

The Robert Burns Humanitarians

Dr Josh Littlejohn MBE – 2020 winner

Josh is the co-founder of Social Bite, a chain of sandwich - coffee shops which give 100 percent of their profits to good causes. Each year, the shops give more than one hundred and forty thousand items of free healthy food to vulnerable people.

Since 2015, Josh's Social Bite Fund has been helping to eradicate homelessness across Scotland and beyond. Promotion of the fund led to the 'CEO Sleep Out' in Edinburgh which in turn led to 'Sleep in the Park' with 8,000 people sleeping out to raise £4 million to help the homeless.

In December 2019 'The World's Big Sleep Out' took place with sixty thousand people participating in 50 cities across the world.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Josh also set up the Social Bite Academy. This gives homeless people the chance to get back on their feet through volunteering and work experience. He also founded Brewgoder, a craft beer that donates 100% of its profits to clean water projects.

Josh received an MBE in the 2016 New Year's Honours List for services to social enterprise and entrepreneurship and the following year he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Edinburgh University.

Jasvinder Sanghera CBE – 2019 winner

Born in Derby, Jasvinder's humanitarian journey began when she escaped a forced marriage by running away from home at the age of 16 – only to find herself disowned by her family.

Her four older sisters were taken individually to India to enter forced marriages. It was after one of her sisters committed suicide to escape the domestic abuse of her marriage that Jasvinder decided to found Karma Nirvana – an award-winning charity that supports victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

Founded in 1993, the charity operates a national helpline to support victims in immediate danger and currently receives around 800 calls per month. Since its inception in 2008, it has received more than 78,000 calls for service.

Crucially, the charity doesn't just work to support the victims, it also works to inform and educate the professionals who will encounter victims too. This includes dedicated training and development for the likes of the police, NHS and social services, as well as in schools.

Jasvinder was instrumental in ensuring that the UK police are required to improve their understanding of honour-based abuse and forced marriage by inspections conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Jasvinder is regarded as an expert advisor to the courts in matters of child, civil and criminal proceedings and the charity, which is based in Leeds, also acts as expert witnesses in court, raises awareness at events nationally and internationally, and lobbies government.

Jasvinder's efforts over a decade of lobbying government and campaigning were pivotal in creating a new law that made forced marriage a criminal offence in the UK. The legislation has now been in place for five years and this had led the way for the present consultation into the mandatory reporting of forced marriages.

Anna Ferrer – 2018 winner

Anna was born in Essex and has worked in India since the mid-1960s – was recognised for her decades of dedication and devotion to women's rights and tackling poverty in her adopted homeland.

Anna fights for equality to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities and same chances in life.

Along with her husband, Vicente, Anna set up the Rural Development Trust (RDT) – with a particular focus on women's rights – in 1969. Focusing on the promotion, and provision, of education, health and homes, RDT now impacts the lives of 3.6 million people in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Over almost 50 years, RDT has established four major hospitals, six rural clinics, two mobile clinics and other special-care centres that administer treatment for basic to advanced ailments and infectious diseases. It has also launched its own supplementary schools, built housing and accommodation, and created access to water – all of which has transformed lives.

Marcelline Budza – 2017 winner

Marcelline founded the women's coffee producing association Rebuild Women's Hope (RWH) in 2013. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the country considered the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman, she has helped many women regain their economic empowerment as coffee farmers.

Inspired by her mother's example of raising a young family on her own, Marcelline went to university before establishing RWH as a platform to combat the misconceptions about women, and help ensure other women could provide for their households, reach their potential and become economically active members of society.

The organisation works to create a spirit of entrepreneurship and self-management in women, in order to raise the standard of living in their communities and across their nation.

Marcelline and RWH have helped more than 1,000 women register as farmers and subsequently sell their coffee to Coffeelac SARL (the DRC's largest Arabica coffee export company) for international distribution through Falcon Coffees in the UK.

David Nott – 2016 winner

Dr David Nott is a life-saving British doctor, known as the 'Indiana Jones of surgery', who literally had to dodge bombs and stare down the barrel of a gun while he worked to save lives.

A Consultant Surgeon at Royal Marsden, St Mary's and Chelsea and Westminster Hospitals, David has given up several months every year for more than two decades to volunteer with Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Committee of the Red Cross in war zones and amidst major humanitarian crises.

His efforts have seen him performing life-saving surgery in areas such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan and Syria – and in some of the most desperate conditions.

David's first posting took him to the state hospital in Bosnia, which was known as 'the Swiss cheese' because it was pockmarked with bullet holes, and that was to shape his experience for many years to come.

