



Press Release – For Immediate Release

SIENA CASTELLON FROM LONDON HONOURED AT SHINE A LIGHT AWARDS FOR HER COMMITMENT TO CHAMPIONING CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION

Siena Castellon has been highly commended in the **Young Person of the Year Award** category at an awards ceremony in London for her sheer dedication and determination in improving the communication skills of children and young people in the capital. The **2018 Shine a Light Awards**, run by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust, took place on 22nd March 2018 and were hosted by stand-up comedian, actor and TV writer, Adam Hess.

The Shine a Light Awards is a national awards scheme that celebrates innovative work and excellent practice in supporting children and young people's communication development. There were 10 awards in total, with winners and highly-commended finalists chosen by a panel of experts in the sector.

Siena, aged 15, is autistic, dyslexic and dyspraxic. After severe bullying forced her to move secondary school on two occasions, Siena drew on her experiences to become an influential young figure in children's communication development.

At just 13 years of age, spotting the lack of online assistance available for young people, Siena designed and created www.QLMentoring.com, a website to support and mentor children with autism and other disabilities. Since then, she has written various articles to address communication issues related to autism.

As a Peer Outreach Worker with the Education and Youth Team of the Greater London Authority, Siena is part of a group of young people who shape and influence the Mayor of London's policies, focusing on strategies and services that impact on the City's young people. Siena is particularly focused on working with charities and organisations that support young people with disabilities, such as United Response, Whizz Kidz and the Camden Society.

She is passionate about raising awareness and acceptance of autism in the wider community. She is taking a multi-platform approach by conducting autism research at University College London's (UCL) Centre for Research in Autism and Education, advising UCL on how to improve the services and support provided to their current and prospective ASD students and being the student representative of 2eMPOWER, an organisation that aims to support academically gifted students with disabilities to excel in STEM.

As if that wasn't enough, Siena recently gave a speech on inclusion at City Hall in celebration of International Women's Day. She was also recently selected to be a member of the Diana Award National Anti-bullying Youth Board, responsible for representing the voices of thousands of anti-bullying ambassadors throughout the UK. She hopes to use her new role as a platform to tackle SEN-related bullying in schools.

In addition to all her community projects, Siena is an exceptional student who got A*s in her Pearson IGCSE Exdecel exams in maths, physics, chemistry and biology at the age of 14. She hopes her achievements demonstrate that with the right intervention, support, dedication and hardwork, learning disabilities do not have to limit your dreams and aspirations.

Siena said: "Thank you to Pearson and The Communication Trust for recognising and shining a light on my commitment to raising awareness and acceptance of autism and my commitment to supporting young people with disabilities. I am extremely honoured to have had my efforts recognised. I am now more motivated than ever to use my voice to change the landscape so that autistic children and children with learning disabilities are better understood and have happy, fulfilling and enriching childhoods."

Stand-up comedian and actor, Adam Hess, host of the 2018 Shine a Light Awards, said: "Siena's dedication is outstanding. As a child, I struggled greatly with dyslexia and an immense fear of public speaking, if it wasn't for the support I received when I was younger I wouldn't be in the position I am today. It is fantastic to know that people like Siena are supporting other children and young people, enabling them to thrive and achieve their goals. Siena should be very proud of her success."

Sharon Hague, Senior Vice President, Schools, Pearson, said: "Our warmest congratulations to Siena for her success in the Young Person of the Year Award category. Through our innovative clinical assessments, Pearson is committed to supporting those working to help people overcome challenges in speech and language. For six years we have run these awards as we believe it is so important to recognise and celebrate the incredible, but often unsung, work being done across the country to change the lives of children and young people by helping them to develop their communications skills."

Octavia Holland, Director of The Communication Trust, said: "Congratulations to Siena and everyone who triumphed at the 2018 Shine a Light Awards. They have shown what can be achieved when expertise, enthusiasm and dedication is given to children and young people who struggle to communicate. These awards highlight the very best practice that is taking place in settings across the country."

