

Strictly under embargo until 16:00 (GMT) on 8th December 2022

CELEBRATING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS - 2022 EVERYWOMAN AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

UK's leading awards programme introduces the eight inspirational women

8 December 2022: Eight extraordinary women from across the country have been unveiled as the 2022 winners in the UK's leading programme for female entrepreneurs. Now in their 20th year **the everywoman Awards**, in association with BGF, provide a platform and spotlight for incredible women in business to build their confidence and inspire the next generation of female entrepreneurs, whilst facilitating powerful introductions to business mentors, commercial relationships, and investors.

From the founders of multi-million-pound empires to those spearheading social enterprises for the greater good, this year's winners were selected from nearly a thousand entries, and span multiple industries including construction, beauty, technology, drinks, fashion, and medical.

The **everywoman of the Year Award** was presented to **Gill Riley, founder of GGR Group, from Haddenham**. Founded in 2003, GGR is a specialist lifting company which has the largest mini crane and vacuum lifting fleet in the UK. They offer over 500 types of lifting equipment to the UK and Europe, including the world's first Electric Telehandler in line with their commitment to sustainability. Gill started her career as the youngest female sales rep working for electrical wholesaler City Electrical Factors, before founding GGR Group with her brother. From an initial investment of £5,000, this family run business has transformed into a £28 million global success, on track to hit £33 million this year, with 150 employees across three UK locations. As one of the top managing directors in the construction industry, Gill has contributed to changing the perception of a highly male-dominated industry and built GGR's reputation over nearly two decades; offering best in class service, equipment, technical expertise and working on notable projects including HS2 and The Shard.

The 2022 category award winners are:

- **ARTEMIS** - awarded to the most inspirational woman running a business trading from 18 months to 3 years:

Abigail Read, Merwave, from Newcastle. Former marketer Abigail founded Merwave in February 2020, just weeks before COVID brought the UK to a standstill and all whilst two months pregnant, caring for her two-year-old toddler and juggling a 9 to 5 job. The time poor but relentlessly passionate entrepreneur was on a mission to create products specifically for the 60% of UK women with wavy hair who, like herself, were frustrated that the only products on the market were for curly hair, and they were just too heavy. From humble origins, packing orders in her garage Merwave quickly expanded, boasting a £100,000 net profit in the first year of trading. At the age of 30 and less than two years after launching Merwave, Abigail is forecasting over a million pounds turnover a year and good growth.

- **DEMETER** - sponsored by Nutriment - awarded to the most inspirational woman running a business trading from 3 to 5 years:

Rebecca Crawforth, Navy™ Professional, from Yorkshire. The brand was founded in 2018 to supply a new standard of tooling and an innovative hygiene system into the professional beauty industry. Rebecca's products are exported to 93 different countries, with over 200,000 orders to date and are stocked in selective retailers including Browns in London. Navy's tools not only last over three years, unlike other industry tooling which lasts three months on average before rusting, but Navy also provide sharpening services to prolong their tools and cut down on the industry's 16 million tools that go to landfill every year. Earlier this year Rebecca launched Salon Rated, the first regulated UK directory of hair and beauty salons which are insured, certified, and evidenced to follow exceptional professional services. After leaving school with no formal education, Rebecca opened her own salon at the age of 19 and went on to own a chain that she sold in 2015 after discovering she had a rare brain condition and needed lifesaving surgery. As an industry which is stereotyped as a 'high school dropout' career choice, Rebecca is driven to prove that the beauty industry should not be undervalued. Being only marginally behind motor trade regarding economy input and providing sustainable employment for over 600,000 people in the UK - one in every 60 jobs - the beauty industry is a powerhouse that grows year on year.¹

- **ATHENA - sponsored by BGF** - awarded to the most inspirational woman running a business trading from 6 to 9 years:

