



Lion Hilary Lister "Woman of Achievement" Award



A quadriplegic yachtswoman who this year became the first disabled woman to sail solo around Great Britain has been named the Woman of Achievement 2009 by a national charity. Lion Hilary Lister, 37, from Kent, won the accolade at a gala award ceremony organised by national charity Vitalise, which provides essential respite breaks and other services for disabled people and carers. Vitalise said it chose Hilary for the award in recognition of her inspirational work pioneering disabled sailing and her record breaking yachting achievements.

In 2005 Hilary became the first ever quadriplegic person to sail solo across the English Channel. Then in 2007, became the first female quadriplegic to circumnavigate the Isle of Wight. But her greatest achievement to date was on August 31 this year, when she became the first disabled woman to sail solo around Great Britain.

Lion Hilary said: I'm completely overwhelmed to receive this award. There are so many talented women here today that to be singled out is really humbling. This award is special to me because it's from Vitalise. They are all about empowering disabled people. I've spent my whole career saying we need to take the 'dis' out of disability. Sailing has provided me with fresh hope and a real sense of freedom that I never thought I would feel again. I hope my voyage will generate awareness of disabled sailing and inspire fellow sufferers to fulfill their own ambitions.

Vitalise's 26th annual Women of the Year Awards event was presented by Arti Halai, formerly of ITV's Central News and took place at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel, on Friday. Proceeds from the event were donated directly to Vitalise, which is set to make more than 20,000 from the event. Over the past 26 years, the awards have raised about 500,000 for Vitalise.

Sophie Cox, Vitalise's head of events, said: Congratulations to Hilary for her incredible achievements. At Vitalise we want to enrich the lives of disabled people by helping them achieve their personal goals, and Hilary is a fantastic example of that spirit. I'd also like to thank the thousands of women who have supported this event over the years. Their generosity has helped us to continue providing life-changing opportunities for thousands of disabled people like Hilary each year. This event raises thousands of pounds of important funds annually for Vitalise and my organisation is very pleased to be associated with it and the role of raising awareness of the outstanding achievements of women like Hilary.

Vitalise provides short breaks for disabled people and carers, with 24-hour nursing care on-call and personal support, at four accessible Centres in Essex, Nottingham, Southampton and Southport. A fifth centre in Cornwall provides accessible activity breaks for groups. For more information visit www.vitalise.org.uk.

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