David has now taken his skills and experience and established the [David Nott Foundation](#) – a UK registered charity that provides surgeons and medical professionals with the skills they need to provide relief and assistance in conflict and natural disaster zones around the world.

As well as providing the best medical care, David Nott Foundation surgeons will train local healthcare professionals; leaving a legacy of education and improved health outcomes.

Olivia Giles – 2015 winner

Olivia Giles is an Edinburgh lawyer who lost her hands and feet following a serious illness and then set up a charity to provide people in developing countries with prosthetic limbs so they can walk.

It was 13 years ago, after contracting meningitis and needing emergency surgery, that Olivia had to be told the devastating news that her hands and feet had been amputated to save her life.

Once back to full strength and very conscious how lucky she was to be alive, Olivia began to raise both money and awareness for the likes of the Meningitis Trust and other charities.

During this time, Olivia learned about the difficulties experienced by amputees in developing countries, who didn't have access to the same kind of healthcare and support that she herself had experienced.

Instead, many of these people – including large numbers of children – were ostracised from their community and Olivia set out to tackle this by founding the charity, '[500 miles](#)', just five years' after the loss of her hands and feet.

500 miles is all about supporting the development and delivery of prosthetic and orthotic services to people with impaired mobility in Malawi, Zambia and, to a lesser degree, in Zanzibar. Thanks to Olivia's efforts, 500 miles now has two centres in Malawi, run in cooperation with the Malawian Ministry of Health. Together, these centres now provide more than 1,650 devices each year to people who badly need them.

The charity also funds and subsidises people to receive prosthetic and orthotic devices in Zanzibar and Zambia. Olivia's work for the charity was recognised in 2010 when she was awarded an OBE by Her Majesty The Queen.

Blanche Nicolson – 2014 winner

Blanche Nicolson from the charity Hansel was selected as the 2014 winner for her tireless efforts to continue the humanitarian work her parents started 50 years ago.

Blanche's sister Lindy was born with Down's Syndrome and, concerned for her future, her parents, Isobel and Tom Murdoch, founded the charity Hansel, which provides services and support to people living with learning disabilities.

For more than 50 years, Blanche has been at the heart of that support, working tirelessly to make a positive difference for people with learning disabilities and to make sure they enjoy the same opportunities as anyone else.

Thanks to Blanche's passion and belief that everyone is equal, and an understanding that it is necessary at times to fight prejudice, she has worked above and beyond her day job to make sure people get the most benefit from Hansel and the services it offers – whether through community living options, education, employment, residential services, respite and leisure and social opportunities.

Blanche has also led the way in the social care sector, working in partnership with local Councils, social work departments, health boards, employers, schools and the people of Ayrshire, changing perceptions about what it means to live with a learning disability and showcasing how full and active a part in society people with disabilities can play.

Khalil Dale MBE – 2013 winner

Khalil Dale MBE was a British Red Cross aid worker who was abducted and killed in Pakistan in 2012.

Khalil Rhasjed Dale was born Kenneth Robin Dale in York but changed his name to Khalil when he became a Muslim.

A caring and compassionate man, he became a nurse – like his mother – working initially as a casualty nurse at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. He went on to become a medic on a North Sea oil rig before studying at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

In 1981, he joined the Red Cross and began a career of humanitarian work overseas – much of it for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. His first posting was to Kenya where he was involved in distributing food and improving the health of people affected by severe drought.

This was followed by many years in some of the most dangerous places in the world – war zones and famine regions – including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia where Khalil was responsible for food distribution, healthcare and development projects, which benefitted tens of thousands of people.

It was for his humanitarian work in Somalia that Khalil was awarded the MBE in 1994, which he received from Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace.

He returned to Dumfries in 1998 to care for his mother. While back in Scotland, he continued to help others, working as a nurse and for Turning Point Scotland – a charity dealing with alcohol addictions and drug and mental health problems.

At the beginning of 2011, Khalil left Dumfries to take up what would be his last post with a Red Cross programme in Quetta, Pakistan, providing healthcare and physical rehabilitation to people wounded in conflict.

Khalil's brother Ian said his brother would have been humbled by such recognition.

He added: "Khalil had a deep affinity with Scotland and, to him, Scotland was always his home so he would have been delighted to be named winner of the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award.

"Khalil very much saw himself as someone who just got on with his job wherever that happened to be and he would have been very humbled by this accolade, which is testament to the lives he changed and the legacy he leaves behind.

