

## England Athletics West Midlands Volunteer Awards

The Volunteer Awards 2018 are a chance to celebrate and recognise the unsung heroes amongst all of our volunteers in the Athletics and Running community - volunteers across England have been nominated in 10 categories, and the winners in each of the nine Regions will be announced over the next few weeks. Winners are then put forward to our National Volunteer Awards.

Walsall in the West Midlands was the venue to celebrate our amazing volunteers in that region. Katharine Merry hosted the evening and Acting Regional Chair Dave Lodwick presented the awards to the winners and runners up in ten categories.

- **Athletics Coach of the Year – Mike Bennett (Worcester AC)**
- **Athletics Official of the Year – Ian Atkins (Worcester AC)**
- **Services to Athletics or Running – Derek Cowdrey (Worcester AC)**



### **Athletics Coach of the Year – Mike Bennett (Worcester AC)**

His nominator writes: I don't think there is a coach out there that gives as much time and effort towards his athletes as Mike does. He is constantly driving up and down the country supporting and helping his athletes, putting our needs before his own. Without him, many of his athletes wouldn't be able to achieve what they have in athletics as they wouldn't be able to make it to training/competitions without him. As well as this he also creates incredibly detailed training plans that are adapted to individuals to suit them and get the best out of them. He has managed for at least the last 10 years, to have numerous athletes at English Schools', with the majority of whom came to him having never done athletics before. Mike is also a very accepting coach, who welcomes any athlete; he has coached athletes of all ages and abilities including para athletes. Mike has often helped lead coaching courses, passing on his knowledge and experiences with the objective of helping others when he can.

Mike's athletes, including myself, feel he deserves a lot of praise for what he has done for all of us. He tells us he gets his sense of achievement from watching us succeed, but we feel he deserves his own achievement for everything he does.

### **Athletics Official of the Year – Ian Atkins (Worcester AC)**

Ian has mentored his nominator for 2 years now and has shown his excellence in training and coaching. Ian works tirelessly both in and out of region and across a range of fixtures. Ian is the lynch pin in local meetings covering his hosting club and their fixtures - including open meetings as well as supporting clubs who have found themselves without starters, especially at short notice. Ian's knowledge of the rules book is clear and I am yet to ask him a question he cannot answer. Ian is a grassroots work-anywhere official supporting the next generation to also be the best they can. I would like to see Ian recognised for the work he does for athletics. Supporting clubs not only so they can host open and league meetings but supporting new officials and making them feel valued.

## Services to Athletics or Running – Derek Cowdrey (Worcester AC)



A member of Worcester AC for 32+ years; a committee member for 22+ and a Timekeeper for 25+ years, turning out rain or shine for regional meets. Derek also qualified as Starter Marksman (a discipline the club lacked) as he wanted greater contact with athletes. He acts as Meeting Manager for all the club's track and field meetings, including buying and making the official's refreshments!

Webmaster is another unofficial title he holds. He is always first to put his hand up for helping with the club's endurance events. He was a key worker in staging the annual Acorns Children's Hospice Triple Run. He is the club Officials' Secretary - ensuring that the clubs' commitments to track and field leagues are met. The club field highly qualified teams, due to his organisation of our volunteer resources. He is master of detail, scoring for club champs and Young Athlete meets. He is the Birmingham League XC official during cold wet winters! He has served as Chairman and is current Secretary and is the club's rep at county Athletics Assoc.

"He is the foundation stone of our club; the backbone to this sport - fair play and safety, he insists on. There are many "Dereks", who keep athletic clubs alive and thriving; but we think ours unique!"

After accepting his award, Derek said, "The reason I can do it is because of my wife Janet. I just enjoy it (most of the time!)." Awards evening host Katharine Merry commented that Derek was a Volunteer decathlete with all the roles he undertakes!