

PR1502 - 7 March 2011

Glasgow florist blooms at Awards ceremony

Floristry student, Debbie McKenna from Glasgow was honoured as 'Floristry Learner of the Year' at the eighth annual Lantra Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards ceremony.

This is the first time that an award for floristry has been presented during the annual awards ceremony. Sponsored by Lorna Davies Florist, the first ever winner of the Land-based Learner of the Year award, this award is in recognition of all the dedication and commitment of learners to this industry.

Debbie McKenna, a mother of three returned to education after being a full-time mum for a number of years. After completing various short courses, Debbie applied to Langside College where she completed a Level 2 National Certificate in Floristry; she is currently undertaking the Level 3 Advanced Award.

Debbie said: "The course was perfect for me. It was a hands-on course doing practical work, teaching me the skills and techniques I need to enable me to become self-employed. I also learnt a lot from working in the industry units of the course, which gave me a great insight into how the floristry industry works. I am now attending workshops on setting up a business and hope to progress this."

A total of 25 prizes were presented during the Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards ceremony organised by Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries. The awards, which attracted over 60 nominations, are designed to inspire new entrants to take up a career in the land-based and aquaculture sector and make employers aware of the benefits of a well trained workforce.

Attending the awards ceremony, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead said: "This is the third year I have been honoured to attend the Lantra Awards and, like both previous occasions, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and skill of the trainees.

"Farming and rural industries face challenging, but interesting times. Scotland's economy is recovering, our food and drink sector is world renowned and we are on the cusp of an energy revolution which is opening up new and exciting opportunities.

"Rural Scotland is very well placed to take advantage of many of these new opportunities and I am sure that many in the hall tonight have the talent to make a significant contribution."

Willie Fergusson, National Director said: "The Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards attract a very high calibre of candidates who are committed to further developing their skills and knowledge. It is vital for the future of these industries that we continue to encourage new entrants and demonstrate how employers can see the bottom line benefits that highly skilled new entrants can bring to the business."

Willie continued: "Recognition of the importance of the awards by industry, their commitment to them, and their generosity in sponsoring this event has grown significantly over the years and we are indebted to the sponsors who make this event the success that it is."

Some 140 guests attended this prestigious event at the Crieff Hydro hotel, including learners, employers, farmers, crofters, land managers, training providers, stakeholders and members of the Scottish Parliament. Skills Development Scotland, Marine Harvest and Scottish Natural Heritage were the main sponsors of the event.

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Full list of winners:

- Overall Winner Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Scott Simpson
- Overall Runner-Up Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Rebecca McWilliams
- Agriculture Learner of the Year: Scott Simpson
- Agriculture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Craig Connell
- Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Harris Wright
- Aquaculture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Robert Wyvill
- Equine Learner of the Year: Rebecca McWilliams
- Equine Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Susan Torrance
- Floristry Learner of the Year: Debbie McKenna
- Game and Wildlife Learner of the Year: Joshua Bunton
- Horticulture Learner of the Year: Daryl Russell
- Horticulture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Ryan Mooney
- Higher Education Learner of the Year: Zane Pretorius
- Higher Education Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Graeme Dunlop
- Land-based Curriculum for Schools Learner of the Year: Danny Watson
- Land-based Curriculum for Schools Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Ryan Munro
- Modern Apprentice of the Year: Stuart Burns
- Trees and Timber Learner of the Year: Eamonn Staunton
- Trees and Timber Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Carina Convery

Special Awards:

- Algo Blairgowrie Ltd - Endeavour Award: Rigga Purvis
- Algo Blairgowrie Ltd - Endeavour Award: Eve Schulte
- Taypack Potatoes Ltd - Endeavour Award: Debbie McKenna
- CARAS Scotland Award: Zane Pretorius
- CARAS Scotland Award: Fraser Mitchell

- CARAS Scotland Award: Righa Purvis

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CREDIT FOR PHOTO:

188 - Debbie McKenna receives her award from Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead

EDITORS NOTES:

- Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries, working to ensure these businesses access the training, qualifications, skills and knowledge they need.
- Lantra in Scotland represents the interests of approximately 24,500 businesses (13% of all businesses), which employ 115,700 individuals (representing 2% of all employment across the workforce) and 40,000 volunteers.
- Lantra represents 17 industries: agricultural livestock and crops; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; land-based engineering; horticulture, landscaping and sports turf; production horticulture; trees and timber and veterinary activities.
- By working together with the sector, Lantra leads research on skills issues and business needs, sets national standards and develops qualifications to meet modern business needs and help businesses grow through skills.
- For more information see www.lantra.co.uk.