

Blackwood Design Awards Winners Announced

Three inventions designed to transform the daily lives of people living with disabilities have won prestigious awards.

A panel of judges has selected the winners from this year's entries to the Blackwood Design Awards, which seek to celebrate innovative new gadgets, technologies and concepts to help disabled people live more independently.

The winning inventions at the Blackwood Design Awards this year help highly paralysed people make art, enable visually impaired people see through the eyes of others and provide unintrusive care for people living with dementia.

Entrants to the awards gave Dragon's Den-style live pitches from around the world via Skype.

Enayball won the 'Best New Concept' award – a device that attaches to wheelchairs and paints on the floor in front of you as you move.

Created by two Brighton University students, Eli Heath, 24, and Pete Barr, 24, in 2015, Enayball is designed to fit all types of wheelchairs and to be used at home or in a workshop setting.

The product was praised for the way in which it is building a community that connects and inspires disabled artists.

Pete Barr, co-creator of Enayball, said: "It's amazing to be recognised for our design – we're chuffed. It all started because we firmly believe that art is a human right and that amazing art can be created by people in wheelchairs.

“Most products for people with disabilities are dull and utilitarian and we want to challenge that. We’re working towards having a finished product, ready for purchase and workshop use by the end of 2019.”



Enayball at work

Winner of the Best New Product category is Denmark-based company Be My Eyes – an app that brings sight to blind and low vision people by connecting them with other members of the

public through a video chat.

Those who sign up to Be My Eyes will be notified if there is a visually impaired person needing help and will guide them through their current situation, whether that's describing a person's location or being able to confirm whether the food in their fridge is out of date.

Be My Eyes is already being used internationally and was recognised by the panel of industry expert judges for the way that it takes away many potential fears and costs away from those who are blind.

Hans Jørgen Wiberg, founder of Be My Eyes, said: "It's exciting to see the Be My Eyes community building – we now have over two million volunteers who speak over 180 different languages signed up across over 150 countries!

"Winning this Blackwood Design Award means a lot to us. As the experts in enabling independent living, it means a lot for Blackwood to award us for helping make the world a more accessible place."

The third and final award for Best Collaborative Project by a University or Institute of Higher Learning went to PhD student Scott Alexander MacLeod and Heriot-Watt University.

Together they developed a system using robots and sensors to help people with Alzheimer's Disease and cognitive impairments to live life independently.

The system listens to its user as it tells them what daily task they are carrying out, and the robot will monitor that they are doing it correctly – and advise to do differently if not.

Scott said: "We wanted to create something that didn't disrupt a person's day-to-day life and that meant that they could go on living independently for longer.

“Our system is designed to be very easy to use, which is key. All the user needs to say is ‘I’m making a cup of tea’, for example, and the robot will watch and flag up if they’ve picked up the salt instead of the sugar.

“Being credited in this way for our research is just a great feeling.”

Max Brown, Chair of Blackwood Board said: “We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our winners and thank all who entered their designs into this year’s awards.

“Whether technical or simplistic, all these entrants have been selected because of their great potential to help those living with disabilities to live more independently.

“It is a fantastic celebration of new and innovative ideas or creations and in most cases, provides a platform for further development and potential production.”

Now in its sixth year, the BDAs support the legacy of Dr Margaret Blackwood who dedicated her life to campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities.

Today, Blackwood Homes and Care carries on her work and provides over 1,500 beautiful, affordable and accessible homes to people across Scotland as well as personal care and support services.

For more information about this year’s finalists [click here](#)