

People's Choice Awards



2015 Nominee Royal Marine Spencer Vaughan

Royal Marine Spencer Vaughan, 26, from Cwmbran, Gwent, experienced a life-changing accident four years ago while on a manoeuvre with 45 Commando in Gran Canaria leaving him paralysed from the chest down.

Throughout his gruelling and ongoing rehabilitation, Spencer has demonstrated a consistently positive and cheerful attitude, determined not to let his disability prevent him from leading a full and active life, packed with the sporting pursuits that he has always loved and excelled at. Thanks to Spencer's efforts, and the support of medical practitioners, he progressed at an astonishing rate regaining movement in his arms and learning quickly how to use his minimal movements to the best advantage, including self-mobilising in a wheelchair and swimming.

Wanting to help others with physical limitations, in January 2013 Spencer took part in an InstructAbility course to train as a fitness instructor and to encourage more disabled people in his local community to participate in physical activity. Once qualified, Spencer undertook a highly successful three-month work placement at Plymouth Life Centre, where he helped a number of individuals with gym-based workouts and contributed to changing staff perceptions about the daily challenges people with disabilities face and what they can achieve in the fitness arena.

Bolstered by this experience, Spencer has managed to steer his life in a completely new and positive direction. Having recently re-sat his GCSEs, he will shortly be taking up a place at Cardiff University to study for a degree in Sports Biomedicine and Nutrition. Spencer is also in training for the Invictus Games where he will be part of Great Britain's wheelchair rugby team.

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Patron: Lord Astor of Haver, DL

Trustees: Wing Commander Tal Lambert MBE (Chairman), David Hahn, John Novelli, Dennis Gimes, Wing Commander (retd) Colin Debenham, Julie Calder, Madonna Walsh, Kevin Menzies

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2015 Nominee Bob Barrett

Robert – or Bob as he is known – Barrett has been a resident at Stoll for over a decade. Having overcome homelessness and other issues, Bob was diagnosed with cancer shortly after moving in but he has never let that stop him being creative and thinking of others.

Bob founded The Beef Kitchen, a social enterprise created with support from Stoll and The Royal British Legion, to train Veterans in catering. This venture expanded for a period into Pryors' Bank Café and is now open most days and match days at Stoll's Fulham site.

It was The Beef Kitchen that prompted Bob to think about sauces:

“Inspiration came from going to the cash and carry buying sauce and then returning to the cafe and seeing five men, one of who was a trained chef and four trainees unloading the van, carrying the sauce and thinking to myself it would be nice if they could make it.”

From there, the Forces Sauces concept was born and Bob worked tirelessly to achieve his dream of a nationally distributed sauce range that tasted good and did good with a percentage of the profits given to Stoll and The Royal British Legion.

Bob and the team worked with design agency BlueMarlin and food producer, English Provender Company, for many months to bring two sauces to the Great British public and on 10th June 2013 Corporal Ketchup and Brigadier Brown hit the Tesco shelves with distribution in Waitrose following later that year.

While sales have been steady, the brand captured the imagination of the public from day one; the launch Facebook post on Stoll's Facebook page was seen by over 140,000 people alone. The range received press coverage that gave over a million opportunities for people to learn about Forces Sauces, Bob and the work of two military charities.

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2015 Nominee The Gurkha Welfare Trust

The Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT) was nominated in recognition of the unique role it has played since 1969 caring for Gurkhas veterans in need.

GWT was established when, following the redundancies of WW2 and the Malaya Borneo Confrontations, it was recognised that 'a duty of care' was owed to thousands of demobbed Gurkhas.

Nepal was, and remains, one of the poorest nations on earth. 25% of the population live below the poverty line. There is little welfare support; medical facilities are scarce and natural disasters frequent. It is to this land of hardship that Gurkha veterans returned after service.

With their service too short to qualify for an Army pension, they survived as subsistence farmers. The GWT was initially established to support this return to farming by teaching skills such as livestock farming and beekeeping. However, as the veterans reached their 70s, they could no longer farm their small strips of land. While UK veterans could rely on the Welfare State or the many Service charities, Gurkha veterans had no support.

The GWT introduced a monthly Welfare Pension. Today it is set at 7,000 Nepalese Rupees. To cover additional costs incurred during colder winter months and when disaster strikes, a Winter Fuel Allowance and Emergency Grants were introduced.

It established a medical programme to care for Gurkha veterans, today employing seven doctors and six district nurses. In each AWC, a Medical Assistant runs a medical centre. Eight Mobile Medical Camps provide healthcare to the hill communities each year, benefitting over 14,504 people.

For the most vulnerable, the GWT constructed two residential homes. Home Carer Allowances were introduced for family members caring for extremely frail pensioners at home.

