

Linda Norgrove honoured with Burns Award

✘ Scottish aid worker Linda Norgrove was today announced as the winner of the 2011 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award.

Ms Norgrove, who died in October 2010 during a US military-led rescue mission to free her from Afghanistani captors, was given the award in recognition of her humanitarian work in Afghanistan.

Receiving the award on behalf of Ms Norgrove, her father John Norgrove said:

“We are hugely honoured to accept this award on behalf of our daughter Linda. She was a modest person and incapable of boasting so it’s ironic that she is now receiving so much praise and attention. She would have found all this positively embarrassing.

“As parents, we are immensely proud of her achievements and are determined that her name will live on in the work of the Linda Norgrove Foundation, which aims to help women and children in Afghanistan”.

Lorna Norgrove, mother of Linda added:

“Linda lived life to the full and worked hard to change things for the better, both for poor people and for the environment. We do hope that her energy, compassion and sense of adventure will be an inspiration for other young people to say ‘yes’ to life’s opportunities and choose to live a life that matters.”

Linda Norgrove dedicated her life to helping improve the lives of others, especially in Afghanistan whose people and communities she cared for deeply. Working closely with indigenous local communities she implemented a variety of

initiatives covering environmentally sustainable development, rural enterprise, infrastructure and improving agriculture.

Presenting the award, Minister for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said:

“We have all learned of Linda Norgrove’s valuable humanitarian work to improve conditions for the people of Afghanistan – this award celebrates her life and her work. Promoting tolerance and a shared humanity were of course themes that Robert Burns so often explored. Linda Norgrove clearly shared these values and through her work made a powerful difference in developing countries around the world.”

Graham Peterkin, Chairman of the 2011 Burns Humanitarian Award judging panel said:

“Once again, the judging panel had an almost impossible task to select the winner of this award as all three shortlisted finalists were of the highest calibre.

“Linda, however, did stand out for us. Her passion and lifelong commitment to helping others shone through in every area of her life and regardless of whether she was working on a conservation project in Peru or agricultural development in Afghanistan, her focus was always on how she could make a difference for those around her.

“We can only hope she knew just how much she touched the lives of others and what she meant to them; however, I suspect not as she never seemed to think of herself.

“The Norgrove family should be very proud of this brave and passionate woman who paid the ultimate sacrifice to help others - she was a true humanitarian and a very worthy recipient of this year’s award.”

Born in Altnaharra, Sutherland, in 1974, Ms Norgrove was raised on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland’s Western Isles. In

2002, following a notable academic career, she joined the World Wildlife Fund in Peru working on conservation, poverty reduction and protecting indigenous communities and their rights.

From 2005 – 2009 Linda Norgrove worked with the UN on environmentally sustainable development projects in Afghanistan. After a brief spell working in Laos, she returned to Afghanistan in February 2010 as Regional Director for American-based aid organisation Development Alternatives Inc (DAI). At the time of her kidnapping, Ms Norgrove was working on the development of agricultural projects in unstable areas of Afghanistan's Kunar province.

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, founder of Scottish-based charity Mary's Meals which provides food and education for poverty-stricken children and communities across Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe and Madhu Pandit Dasa, founder and Chairman of the Akshaya Patra Foundation, one of the world's largest school meal programmes, were also shortlisted for the award. The three nominees were selected from a list of submissions by members of the public between September and November 2010.

The 2011 Robert Burns Humanitarian Award ceremony was held at the new Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, South Ayrshire. The award, now in its tenth year, is presented annually to a group or individual who has saved, improved or enriched the lives of others or society as a whole, through personal self-sacrifice, selfless service or 'hands on' charitable work. The winner of the award receives 1759 guineas, a sum which signifies the year of the bard's birth and the coinage then in circulation, as well as a specially commissioned hand-made award.

The Robert Burns Humanitarian Award is supported by EventScotland, Scotland's Winter Festivals, South Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland.