

**From:** Karen Almond <Karen.Almond@blaby.gov.uk>  
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Please find our latest news for immediate release. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information. Photographs are available on request.

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Community heroes honoured**

Unsung heroes who give their time to make their communities a better place received rightful recognition during a special ceremony.

Winners and runners-up in the 2023 Blaby District Council Community Awards were honoured at the annual prize-giving.

The event, held in the Council Chamber, was attended by more than 100 representatives from the local voluntary sector community, including the nominees from all three categories: Volunteer of the Year, Young Volunteer of the Year and Community Group of the Year.

The individual categories had received 24 nominations in total while there were nine nominations for Community Group of the Year.

The winners were announced on the night with Suzann Miller, Sharon Denston and Kim Frain sharing the award of Volunteer of the Year. This was for the support they have given to Ukrainian refugees arriving in the area.

The runner-up in this category was Dawn Williams of Enderby Lawn Tennis Club. She was praised for her efforts to champion inclusion at the club, organising tennis sessions for adults with learning disabilities and children with special educational needs.

A special recognition award was also made this year to John Harrison. After retiring from a long career on the railways he has volunteered tirelessly to bring in significant funding and improvements to Narborough Station.

Alleah Benson was chosen by the judging panel as Young Volunteer of the Year. Alleah stood out as a real role model for others. Alongside working now, she has volunteered at Stoney Stanton Youth Club as a youth leader for several years, was a former member of the District's Youth Council and helps each year with the local community carnival.

Mili-Mai Dunn was chosen as the runner-up for her fundraising efforts in aid of Motor Neurone Disease following the loss of her grandfather to the illness.

Our individual winners and runners-up each take home £100 and £50 respectively. They also get the opportunity to gift a donation to a local voluntary sector organisation, courtesy of our awards sponsors.

Nearly 2,000 votes came in for the Community Group of the Year with Sapcote Memory Hub taking home this prestigious award and the £1,000 prize money, having received 599 votes.

The group offers extensive therapeutic support, activities and compassion to residents living with dementia and their carers. As one person who nominated the group said: "the hub is a sanctuary for those living with dementia".

Blaby and District Spartans Inclusive Football Club was the runner-up in this category and will receive £500. The club has expanded in the last year to offer a junior, as well as adult section. It continues to provide accessible, enjoyable and competitive opportunities for everyone to play football.

Councillor Terry Richardson, Leader of Blaby District Council, said: "I mean it when I say this is my favourite event of the year. As compere, it is an absolute privilege to spend the evening with people from across the District who selflessly go that extra mile week in, week out, to help others as well as our environment.

"It is especially heart-warming to hear what our young people are already doing for their community - they are truly inspirational to us all. The judging panel had an extremely difficult task and huge congratulations to all this year's winners and runners-up.

"However, I want to thank each and every volunteer and community group in the District - whether nominated or not. You make a real difference to the lives of our residents in so many ways and help make Blaby District the great place it is to live."

Our generous sponsors this year were: Serco, Everyone Active, Central Co-op and the Love Blaby Lottery. We are extremely grateful for their support in making these important awards possible.

Read more about the awards and all the winners and runners-up at [Community Awards Evening \(blaby.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaby.gov.uk/community-awards-evening)

12 February 2024

Best regards

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