Karen Graham – 2012 winner

Karen Graham, a Scottish nurse working within the Oil Clinic in Tripoli, Libya won the 2012 award in recognition of her humanitarian efforts to care for patients – with little regard for her own personal safety – during the Libyan civil war conflict.

Originally from Clydebank, Karen took up a nursing position in Tripoli in November 2010, quickly being promoted to matron/nursing services manager within the 130 bed district hospital, which is also known as the 11th June Clinic.

In August 2011 the hospital became the centre of trauma medicine during the Libyan civil war conflict. With its proximity to a NATO target area the hospital became caught up in the conflict, with the building sustaining substantial damage.

Despite gunfire and shells raining down on the city, and putting their own lives at risk on a daily basis, Karen and two other British nurses chose to remain at the hospital, continuing to administer care to their patients. Karen's dedication epitomised humanitarian work in action and is an inspiration to others.

On winning, Karen said: "I'm just a nurse doing a job I love and that doesn't change when you suddenly have to deal with civil war and heavy fighting in the vicinity of the hospital which resulted in us caring for the casualties of the conflict rather than the oil workers we were used to looking after. I'm really glad I stayed."

Linda Norgrove – 2011 winner

The 2011 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award was given posthumously to Scottish aid worker Linda Norgrove who died on 8 October 2010 during a US military-led rescue mission to free her from Afghanistani captors. Linda was given the award in recognition of her humanitarian work in Afghanistan.

Linda was kidnapped on 26 September 2010 while working on the development of agricultural projects in unstable areas of Afghanistan's Kunar province. She was Regional Director for American-based aid organisation Development Alternatives Inc (DAI).

Born in Altnaharra, Sutherland, in 1974, Linda grew up on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland's Western Isles. Linda was a highly qualified environmental expert who joined the World Wildlife Fund in Peru in 2002, working on poverty reduction, conservation and protecting indigenous communities and their rights. Between 2005 and 2008 she worked with the United Nations on environmentally sustainable development projects in Afghanistan. Linda worked with the UN in Laos for over a year before returning to Afghanistan in February 2010 with DAI.

Linda's parents John and Lorna Norgrove – who collected the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award on her behalf – set up the Linda Norgrove Foundation in her memory. The Foundation aims to continue Linda's good work, offering education, health and childcare to women and children affected by the war in Afghanistan.

Habib Malik – 2010 winner

Born in Pakistan, Habib Malik came to Scotland at the age of 18, reportedly unable to speak a word of English. However he quickly fell in love with the country and its language, graduating with a masters degree in Chemistry. After working with Imperial Chemical Industries in Dumfries for two years he took over the family motor trade business, before establishing a scrapyards in Aberdeen.

Renowned for his desire to see an end to poverty, friends encouraged him to apply for a post with Islamic Relief, an international charity that aims to alleviate the suffering of the world's poorest people. Habib has held the position of Scotland Manager of the Disasters Emergency Committee within Islamic Relief since 2003.

His work has taken him all over the world, to countless tragic and desperate scenes that require the care, love and dedication of people to help ease sorrow of victims. Habib has seen firsthand the destruction that followed the 2004 tsunami in south-east Asia, earthquakes in Kashmir and Iran, the 2007 cyclone in Bangladesh, and bombings in Gaza and Lebanon.

He says: "I have witnessed much suffering in my work as an Islamic Relief aid worker but I have been greatly blessed by seeing wonderful results of people's lives being transformed by the love and physical aid they have received."

As well as being given the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award in 2010, Habib received the Scottish Asian Business 'Community Award' in 2011 and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Scottish Young Muslims in 2008. Habib Malik is now a member of the judging panel for the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award.

Guy Willoughby – 2009 winner

Along with the late Colin Campbell Mitchell, Guy Willoughby – a former Coldstream Guard and Corinthian amateur jockey – founded The Halo Trust in 1988 at the age of 28. Specialising in removing war debris, The Halo Trust is the world's oldest and largest humanitarian landmine clearance organisation, having destroyed more than 1.4 million landmines and 52 million bullets to date.

Guy and Colin spent two years developing the concept of providing civilian mine clearance as an act of humanity for two years prior to establishing the Trust in 1988 while in Kabul. The Trust was founded with the mission statement: 'Getting mines out of the ground, now'.

The Halo Trust now has 8,000 staff working around the world clearing landmines and unexploded bombs as an act of charity. Missions have been carried out in countries such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, Chechnya, Kosovo, Sri Lanka and Colombia. Assessment missions have also been conducted in mine-impacted countries such as Bosnia, Lebanon, Vietnam, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tajikistan.

