



“We believe we are the only awards dedicated solely to recognising and celebrating the outstanding achievements of the young people of Britain”

-Blanche Sainsbury

Written by Alula Hart, Journalist/Blogger

National awards celebrating the bravest, most courageous and exceptional in society, are not unfamiliar with the general public. They play a role in highlighting those special people who deserve the public's commendation. For example, a series of Pride/Community awards were launched across Wales and South West England by Blanche Sainsbury in 2008, awards which went on to become an annual celebration. With the 2019 launch of The Child of Wales Awards, founded by Sainsbury herself, it has become apparent that an event solely recognising the outstanding achievements of children and young people was needed. The awards introduce us to children and young people who have shown strength in the face of adversity, whilst simultaneously raising money for extraordinary causes and charities. On the back of the success of the Child of Wales Awards, Sainsbury founded the Child of Britain Awards, sponsored by I Saw it First and to be held in June 2022, to further demonstrate the remarkable work of children up and down the UK. The awards are continuing to seek nominations for children and young people who have made a real difference. To nominate a child who you think deserves national recognition, go to www.childofbritain.com/nominate.

The awards are due to be held in a different city in the UK every year, travelling the length and breadth of the country to spotlight children and young people from all different walks of life. There are 13 separate categories the children can be nominated

for, including personal courage, bravery, sporting, and creative achievements. Also celebrated are young people who contribute to their communities, care for others, fundraise or undertake environmental activism. Children who strive to make a positive difference for those around them, and those who face personal challenges in their own lives and tackle them with incredible bravery, are who these awards are for. The winners may be invited to Downing Street, as the Child of Wales winners were, as a memorable opportunity for the children.

One need only to go to the Child of Wales website (www.nationalchildrenofwalesawards.org) to see the inspirational stories of 2020's Child of Wales winners, and recognise the achievements of young people who are headlining these awards. The 2020 Child of Courage Winner from the 13-18 years category was Abi Phillips, a 15-year-old who lives with an undiagnosed muscle disorder. Abi raised money for charity with her Zumbathon, showing adults everywhere how getting up and moving can raise money for a worthy cause! The Child of Courage under 13 years winner was McKenzie John, who was diagnosed with malignant cancer and had to undergo intensive treatment and chemotherapy from a young age, an understandably devastating experience for any child and their family. The Child of Wales and Britain Awards are a platform for inspiring children such as Abi and McKenzie to receive the recognition they deserve, and future awards intend to follow this precedent.

Reading through the Child of Britain Facebook page, one can find a plethora of featured stories of children and young people who have faced challenges so early on in life. Going through the Facebook page, the Child of Britain's work with the charity Dreams & Wishes highlights a charity that deserves far more recognition. Since it's set up in 2011, Dreams & Wishes has helped families across the UK by providing support and care for children with serious illnesses. Ensuring that children have the most fun possible in such challenging times is a priority for Dreams & Wishes, who organise unique and wonderful experiences for the children to make lasting memories for them. Their "Young Ambassadors" include children who have faced significant battles in their life, and allow them to share their stories with others. Amongst these Ambassadors include Macsen Giess, an 11 year old boy from South Wales who was diagnosed with Leukaemia in 2011 and underwent chemotherapy. Thanks to Dreams & Wishes, Macsen has ridden in a Ferrari, flown in a helicopter and had other fantastic experiences throughout the summer! The charity is undoubtedly doing meaningful work each and every day for special and deserving children. You can regularly donate, give a one-off donation, donate an item for a fundraising auction, or donate a wish / experience for a child here: <https://www.dreamsandwishescharity.org/ways-to-donate/>

Beneficiary charities for the last Child of Wales Awards included the NSPCC, Teenage Cancer Trust, and Dreams & Wishes. The money raised went to children and young people most deserving and in need of the money. Annual events like the Child of Britain Awards aim to raise even more money for them. I Saw It First, a retail company, has been named the headline sponsor and are already developing their branding to incorporate the event. There will no doubt be extensive coverage of the winners' stories, bringing to the forefront children and young people who go that extra mile.

Not only are individual children celebrated through the awards, but community events are also to be honoured. Also on the Child of Britain's Facebook page is a link to the Acorns Children's Hospice fundraising article, whereby the local children's hospice in Walsall raised an incredible £2 million from the community to save their hospice. So many more examples of communities coming together with the help and support of young people at its heart need to be given a voice at the Child of Britain Awards!

The Child of Britain Awards, along with the Child of Wales Awards, have unfortunately had to be postponed due the Coronavirus pandemic. While founder Blanche Sainsbury notes this "disappointment", she also acknowledges how "absolutely overwhelming [it has been] to have received the support of our sponsors and supporters and we are thrilled that everyone has been so kind and understanding", and went on to say how "the support of our sponsors enabled us to give funds to the charities we are supporting before the event took place as we felt it was now more than ever, they needed the funds." It was wonderful to hear that the Awards have already received lots of nominations of children and young people who deserve the opportunity to be recognised for their amazing achievements. As the only national awards dedicated to honouring children and young people for their inspirational efforts, the Child of Britain Awards are a much-needed celebration of strength and success, guaranteeing an emotional night for all involved.