Suzy Dean, AddIn365, from Watford. Suzy founded the business in 2015 as a young female CEO of 28 years old, entirely self-funded by her life savings of £26,000. AddIn365 is a software product company focusing on the digital employee experience. They deliver tools to enhance employee collaboration and communication, supported by AI technology, that is crucial in the hybrid workplace. After winning global contracts with WPP Group, Wincanton, St James' Place, Wales and West Utilities and AstraZeneca to name a few, there are now 453,900 people in 136 countries using AddIn365 products. But the male dominated digital world was difficult to navigate; male peers openly dismissed her as a young female CEO and even turned their backs at events to stop her joining conversations. Despite the frosty welcome, Suzy persevered. She had her son when AddIn365 was two, taking only three days off in hospital, then continued building the business with babe in arms. During her second pregnancy in 2021 she grew her business by 47%, bringing 16 new products to market and made her first million in profit. With Suzy's focus on making an impact, her workforce is over 50% BAME and 45% female, consciously hiring and retraining from outside the industry to close the skills gap and gender stereotypes that she experienced.

- **HERA - sponsored by Saunderson House** - awarded to the most inspirational woman running a business trading for 10 years or more:

Elizabeth Colleran, Duvalay, from Dewsbury. Co-founded in 2004, Duvalay is a disruptor of the sleep market through its range of innovative patented products, including the famous Duvalay Sleeping Bag which secured investment on BBC's Dragons' Den. When the business started, Elizabeth was looking after five children, three of her own and two that were under her care after a close friend passed away. To save costs, she purchased a caravan for family holidays but suffered with insomnia and back pain from the uncomfortable bed. This experience set in motion the creation of an innovative, superior, comfort-enhancing mattress topper that would serve millions of caravaners - Duvalay's portable memory foam was born. With no money for marketing, she designed an advert for the Caravan Club's 400,000 membership and the calls started rolling in. Duvalay has soared to success, providing sustainable employment to 85 people, expanding

¹ [British Beauty Council report](#)

their market across Europe, signing a ground-breaking licensing deal with Chinese manufacturers Shubert, and launching the Duvalay sleeping bag into e-mart, the largest retailer in South Korea. During lockdown Elizabeth also launched the company's bestselling EasySleep (mattress in a box collection) made from recycled bottles, that has generated over £2.5m and has helped the company go from a £4m to £8m turnover in just two years.

- **GAIA** - awarded to the most inspirational female founder who has combined strong community benefit with a sustainable business model:

Michelle John, PEGS, from Shrewsbury. PEGS (Parental Education Growth Support) launched its services in 2020; a social enterprise which focuses on Child to Parent Abuse (CPA). In two years, Michelle has come to be regarded as one of the UK's foremost voices in the campaign to raise awareness of, and reduce the impact of, CPA. PEGS has supported over 3,000 parents, carers and guardians who have described it as a 'lifeline'. One parent is killed at the hands of their child every 19 days in England and Wales, and the prevalence of CPA is thought to effect 3% of UK households, although it is traditionally under reported and under recorded. Michelle has trained police forces, local councils, charities, social care teams, regional Women's Aid organisations, church officials and many others on how to react to CPA empathetically and effectively. PEGS also set up the CPA Covenant in partnership with the Department of Works & Pensions to help employers introduce practices and policies for affected staff after finding 70% of those parents experiencing CPA had either left work altogether or reduced their hours as a result. Michelle has worked directly with the Home Office, writing a section about CPA in the Domestic Abuse Act statutory framework guidance documents, the first time this type of abuse has ever been included in such an act. Michelle has an unwavering commitment to reduce the barriers to access support, hence why all PEGS services for parents are free and will remain so forever.

- **APHRODITE** - sponsored by The Daily Mail - awarded to a woman who founded her business whilst raising a child/children aged 12 or under:

Freya Rose Archer, Freya Rose London, from Southsea. The British luxury shoe and jewellery designer was founded in 2010 by Freya, who was a single mother of a one-year-old at the time. Inheriting her entrepreneurial spirit from her mother and benefitting from a £3,000 loan from The Prince's Trust, Freya organically grew her business into a multi-six-figure-enterprise without external investment, increased turnover by 400% in the last financial year, doubled her in-house team and gained international recognition as an ambassador for the Prince's Trust 'Women Supporting Women' initiative. The brand's global appeal has seen Freya's designs worn by style icons Kate Moss, Rihanna, Olivia Palermo, and the Princess of Wales. Renowned for her signature and unique Mother of Pearl accessories, Freya advocates for slow-fashion and preserves indigenous craftsmanship, working alongside the same family run business of skilled shoe courtiers in Spain and artisan jewellers from Bali who use traditional techniques to create her exquisite designs. Freya Rose London has launched a retail concession in the heart of Chelsea London and digital presence with world renowned Harvey Nichols.

- **BRAND OF THE FUTURE** - sponsored by The White Company - for a female founder of a business that demonstrates great potential for growth:

Laura Riches and Laura Rosenberger, Laylo, from London. The luxury boxed wine brand was founded in 2020 and in two short years the brand has built a cult following of customers and critics who have discovered that boxed wine is a smarter and more sustainable way to drink without compromising on taste. The founders met at Naked Wines, the UK's largest direct-to-

customer wine brand where they were COO and Marketing Director. With Laylo, they are redefining boxed wines by sourcing incredible wines and pairing them with boxes you would be proud to have on your countertop. Boxed wine stays fresh for six weeks from opening (unlike bottles) making them perfect for enjoying just a glass.

Speaking about the winners, **Maxine Benson MBE, co-founder of everywoman comments:** “For the past 20 years these awards have provided a platform to share the stories of hundreds of entrepreneurs; encouraging, emboldening, and empowering other women to follow suit. We are thrilled to celebrate the winners’ success and hope their experiences will go onto inspire others and provide the motivation that will strengthen the backbone of the UK’s economy.”

BGF, the UK and Ireland’s most active growth capital investor, is associate partner for the everywoman Awards’ 20th anniversary. Having been named the most active investor in women-led businesses by the ScaleUp Institute for the last three years, BGF has invested £390 million in companies with at least one female founder since 2011.

Daina Spedding, investor at BGF and everywoman judge, said: “It’s been fantastic to support the everywoman awards in its 20th year and to shine a light on such an inspiring and diverse group of business leaders.”

“The women recognised by these awards span a variety of sectors, regions and growth stages and they provide an incredible snapshot of the talent that is driving forward business success in this country. We look forward to hearing much more from them as they continue to scale.”

The 2022 winners were chosen by a judging panel comprising some of the UK’s top business figures including Daina Spedding (investor at BGF), Chrissie Rucker OBE (Founder, The White Company), Rosaleen Blair CBE (Founder, Alexander Mann Solutions), Sam Smith (Founder, FinnCap), Annoushka Ducas MBE (Annoushka Jewellery), Helen Pattinson (Co-founder, Montezuma’s Chocolate), Roni Savage (Founder, Jomas Associates) and Melissa Odabash MBE.

For further information about the winners visit: www.everywoman.com/ewawards

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Notes to editors:

About everywoman - Powering businesses to achieve their gender inclusion goals

everywoman is a global membership organisation for women in business that drives positive change by empowering women to achieve their professional potential. Established in 1999, everywoman works with leading corporations and organisations, improving productivity and performance through its membership offering and unique tailored blend of products and services which unlock female potential and powers businesses to accelerate their gender inclusion goals. As part of its portfolio, everywoman’s cross-industry awards and forums have created thousands of female role models and inspired generations of future leaders. For more information visit www.everywoman.com

About BGF

BGF was set up in 2011 and has invested £3bn in more than 500 companies, making it the most active investor in the UK. BGF is a minority, non-controlling equity partner with a patient outlook on investments based on shared long-term goals with the management teams it backs. BGF invests in growing businesses in the UK and Ireland through its network of 16 offices. BGF models have now been set up in Canada and Australia, with other countries evaluating the opportunity to replicate this.

BGF has been named the most active institutional investor in women-led businesses for the last three years by the ScaleUp Institute. Since 2011, BGF has invested £390 million in women-led businesses and provided £63 million of follow-on funding.