Its Rural Water and Sanitation Programme has delivered clean water to 1,406 Gurkha villages and 297,792 people since 1989. Its School Programme improves schools in the hill villages. 125 new schools have been built and a further 1,544 improved, benefitting 546,504 children.

Following changes to Gurkha settlement entitlement, a welfare need developed among Gurkhas in the UK. In response, the Trust established 2 Welfare Advice Centres. Annually it responds to over 850 cases of need.

At every stage, GWT has responded to the changing needs of the Gurkha veteran. It remains committed to ensuring that Gurkhas have the resources and support to live in security and with dignity. It is a 'debt of honour' it fulfils on behalf of the British public.

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2015 Nominee Kevin and Amie Ogilvie

Kevin Ogilvie was just 22-years-old when an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2013 left him paralysed from the chest down. Kevin and his wife Amie have been forced to adapt to a life of Kevin being in a wheelchair but this feisty young couple have not only readjusted their priorities but they, and their friends and family, have spent the past year fundraising for the RAF Benevolent Fund, who supported Kevin after he was injured.

Kevin and Amie, who had a six-month old daughter at the time of the accident, had their wedding booked 11 months after Kevin's accident– the wedding became the focus for the couple but in particular for Kevin as he recovered.

They also set their sights on fundraising for the RAFBF and SSAFA and rallied friends and family together for their fundraising efforts.

Amie, 25, gave up her job as a support worker for adults with learning disabilities and mental health, after the couple were forced to move five hours away from their home in Bury St Edmunds whilst Kevin was in the Oswestry Spinal Unit.

From the moment Kevin was in hospital, Amie spent every day with him, feeding him when he was unable to feed himself, bringing him things to keep him entertained and keeping friends and family up to date on his progress. Then when Kevin was moved to the Oswestry Spinal Unit, five hours from their home, Amie moved with Kevin - away from family and friends - to continue to support him.

She had to overcome several moves until the RAF Benevolent Fund stepped in and provided the family with financial support to ensure Amie and Grace could stay with Kevin during his recovery. They paid for them to spend three months in a cottage in Oswestry only 10 minutes from the spinal unit. They also paid for Kevin's parents, Rhona and Phil, to come down from Scotland to visit Kevin every other week, meaning they had family support and also they could see their son during his recovery.

Amie was determined to learn how the couples' life would be affected by Kevin's injuries and attended meetings to gain the knowledge she needed to help Kevin in his recovery.

To date Amie and Kevin have raised an incredible £20,000 through bucket collections at supermarkets and Kevin's brother, Ali, raised over £3,000 through two bungee jumps over two days. The couple's main fundraising effort for 2014 was a midsummer ball for which they raise £6,800 and for which they managed to get auction prizes of a signed Manchester United shirt and a stadium tour of Liverpool's Anfield.

Kevin, Amie and other members of the family and friends also plan to do a sky dive for the charities next year.

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2015 Nominee Tony Robinson and his dog SSAFA

Tony Robinson suffered life-changing multiple injuries in an industrial accident in 2001 while working as a local authority caretaker. Partially paralysed as a result of irreparable spinal and nerve damage, the former fitness fanatic, who had spent four years with 1st Battalion The Queen's Regiment, was confined to a wheelchair.

He suffered from frequent attacks of pain which surged without warning and led to him regularly being hospitalised by ambulance. Each time he'd be put on a morphine drip and admitted overnight, but it would take him a week to recover. The whole family was under terrible stress.

What changed their lives for the better was the acquisition of a Jack Russell which they named SSAFA, in honour of the charity that had helped them when Tony went bankrupt in 2006 by providing basic essentials such as clothes for the children and much-needed white goods for the home.

The family, from South West London, had been determined to give something back and had been dedicated fundraisers ever since, raising £3000 to £4000 a year. They had wanted a dog that could sit on Tony's lap while they were fundraising, but little did they know at the time that SSAFA the puppy would prove to have a natural talent for knowing when Tony was about to have an attack.

On the advice of their vet, Tony and his wife Tina, 37, got in touch with the charity Medical Detection Dogs which trains dogs to help people with life-threatening health conditions, and after successfully completing her training SSAFA is now a registered Medical Alert Assistance Dog.

Not only can she predict the onset of an attack, but she even knows where in the body it's going to take place, allowing Tony time to take the correct medication before the pain kicks in.

"SSAFA's changed our lives; she really has. I don't feel like a drain on the NHS anymore; she's never got it wrong and I've only been hospitalised twice in the last three and a half years," said Tony.

Tina and their children, Scott, 16, and Nicole, 15, are now able to lead more normal lives instead of being afraid to leave Tony's side.

"If it wasn't for SSAFA I wouldn't be able to do ninety per cent of what I do now. She has taken so much of the stress away for all of us," he said.

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