Have you got what it takes to win an Epic Award?

Wednesday 18 November, 2015

?UK and Ireland's premier award for amateur cultural groups, the Epic Awards opens for nominations.

?Over 60,000 voluntary arts groups across the UK and Republic of Ireland are eligible.

?Groups can nominate themselves online at www.epicawards.co.uk

?Closing date for nominations is 7 December 2015.

?A winner and a runner up will be chosen from England, Northern & Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

?Once the shortlist is announced there will also be a People's Choice award voted for by the public, a Peer award in which groups vote for each other and additional awards for excellent work with young people and disabled people.

?The Epic Awards will be presented at a dinner in Cardiff on 2 April 2016.

?The Epic Awards are run by Voluntary Arts to recognise and reward excellence and innovation in the amateur cultural sector.

Are you involved in an arts or crafts group that is doing something new and interesting? Do you know of any arts and crafts groups in your local area? Have you struck up an interesting collaboration, inspired others or solved a problem in your home town?

From singing to knitting, amateur dramatics to painting, over 60,000 amateur arts groups across the UK and Republic of Ireland are making a difference to lives in their local areas. The Epic Awards shines a spotlight on their achievements.

You can nominate your group or ask your local group to nominate themselves for an award by filling in the form on www.epicawards.co.uk to put them forward for national recognition and a range of prizes from financial support to advice, partnership and performance opportunities.

Winning groups have usually run initiatives or activities that involve interesting collaborations, or engage with their local community or beyond, undertake creative activity that inspires others or increases participation, or use new ideas in innovative ways.

Last year's Epic Awards winners included Friends of the Flyover (England), Milk and Cookies (Ireland), Kirkcudbright Art and Crafts Trail (Scotland) and MaDCaff (Wales).

In addition to the national winners there are a number of other awards. The Epic Award for exceptional work with disabled people went to Kent Association for the Blind Medway Art Group (England) and the award for exceptional work with young people was won by DD8 Music (Scotland).

The **public have their chance to vote** and award a prize to one of the shortlisted groups through The People's Choice Award. Last year's winners were Knitted Knockers UK a group of over 650 people across the UK who coordinate online to create and send 100% cotton breast prostheses to women who have had mastectomies.

Robin Simpson, CEO of Voluntary Arts who run the Epic Awards, said *"Each year Epic Awards highlights amazing stories of the creative cultural activity taking place in communities across the UK and Ireland. The annual winners' reception is an incredibly inspiring and humbling event which demonstrates the incredible results that voluntary arts activity can achieve. The winners are not always the biggest, most established groups - many of our winners have been small, start-up projects built on the power of a really creative idea. I am keen to encourage groups to apply - everyone tends to think they wouldn't stand a chance of winning but it really is worth entering - as our previous winners, runners-up and shortlisted groups will confirm. Tell us the EPIC things you are doing in your community - we look forward to hearing from you."*

The Epic Awards are supported by Spirit of 2012, an independent trust created to sustain the spirit and opportunities from London 2012, and are themselves supporting BBC Get Creative. Spirit has also

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helped to create two new categories of Epic Award as well as the Epic Places project. Voluntary Arts also acknowledges funding from Arts Council England, Arts Council Wales, Creative Scotland and Arts Council Northern Ireland.

Debbie Lye, Chief Executive of Spirit of 2012, said: *"We at Spirit are delighted to be supporting the Epic Awards again in 2016. I was blown away by the sheer breadth of high-quality award nominations last year- it's clear we've got a voluntary arts scene to be proud of. The Epic Awards really do showcase the cream of the UK and Ireland's amateur artistic and cultural crop, and I am eager to see who's in the running in 2016. Best of luck!"*

Epic Award 2016 partners are Arts & Business Cymru, Making Music, Arts Development UK, People's Voice Media, Audiences NI, Arts and Business NI, Ulster Association of Youth Drama, Dance Resource Base, Volunteer Now, Volunteer Ireland, Association of Irish Choirs, Association of Irish Festival Events, Sue Isherwood, Rosemary Curtis and BBC Get Creative.

Notes to Editors

For interviews, quotes, case studies, photos or further information please contact Susie Gray, The Corner Shop PR, susie@thecornershoppr.com 07834 073 795

More information about the Epic Awards, and previous winners can be found at www.epicawards.co.uk

Epic Awards Facebook page

@EpicAwards

Or by joining in **#loveto**, a twitter campaign which celebrates doing things because we love to. This month #loveto focuses on #lovetoMAKEMUSIC

Previous winner quotes:

“It was something we were really proud of and something that put us on the map." Barra Bunting

“it feels like our group is taken more seriously" The Buddy Beat

“it is a recognition of how groups can emerge from the ground up – that there is a strength in community… The money that we won for the Epic Awards paid for a well-known poet to come and give a workshop to our members" Poetry in the Park

“Winning the Epic Award was amazing for everyone who took part in Knitting Jazz. It gave everyone involved a huge sense of pride in what they had achieved together and a great sense of achievement in our hard work being recognised. …although we live in a remote area we can still be recognised for our creativities and hard work…when we get together and have fun creating, big things happen." Fishguard Arts Society

About Voluntary Arts

Voluntary Arts operates across the UK and Republic of Ireland, offering information, advice and support to the 65,000+ groups who regularly provide opportunities for creative cultural activity in their local area. We also advocate for the voluntary arts sector, and work with local and national decision makers to help create the best environment for amateur arts to flourish in.

Further information can be found on www.voluntaryarts.org

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