

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, 18 November, 2016

MERSEYSIDE RUNNING COMMUNITY AWARDS 2016 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Third annual event celebrates Mersey sporting champions

The winners of the Merseyside Running Community Awards 2016 have been announced.

The top honours were revealed at a special celebratory awards dinner at The Richmond Hotel Liverpool in front of 130 guests and sponsors.

This is the third year of the awards, which celebrate and thank individuals and groups who make a huge difference to Merseyside's growing running community.

A total of 11 awards were presented and the evening was hosted by Radio City's Claire Simmo and Graeme White, with entertainment from Liverpool soul band, The A Team.

Kirkby Milers, a new running club still in its infancy and less than two years since it was established, were named Club of the Year for the second consecutive year. While the Charity Fundraiser award was won by Gary Jones and young son 10-year-old Ben, who Gary is often seen pushing round races in his specially adapted buggy raising thousands of pounds for a number of various charities.

This year's event also featured a surprise award to recognise Outstanding Contribution from leading independent race organisers and headline sponsor BTR Liverpool. The introduction of the new award was announced during the evening itself.

The first recipients of the special award were 44-year-old James Hughes and his foster dad John Courtney, aged 78. They have become familiar faces on the running circuit since they began back in 1988.

The awards began in 2014 when the running community were keen to celebrate all that is special about the sport locally. Each year, members of the running community and public are encouraged to submit nominations. A total of three finalists are then announced for each category and the winners are chosen by an online vote which is open to all.

This year's awards achieved two personal bests of its own after generating the most nominations to date, as well as the most number of votes cast to choose the finalists which totalled 2,700 votes.

The winners of the Merseyside Running Community Awards 2016 are:

- **Volunteer Team** – Keith Peacock (Wigan)
- **Best Running Moment** – Smile Mile at the Tour Of Merseyside
- **Services to the Running Community** – Paul Cope (Kirkby)
- **Newcomer of the Year** – Steph Battersby (Prescot)
- **Running Image of the Year** – Speedo Milers for Woodlands Hospice
- **Running Personality** – Terence Forrest (Leeds)
- **Charity Fundraiser** – Gary and Ben Jones (Aughton)
- **Inspirational Individual** – Jo Moody (Croxteth)
- **Club of the Year** – Kirkby Milers
- **Lifetime Achievement** – Dave Edwards (Liverpool)
- **Special Award – Outstanding Contribution To Running**
John Courtney and James Hughes (Liverpool)

(Please note a description of each winner can be found below in the Notes to Editors; individual photographs of all the winners are available upon request)

Support for the awards came from Cestrian Loos, District House, The Goody Bag Company, Jef Group, Paramount Stewarding, The Richmond Hotel Liverpool, RunABC North, Running Imp, TDL Event Services, Wild Thang and headline sponsor BTR Liverpool, who also organised and delivered the Merseyside Running Community Awards. Category sponsors took to the stage to announce the winners and present them with their awards and certificates. All finalists also received a certificate.

BTR Liverpool is behind some of the biggest and most popular running events in the North West. Its portfolio includes the Vitality Liverpool Half Marathon; Tour Of Merseyside; Tunnel 10K; and Radio City Liverpool Santa Dash.

BTR Race Director Alan Rothwell commented:

“What a fantastic night for all involved. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists, and not forgetting everyone who was nominated. Over 2,700 votes were cast, that’s a personal best for the awards so thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate and vote.

“BTR is delighted to introduce the special award for 2016, and John and James are very worthy winners. John guides visually impaired James through every race and no challenge is too small, they have even taken on the 52-mile Tour Of Merseyside for the past three years. Watching them run together is incredibly heartwarming and they never fail to inspire others – their bond is unrivalled.

“Merseyside’s running community continues to thrive and is home to some of the region’s most inspiring stories – keep up the fantastic work everyone.”

The evening also included a prize draw and auction, which raised £800 for the BTR Footsteps Fundraisers charities – Radio City’s Cash For Kids, Everton in the Community and Zoe’s Place Baby Hospice.

Prizes were donated by Beatles Story; Bill Elms Associates; BTR Liverpool; Collins Chiropractic; District House; Everton Football Club; Isla Gladstone Conservatory; Liverpool Playhouse Theatre; Lotus Therapies; Radio City; Richmond Hotel Liverpool; Royal Court Liverpool; The Holistic Hub; Venture Studios; and Wirral Cryotherapy.