The global headquarters for The Halo Trust is based at Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. In August 2011 American actress Angelina Jolie visited the headquarters at Thornhill. Jolie and her partner actor Brad Pitt are long-standing supporters of The Halo Trust.

Guy was presented with the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award in 2009 by Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond. Guy Willoughby, who is CEO of The Halo Trust, is now a member of the judging panel for the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award.

Jonathan Kaplan – 2008 winner

Born in South Africa, Jonathan Kaplan is a hospital surgeon and author who has become a renowned humanitarian aid surgeon. After studying medicine at Cape Town University, in London and Boston, Jonathan volunteered with a humanitarian aid agency, being stationed behind the Kurdish frontline in the early 1990s. He has since enlisted on a number of charitable missions to conflict and war zones around the world, from Eritrea and Angola to Mozambique, Burma and Baghdad.

At the heart of Jonathan's work is his ability to help innocent people who have become the victims of the atrocities of war. His experiences led him to write two books – *The Dressing Station* (2001) and *Contact Wounds* (2006) – which give graphic detail of working in extreme conditions and performing surgery in the most horrific conditions while battling his own fatigue. He has also produced and directed television documentaries for Channel 4.

His father and mother were both doctors – his father was an army surgeon at El Alamein who later volunteered in Israel. Jonathan lives in London where he works as a surgeon and GP for the NHS, though he remains on standby to go to war zones. He is also much in demand to train medics on frontline healthcare and is a member of the Faculty of Conflict and Catastrophe Medicine in London.

Jonathan Kaplan received the 2008 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award – actor and UNICEF ambassador Ewan McGregor and founder of the Ozanam Clubs for disabled young people James Lynch were also shortlisted that year.

Adi Roche – 2007 winner

Adi Roche is a campaigner for peace, humanitarian aid, education and justice. Born in Co Tipperary, Ireland, she founded the Irish-based charity Chernobyl Children International (CCI) in 1991, providing aid to the children of Belarus, Western Russia and Ukraine. She founded the charity after receiving a fax from doctors in the Chernobyl area reading 'SOS appeal. For god's sake, help us to get the children out'.

The fax was sent five years after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster – when most people assumed the danger was over. Since its formation CCI has delivered more than 91 million Euros to the areas most affected by the nuclear disaster and has brought more than 22,000 children to Ireland for essential medical treatment through the Rest and Recuperation Programme, with terminally ill children being cared for at the late Paul Newman's therapeutic recreation centre in Co Kildare.

After working for Irish airline Aer Lingus for a number of years, Adi took redundancy to become a full-time volunteer for the Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It was while working here that she received the Chernobyl fax.

In 1990 Adi became the first Irish woman elected to the Board of Directors of the International Peace Bureau in Geneva. She has since worked extensively with the United Nations and in 2006, marking the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, she was asked to sit on the organising committee for the International Chernobyl Conference in Minsk.

Today, Adi continues to be Chief Executive of Chernobyl Children International. As well as the 2007 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, she has received the European Person of the Year (1996), Irish Person of the Year (1996), European Woman Laureate Award (2002), and Health Award at the World of Children Award (2010).

Marla Ruzicka – 2006 winner

Marla Ruzicka died at the age of 28, having been killed by a car bomb in Baghdad on 16 April 2005. The young woman was a passionate relief worker who founded CIVIC, the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict.

The 2006 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award was presented posthumously to American-born Marla's sister Jill Leighton, who travelled from Los Angeles to Scotland to collect the award on her behalf.

Born in Lakeport, California, Marla attended Long Island University. She first went to Afghanistan while working for Global Exchange, an international human rights organisation. In 2003 she founded CIVIC, an organisation that counted civilian casualties and assisted Iraqi victims of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

Before her death, Marla had successfully lobbied the US Government through Senator Patrick Leahy to provide much needed medical, vocational and other forms of assistance for Afghan and Iraqi families and communities harmed as a result of the US and coalition military operations.

To date, CIVIC has conducted research and advocacy which has led directly to NATO approving its first compensation policy for Afghan war victims. Working with Senator Leahy and the US Congress, it has also created the first ever livelihood assistance programmes for civilians harmed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan - \$166 million has been secured for these programmes so far.

Pius Ncube – 2005 winner

His Grace the Most Reverend Dr Pius Ncube served as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, until 2007. He has long been a gallant advocate for human rights in his home country, being an outspoken critic of President Robert Mugabe, demanding that his government address increasing food and economic crises, and put an end to widespread torture and rape.

