

Eco-Innovators Honoured in Green Awards

Ecological integrity and planet-saving ambitions are among the traits of individuals and companies that have been honoured in the inaugural 'Real Simple' Green Innovation Awards.

Established by Real Simple, a women's consumer magazine, the Awards are aimed at creating awareness of 'green' products for the benefit of consumers, says the magazines' editor Kerry Fischer.

"Our research has consistently revealed that our readers want to live 'greener' lives but were unsure how to do so. So we set about equipping them with the information they need to do this by instituting a monthly green section in the magazine and initiating the Green Innovation Awards whereby we celebrate those products, individuals and companies committed to green ethics and principles," she says.

The competition received over 100 entries. "It was very impressive to see how many companies were aware of their carbon footprint and how many were committed to making eco-concerns their sole CSI programmes," said Fischer.

Among the winners were Leonard Mead and Thys Strydom who took home the Green Children award for their product, Olli Organic, South Africa's only certified organic bottled baby food.

Brett Kaplan won the Green Fashion award for his Woolworths Green Label range of clothing made from 100% organic cotton. The range also includes bamboo shirts and socks.

Debbie Alcock of Gourmet Africa was named as the Innovator of the Year for her brand of organic food products; Burchells Food.

"Burchells Foods is impressive because of their overall commitment to sustainable practices. Far from just producing a product that answers a market's need, they've looked at the entire scope of their business and incorporated it into their daily working lives," said the judges.

Not only is Alcock's range of products 100% organic, it is also produced in a 'green factory'. The Burchells factory is powered by non-fossil sustainable organic bio-fuel, solar power and recycled water.

"It's a belief," says Alcock explaining what inspired Burchells Food. "It's the way we live and the way we want others to live."

Alcock believes that there is great room for growth and success in South Africa's organic consumer products market. "With increasing awareness of global climate change and other environmental issues, the whole alternative arena is gaining a lot of credibility."

Real Simple has awarded Alcock with a R20 000 cash prize, for the charity of her choice. "The money will be going to Camphill School," says Alcock.

Situated in Hemel en Aarde Valley in Hermanus in the Western Cape, this school for physically and mentally handicapped young people has a strong focus on environmental awareness with projects that include their own vegetable garden and the production of 100% natural yoghurt.