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Page 1 of 2





Forging a future

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 CareerOne Editor

ADELAIDE businesswomen Cathy Anderson, Susan McInerney and Julie Stevens help individuals to overcome challenges and move forward in their lives every day in each of their personal roles.

But together the three women are leading by example, showing women across South Australia that they, too, can have a successful career while making a difference in others' lives.

All three women were finalists in the 2009 Telstra South Australian Business Women's Awards announced last month.

For Ms Anderson, who owns the Blackwood franchise of Smartline Personal Mortgage Advisers, the awards experience has been a learning curve. "Working through the submission process, it makes you realise what we have done and what we need to do," she said.

Since she started her business in October 2005, more than 1800 families have been helped to achieve financial and life goals and get greater control over their money.

Ms Anderson this year won the industry's highest national award, the Mortgage Finance Association of Australia's Operator of the Year at its Excellence Awards in March.

She has also won other industry, state and Smartline awards in her 3 1/2 years in the job.

"I believe our success as a business has been as a result of our passion for making a positive difference in the lives of our clients," she said.

"It's the way we empower them to take control of their money and therefore achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their families."

Minda Incorporated chief executive Susan McInerney has worked to improve the organisation's position as a leader in service delivery best practice and human rights advocacy since she began in the role in February 2008.

Minda is South Australia's largest provider of services for the intellectually disabled, providing accommodation, respite, aged care, day options, employment and training support to more than 1500 people living with intellectual disability.

She said being a finalist in the awards would help raise the profile of the work which Minda undertook every day to promote the human rights of people with a disability.

"My passion is to affect positive change on behalf of vulnerable and marginalised people and I have worked my entire career to see this happen," she said.

"I don't recognise that there are barriers, just opportunities."

She said Minda had an 111-year history of male leadership and cli-

ents, staff and families had to adjust to the new female approach.

"Under our revised strategic direction, Minda is now actively lobbying for legislative and policy changes relating to the rights of people living with disability," she said.

Julie Stevens started her career at State Swim as a casual swim instructor and now is chief executive.

She said the awards were an opportunity to show other females in business that hard work pays off.

She also looks forward to mentoring them and helping them work their way up in the corporate world.

"I think it's very much leading by example, being honest, working with integrity all the time and encouraging people," she said. "I'm at a high management level in a male dominated industry and breaking through those sorts of barriers has been fairly challenging over the years, doing it in a way that you are true to yourself." In the past year at the helm of the organisation, she has tried to better nurture staff as well as State Swim students.

"Learning to swim is seen by many parents as an essential skill for their children's safety and development," she said. "We also advocate that being able to swim is also important for a child's self-confidence, fitness and well-being."



LEADING BY EXAMPLE: Cathy Anderson, Susan McInerney and Julie Stevens were all finalists in the SA Businesswoman of the Year awards and have a passion to make a difference. Pictures, cover and above: ALICE PROKOPEC