Merseyside Running Community Awards 2016 Official Event Video:

<https://youtu.be/hENfHWZ3zKA>

Next for BTR is the Radio City Liverpool Santa Dash on Sunday, 4 December. Enter in person at Rapid Discount Outlet in Liverpool city centre or the BTR office at 82 Market Street, Hoylake. Or enter online at www.btrliverpool.com

Website www.btrliverpool.com
Facebook Facebook/BTR Liverpool
Twitter @BTRLiverpool



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Notes to Editors

MERSEYSIDE RUNNING COMMUNITY AWARDS 2016

Winners' Summaries

Volunteer Team – Keith Peacock (Wigan)

When he isn't running, Keith can often be found rounding up the troops as a race day volunteer. Keen to give something back, he takes great pleasure in presenting runners with that well-earned bling and words of congratulations as they cross the finish line. Keith now regularly recruits his own volunteer teams, encouraging many runners to lend a helping hand.

Best Running Moment – Smile Mile at the Tour Of Merseyside

Pom pom laden cheering stations throughout this year's Tour Of Merseyside culminated with the Kirkby Milers spreading happiness along the way. The idea of Ian Rivers, a 'Smile Mile' helped push runners on during the 10-mile on the ralla. Proving popular, they were back at mile 51 in New Brighton with much-needed support as the Tourists completed their epic challenge.

Services to the Running Community – Paul Cope (Kirkby)

Paul's dedication and commitment in coaching and developing the talents of the youngsters at Kirkby Milers is second to none. The number of Mini Milers running has massively increased as the club becomes more established, and they are quickly becoming regulars on the junior race and athletics circuit. Coaching has now increased to twice a week with regular weekend meetings.

Newcomer of the Year – Steph Battersby (Prescot)

Steph has fast become determined in achieving her goals since she began running. She started with her local parkrun, then gradually built up to 10K races – always with a smile. In September, she reached a huge milestone when she completed the three-day 26-mile Whistle Stop Tour Of Wirral race series – that's no mean feat for a newcomer to the sport.

Running Image of the Year – Speedo Milers for Woodlands Hospice

Runners Tony Craig and James Warburton from the Kirkby Milers donned speedos to take part in Croxteth Park parkrun to raise money for Woodlands.

Running Personality – Terence Forrest (Leeds)

Terry is known as much for his striking hair as he is for his unique running style. He even shaved off his mohawk for Alder Hey at the Tour Of Merseyside. Starting every run at the back, the race is then on as he motors



through to become a front runner. He's always ready to repay the support he receives.

Charity Fundraiser – Gary and Ben Jones (Aughton)

Runners say a real race highlight is seeing proud dad Gary Jones pushing son Ben in his specially adapted running buggy. Together they've covered hundreds of miles and raised thousands of pounds – not only raising awareness of Ben's condition but also raising money for other children's charities. A wave from Ben is worth its weight in gold for any runner.

Inspirational Individual – Jo Moody (Croxteth)

Eighteen months ago, healthy Jo was struck down with a debilitating brain lesion. Determined to fight back and help aid her recovery, she set herself a challenge to run 200 miles for charity through 'Moody Marathons' at home and overseas, joined by husband Phil. Race events included marathons and the Tour Of Merseyside, while also raising awareness of her condition.

Club of the Year – Kirkby Milers

Kirkby Milers burst onto the running scene less than two years ago, started by a small but dedicated core team with a clear community vision. You'll be hard pushed not to see an army of green and orange, whatever the race distance. The club have a strong family ethos, with many members now encouraging their children to become Mini Milers.

Lifetime Achievement – Dave Edwards (Liverpool)

Known as The Chief, Dave is a well respected member of the running community. Experienced runner and a proven coach, he keeps his Kirkby Milers squad on their toes, as well as hosting social runs from his own home up to five times a week. Always ready with words of advice for all runners, he is an excellent role model.

Special Award – Outstanding Contribution To Running

John Courtney and James Hughes (Liverpool)

James Hughes and his foster dad John Courtney have become familiar faces on the running circuit for almost 30 years. The races they choose to challenge themselves with are wide and varied and are especially tough for James, who requires John to guide him every step of the way. Seeing them run together is incredibly heartwarming.

John and Sylvia Courtney became Mum and Dad to James when he was aged just 15. He's now 44. And John who never shies away from the big races including marathons, is now 78. What a partnership.