Archbishop Ncube, a member of Zimbabwe's minority Ndebele ethnic group, has received many death threats for his human rights activities. In 2003 he received a Human Rights Award from Human Rights First for speaking out against torture and confronting the Mugabe government for allegedly starving some regions of Zimbabwe for political reasons. He has gone to great lengths to gather evidence of human rights abuses, to the danger of his own life.

Pius Ncube was trained by Jesuits in the former Rhodesia for seven years, then studied in Rome for two years before returning to his homeland in the 1970s, at the height of independence war. He has witnessed – and spoken out against – brutality under President Mugabe's government since the 1980s when the president was involved in armed struggle against the Ndebele.

Archbishop Ncube was presented with the 2005 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award at a ceremony held in Culzean Castle. On receiving the award, he dedicated it to Zimbabweans who are persecuted in their country.

He said: "I feel from the bottom my heart that I don't deserve this award but I accept it on behalf of those in Zimbabwe whose suffering is unabated and whose struggle continues."

Clive Stafford Smith – 2004 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award winner

Clive Stafford Smith is a British-born lawyer who specialises in civil rights and the death penalty in the USA. Awarded the OBE in 2000 for 'humanitarian services in the legal field', he returned to live in the UK in 2004, taking up the post of Legal Director of the UK branch of the human rights not-for-profit charity Reprieve which he founded.

To date, Clive has represented more than 300 prisoners facing the death penalty in the southern United States. He has also helped secure the release of 65 prisoners from Guantanamo Bay – including every British prisoner – and continues to act on behalf of 15 more.

Born in Cambridge, he studied journalism at the University of North Carolina before enrolling in Columbia University's Law School in New York. He worked as a lawyer for nine years with the Southern Center for Human Rights, working on behalf of death penalty cases and other civil rights issues, before moving to New Orleans where he launched the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Center, a non-profit law office specialising in the representation of poor people in death penalty cases.

Reprieve uses the law to enforce the human rights of prisoners. The organisation now has 25 full-time staff in London, five Fellows in the USA, two Fellows in Pakistan and many volunteers around the world.

As well as receiving the 2004 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, Clive Stafford Smith has been awarded the Gandhi International Peace Award (2005), and the International Bar Association's Human Rights Award (2010).

Yitzhak Frankenthal – 2003 winner

Yitzhak Frankenthal became a Middle Eastern peace activist after his son Arik was abducted and killed by the Hamas while serving as a soldier in the Israeli army. He founded the Parents Circle – Families Forum, which has grown into an organisation of more than 500 Israeli and Palestinian bereaved families who are calling for reconciliation and peace, rather than revenge.

Following the death of his son in July 1994, Yitzhak, a former businessman, trawled through decades of news reports to find the names of Israeli parents whose children had been killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He brought bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families together at Gaza, a meeting that resulted in the Families Forum. The Forum aims to bring comfort to bereaved Israeli parents, Palestinians and Jews, who have lost children either during army service or due to acts of terrorism.

In 2004 Yitzhak founded the Arik Institute for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace – the organisation's work includes media outreach, and bringing Palestinian speakers to talk to Israeli youth preparing for military service. The Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace superseded the Arik Institute when it was established in 2009 by singer Leonard Cohen. Cohen had performed a concert in Israel to honour 400 bereaved Palestinians and Israelis who had lost family members in the conflict. He was so inspired by these people that he donated the proceeds from the concert to establish the Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace.

Yitzhak, who received the 2003 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, holds the position of Executive Director of the Fund for Reconciliation, Tolerance and Peace.

Sir John E Sulston – 2002 winner

The first ever recipient of the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, Sir John E Sulston is a British biologist who has dedicated his life to biological research. He played a central role in the human genome sequencing project and jointly received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2002.

Sir John graduated from Cambridge University where he completed his PhD on the chemical synthesis of DNA. He then studied prebiotic chemistry in America. On returning to the UK he joined the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge where he studied the biology and genetics of the nematode worm – his team collaborated with Washington University to sequence the genome of this model organism.

In 1992 Sir John became the founding Director of the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in Cambridgeshire, which made the UK's contribution to the international Human Genome Project. The Institute was launched with 15 staff working from temporary laboratories but now has a 900-strong workforce and state-of-the-art buildings.

Though he stood down as Director in 2000, following the completion of the draft human genome sequence, he continued to work on the Sanger Centre's contribution to the human genome until 2003. Sir John received his knighthood for services to genome research in the 2001 New Year's Honours. He holds a role at the Human Genetics Commission and is Chairman of the Institute for Science, Ethics and Innovation at the University of Manchester. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society and an Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge.