

# Ladies rewarded for hard work and dedication in their communities



**DELIGHTED** Katherine Sloane, left, and Helen McArdle



**THRILLED** Customer Service Award, Gillian Burnett of Driving Miss Daisy



**SUCCESS** Susan Tonks, left, and Nicky Gray of Fidgets, the Salon for Kids



**AWARD WINNERS** Left to right, Newcomer of the Year, Claire Heathcote of Cleaners for Causes; Collaboration of the Year, Lesley Middlemiss Lister of Tyne Tees Models; Customer Service Award, Gillian Burnett of Driving Miss Daisy; Lifetime Achievement, Helen McArdle of HMC Group; Lifetime Achievement, Katherine Sloane of Katherine's Florists; Success of the Year, Nicky Gray and Susan Tonks of Fidgets, the Salon for Kids; Woman of the Year, Eileen Richardson

# Inspiring women praised at awards

## RUTH LAWSON

**WORTHY** women were praised for their inspirational efforts at the first Glass Slipper Awards.

The Evening Chronicle Sunshine Fund organised the event which aimed to recognise the work of dedicated ladies from across the North East.

Whether it be in the community, business or family world, all manner of women were given accolades at the lavish bash held the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead yesterday.

Before the ceremony got under way, a special recorded message was delivered by Sunshine Fund Patrons Ant and Dec before Tyne Tees news presenter Pam Royle and Sandra Jobling, who set up Coastal Productions with TV star Robson Green, took to the stage to explain why they are both proud to be involved with the charity.

Pam, also a patron, said: "I think it's really important we actually take time out and think about women's achievements particularly when so many are juggling so many things in life.

"Through hard work and determination they make such a difference to business, the economy, the community and to home life as well as to the Sunshine Fund.

"Let's hope this is the first of many Glass Slipper Awards."

Taking the role of hosts for the afternoon were Real Radio breakfast presenters Gary and Lisa who dished out the stylish glass awards with bouquets of flowers.

The first award for Newcomer of the Year went to Claire Heathcote who set up Cleaners for Causes, which is a Gateshead-based professional dry cleaning service that donates 15% of the price customers pay directly to partner charities.

Claire said: "I love my job and I love the fact I can juggle my family and work life successfully."

Gillian Burnett, who set up a taxi service solely for women called Driving Miss Daisy, picked up the Customer Service Award.

The business woman, who runs the taxi service in Burnopfield, County Durham, said: "I'm very, very humbled to be by it all because there's some amazing women here."

Tyne Tees Model boss Lesley Middlemiss Lister was handed the Collaboration of the Year gong for her success in the world of modelling, including setting up the first nationally-recognised accredited training course for modelling with Northumberland College.

The Woman of the Year was named as Eileen Richardson who was diagnosed with breast cancer 27 weeks

into her pregnancy with triplets. She had to endure a premature labour and instantly afterwards had to undergo surgery for her cancer. Ten years on and Eileen is now helping to support other sufferers with her Hug in a Bag charity in Sunderland.

Success of the Year went to Nicky Gray and Susan Tonks who set up Fidgets, The Salon for Kids in Whitley Bay to make the lives of children with sensory difficulties easier.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was so hotly disputed by the judges that they eventually decided two of the finalists deserved to be honoured.

Helen McArdle, who runs Helen McArdle Care, received the prize alongside Katherine Sloane, owner of Katherine's Florists.

Picking up the award Helen said: "I was thrilled to be shortlisted and I'm absolutely delighted to win it."

Katherine said: "I set up Katherine's Florists in 1970 and I took three pound six shilling on the first day. It's been an amazing journey so today is an opportunity to say thank you."

Sunshine Fund director Carroll Pattison would like to thank all the businesses and organisations involved in the event, including sponsors Tait Walker and Hilton Newcastle Gateshead as well as supporters ncj-Media and Eldon Square.

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