The **Shine a Light Awards** have grown in popularity since their launch during the National Year of Communication in 2011 (known as the *Hello* campaign). To date, the awards have celebrated the work of over 120 teams and a wide range of individuals, including young people with severe and complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

For further information about the Shine a Light winners and highly-commended finalists, visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #awards_SAL

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For further information

For more information, or to arrange interviews, please contact Lisa Church and Laura Smith at Consilium Communications by contacting lchurch@consiliumcommunications.co.uk / 07467 945661 or lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk / 07467 945848.

Notes to editors

The full list of winners and highly commended finalists is as follows:

Award	Winner	Highly Commended	Commended
The Katie Rough Memorial Award	Libby Hill, Utttoxeter	Rachel Peck, Cambridgeshire	
Child/Young Person of the Year Award	Jonathan Bryan, Wiltshire	Siena Castellon, London	
Communication Champion of the Year Award	Pip St John, Lancashire		
Youth Justice of the Year Award	Manchester Youth Justice, Manchester		
Early Years Setting of the Year Award	Children's House Nursery School, London	Juice Nursery Ltd, Altrincham	
Primary School of the Year Award	Pendle Primary Academy, Lancashire	Longmoor Community Primary, Merseyside	Bridgewater Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne
Secondary School/College of the Year Award	Isaac Newton Academy, London	London South East Colleges, London	
SEN School/Group of the Year Award	Pontville School, Lancashire	The William Henry Smith School, West Yorkshire	
SLCN Innovation of the Year Award	Stoke Speaks Out		
Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award	Stoke Speaks Out		

About the Shine a Light Awards

- The Shine a Light Awards are sponsored and organised by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust, a coalition of over 50 organisations dedicated to supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication.
- The Awards are designed to promote and celebrate good practice in speech, language and communication for individuals, groups and settings that work with children and young people, particularly those with SLCN.
- The awards form part of the legacy of the National Year of Communication (*Hello* campaign) and have become a key event in the speech, language and communication and healthcare calendar.
- The judges involved in the 2018 Shine a Light Awards were:
 - Bob Reitemeier, CEO of I CAN
 - Diz Minnitt, Speech and Language Lead, Association of YOT Managers (AYM)
 - Hilary Berry, Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Primary Heads' Association
 - Janet Cooper, Early Language and Communication Strategy Lead at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and past Shine a Light Award winner
 - John Parrott, Chair of Communication Consortium at NAPLIC
 - Jonathan Douglas, Director of National Literacy Trust
 - Julie Steele, Speech and Language HLTA and Local Champion
 - Jonathan Middleditch, Young Person of the Year 2015
 - Kamina Gadhok, MBE, CEO of Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)

- Lesley Munroe, Education & Speech and Language Therapy Manager at Pearson
- Liz Tyler, Director of Learning Services, UK Schools at Pearson
- Malcolm Reeve, Managing Director of Firmament Education Ltd
- Octavia Holland, Director at The Communication Trust
- Peter Sutcliffe, Editor of SEN Magazine
- Shane Dangar, Communication Champion 2013/14
- Theresa Redmond, Lead Professional Advisor, The Communication Trust
- Vicky Roe, Deputy Chair of SMIRA
- Wendy Lee, Director of Lingo Speech and Language Therapy and Consultancy
- Zoe Peden, Co-founder of Insane Logic

About Pearson

- Pearson is the world's learning company, with expertise in educational courseware and assessment, and a range of teaching and learning services powered by technology.
- Our mission is to help people make progress through access to better learning. We believe that learning opens up opportunities, creating fulfilling careers and better lives.
- Pearson have sponsored the Shine a Light Awards since their launch in 2011, as part of the *Hello* campaign (National Year of Communication).
- For more information, visit www.pearsonclinical.co.uk or follow @PsychCorpUK #awards_SAL

About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of over 50 leading voluntary sector organisations, which raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members.
- The Trust's mission is to ensure that every child and young person is supported to communicate to the very best of their ability.
- The Trust works towards its mission by working in partnership to build skills, knowledge and confidence in the children's workforce, based on a foundation of good practice, robust evidence and effective policy and legislation.
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or follow @Comm_nTrust