teach.

Jim is best known in the UK for his pioneering work developing autism-specific approaches to education during the 1970s and 80s when he was one of the first teachers in the UK to work exclusively with children affected by the condition.

Outside his work in the education field, Jim chairs both the Autism Accreditation Standards Body and is a former Chair of the Coalition of Senior Professionals working in Autism (CoSPPA), helping to improve understanding of autism and promote best practice among professionals working in the field.

The judges said that Jim's contribution to spreading and identifying best practice is considerable and his ability to inspire others to follow his philosophy means that his work will be sustained. They added that Jim's boundless enthusiasm, a profound knowledge of autism and an exceptional sense of humour characterised his contribution to the field.

Jim, whose latest venture is 'Jim Taylor Knows Autism', said: "I'm deeply honoured to accept this award, especially considering the astounding achievements of the other nominees, Dr Jacqui Ashton-Smith and Dr Luke Beardon. They have both contributed so much to our understanding of autism and have had a huge impact on many, many people living with the condition.

"There is some outstanding work going on all around the UK to improve the lives of people with autism. There's simply no excuse for settling for mediocre services for people with autism. People with autism are written off all too often but I've seen how much they can achieve and can contribute to their local communities, if they are given the right support and understanding.

"I'm so grateful to everyone who nominated me for the award, as well as all the people with autism I've worked with, and their families – they're the reason I do what I do and why I've had such a wonderful and rewarding career."

Carol Povey, Director of The National Autistic Society's Centre for Autism, said: "Autism is a specialist field which attracts many talented and dedicated individuals so it takes something extraordinary to stand out, especially in a year in which we received a record number of nominations.

"Jim's teaching has benefited a large number of children, young people and families in Scotland, while his pioneering work in the field of education has influenced and inspired countless professionals, teachers and schools

in the UK and internationally. His impact on the autism community has been huge and he is a deserved winner of this prestigious award.

"The awards ceremony was a great opportunity for Jim to network and share his expertise and experiences with his peers, with a view to promoting best autism practice.

"Autism can have a profound effect on individuals and families but, as shown by the achievements of Jim and the other finalists, the right support can make all the difference and help them live the fullest life possible."

Jim was joined by two other nominees in the Lifetime Achievement Award category: Dr Luke Beardon, an autism consultant and lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, and Jacqui Ashton-Smith, the Executive Director of Education for the NAS.

There were 191 nominations for this year's awards, which were chiselled down to a shortlist of 38 and finally 13 winners by a panel of 10 autism experts. The nominees were judged on their innovation, creativity, impact and sustainability.

The full list of winners are:

- The Axcis Award for Achievement by an Individual Education Professional: **Jacky Wyatt**.
She leads the Reception team at Hillcrest Primary, a mainstream school in Bristol.
- Lifetime Achievement Award: **Jim Taylor**.
He is an autism consultant from Stirling.
- Award for Outstanding Achievement by an Individual on the Autism Spectrum: **Julia Malkin MBE** and **Robyn Steward**.
Julia runs a service for people with autism in Leicester; Robyn is an autism consultant from Tooting, London.
- Award for Most Inspirational Volunteer: **Kate Laine-Toner**.
Kate founded Bristol Autism Support, which supports local families affected by autism.
- Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Primary Schools: **The Inclusion Team at Tollgate Primary School** in Newham.
- Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Secondary Schools & Over 16: **Autisan Creative Enterprises**.
This is a fudge-making business run from Robert Ogden School in Thurnscoe, South Yorkshire.
- Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Other Education Provider: **Suffolk County Council's County Inclusive Resource**.
They support children with autism attending mainstream schools.
- Award for Outstanding Adult Services: **Wirral Autistic Society's Community Health and Wellbeing Team**.
They run activities to improve the quality of life for local people with autism.
- Award for Clinical Excellence: **The SEQOL Adult Autism Diagnostic Service**
They provide diagnosis and post-diagnostic support for adults who suspect they may have autism in Swindon, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire.
- Award for Innovative Family Support: tied between **Bernardo's Cygnet Service** and **Sunderland's Autism Outreach Team**.
The former supports people affected by autism and trains professionals in Bradford; the latter is a support service for families affected by the condition.

- Award for Best New Technological Innovation sponsored by Network Autism: **Circus Starr's Show and Tell**.
This is an interactive visual story app for children with autism that can be tailored to suit the specific needs of a child in preparation for a trip to the circus.
- Award for Most Creative Community Project: **Scottish Autism's Gartinnay Conservation Project**.
This is a vocational day service for people with autism.
- Autism Accreditation Excellence Award: **Knowsley Disability Service**.
This supports local people with learning and physical disabilities and autism.

To find out more information about the Awards, please visit www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk.

For more information about Jim Taylor, please visit: www.jimtaylorknowsautism.com

ENDS

For photographs or more information on the winners, please contact **Piers Wright** on **020 790335348** or piers.wright@nas.org.uk.

Notes to editors:

The Autism Professionals Awards

- The independent judging panel consists of 11 leading experts in the field of autism from a variety of professional backgrounds across the UK. Full biographical details of all judges are available on the website: www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk

Autism Professionals Awards sponsors

AXCIS Education Recruitment

- Axcis Education Recruitment is the foremost specialist supplier of quality special educational needs (SEN) staffing solutions in the UK.
- Their commitment to working with government and professional partners plus its duty of care, ensures that, despite wide-ranging changes in education, they can have a positive effect on the lives of the young people with SEND they ultimately support.
- They appreciate these young people are some of the most vulnerable in the education system and require inclusive nurture to allow them to achieve to the very best of their ability. www.axcis.co.uk

Switalskis Solicitors

- Three times winner of the Yorkshire Law Firm of the Year award, Switalskis Solicitors offers a wide range of expert legal advice and representation for individuals and businesses.
- Switalskis legal services are available from nine locations across the Yorkshire region: York, Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, Dewsbury, Pontefract and Goldthorpe (in association with W. Brook & Co).

Autism Accreditation

- Established by The National Autistic Society (NAS) and its affiliated local societies, with support from the Department of Health, Autism Accreditation has been the foundation upon which much of the successful expansion of quality services for people with autism has been built.
- Autism Accreditation works to improve the quality of provision for people with autism by:
 - providing a unified standard of excellence in both policy and practice
 - presenting a systematic framework for continuous self-examination and development
 - giving guidance and support to the services who use our programme so that they can meet the established criteria required for accredited status.
- Autism Accreditation provides an autism-specific quality assurance programme for over 300 organisations throughout the UK and across the globe. Clients include local authorities, NHS trusts, education authorities, local autism societies and private companies.

Network Autism

- Network Autism, established by the National Autistic Society (NAS) is a place where professionals can come together, open up new channels of information and share good practice.
- Network autism allows professionals to:
 - connect with professionals in similar situations
 - collaborate in finding new solutions
 - share expertise and knowledge
 - support colleagues in achieving better outcomes.
- www.network.autism.org.uk/

The National Autistic Society

- Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.
- Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.
- The National Autistic Society is the UK's leading charity for people with autism and their families. Founded in 1962, it continues to spearhead national and international initiatives and provide a strong voice for all people with autism. The NAS provides a wide range of services to help people with autism and Asperger syndrome live their lives with as much independence as possible.
- For more information about autism and the NAS, visit www.autism.org.uk
- Follow the NAS on Twitter (@Autism) or on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety).