



## **Finalists announced for Midlands Businesswoman Award**

**4th October 2001**

Six of the region's finest businesswomen have been selected as finalists for the prestigious title of 'Midlands Businesswoman of the Year 2001'. Final judging took place on October 2nd at the offices of key sponsor Allied Irish Bank (GB), and was followed by a reception at the Burlington Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

'The Midlands is a hive of dynamic and successful female entrepreneurs, and we are delighted to support them as they grow their businesses,' says Allied Irish Bank (GB) Chief Manager, Midlands, John Wall. 'But few receive the recognition they deserve for their contribution they make to our economy. This is one of the reasons we support the award, and the vital work undertaken by the Winged Fellowship.'

George Campion, Midlands senior partner of co-sponsor Andersen, comments, 'Women in business and the professional services sector are playing a vital role in the growth of the regional economy. There is an outstanding shortlist for the Award, and we'd like to wish each of the six finalists the very best of luck.'

The overall winner will be announced at a luncheon to be held on Friday 12 October at The Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Funds raised by the luncheon are donated to Skylarks, one of five centres providing holidays for people with severe physical disabilities, owned and administered by The Winged Fellowship.

Susan Bell is Chief Executive of The National Forest: the largest environmental regeneration project in the Midlands, covering some 200 square miles. Susan's drive and creativity has taken The National Forest through feasibility and development stages to its sixth year of implementation.

During this time Susan has enthused the sceptics, bringing on board public and private funding and resulting in £35m of inward investment and the creation of some 500 new jobs.

Patricia Bullivant is the Managing Director of Observer Standard Newspapers Ltd, a leading independent publisher of free newspapers across Warwickshire, Worcestershire and North Hertfordshire. The company now publishes fourteen titles, with a total weekly circulation of over 330,000. Patricia has led the strategic direction of the company and was instrumental in its diversification into internet design and, potentially, local radio. She also served for eight years as a magistrate, and works to promote energy saving and 'green' issues.

Jane Lodge is Deloitte and Touche's most senior female partner in the UK. She heads up Deloitte and Touche's Birmingham Office: the largest outside London. As well as leading the Birmingham team, she is dedicated to life long learning - recognising that developing people

is key to business success. Jane also leads a UK-wide initiative to increase the number of women in senior management positions within the practice.

As early as 1985, Jo Marks saw the phenomenal potential of mobile telephony. From her first sale of a single handset, Jo has guided her company Aerofone Ltd. to a position of 500% growth in the last year. A dynamic and hands-on leader, Jo now employs 45 people based across two sites. Underlining Jo's commitment to her staff and her customers is the considerable recognition she has received within the industry. Aerofone Ltd. has been voted 'Best Service Provider' in 2000, and again in 2001.

Pollyanna Pickering is recognised as one of Europe's foremost wildlife artists, with an extensive range of work published in 83 countries worldwide. Committed to the cause of conservation, her books, lectures and exhibitions aim to improve awareness of endangered species. Her 'Pollyanna Pickering Foundation' raises funds for animal welfare and disaster relief and she is patron of the charities 'Raptor Relief', 'Naturewatch' and 'Fable'.

Marilyn Stokes is the Managing Director of both Nestor Medical Duty Services Ltd. and Forensic Medical Services Ltd. Since joining in 1994, Marilyn has taken the company through a period of considerable change and has built the business back after the imposition of new legislation. Under Marilyn's leadership, the customer base has doubled and service delivery is efficient and focused. The organisation's high staff retention rate testifies to Marilyn's flair for people development and teambuilding.

The finalists were chosen from the numerous entries submitted from a broad spectrum of businesses and backgrounds. Likewise, the judges' criteria covers many aspects of business acumen. Each finalist has demonstrated ability and achievement, underpinned the determination and drive to succeed.

Awards chair Judy Groves however, sounds a note of caution, 'Each year it becomes more and more challenging to get women to come forward to be recognised for their success, and to become a role model encouraging other women to develop their potential.'

'With the economic climate as it is,' Judy continues, 'there aren't many success stories around - but each of these six women is an outstanding businesswoman: a shining example of what women can achieve in business.'

The speakers at the lunch will include: The Rt Hon Virginia Bottomley, President of 'Women for Business' and the youngest ever female Cabinet Minister; and Baroness Nokes OBE, now a working peer in the House of Lords, she was also the first female President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and a senior partner at KPMG. Also speaking will be Polly Vacher, who has recently circumnavigated the globe alone in a single engine Piper Dakota.

The Midlands Businesswoman of the Year will be someone who has displayed exceptional business skills. She will have made a significant contribution to the financial success and performance of her company whether managing a subsidiary or particular area of a large organisation or setting up and running her own business. The judging criteria will reflect the different skills, abilities and influences of both entrepreneur and senior manager.

Andersen is a global leader in professional services. It provides integrated solutions that draw on diverse and deep competencies in consulting, assurance, tax, corporate finance and legal services. Andersen employs over 500 people in the Midlands.

Other sponsors of the awards are SCC, CBI West Midlands, Heart of England Tourist Board, BRMB Radio and Millennium Point

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