

Credit Suisse Commitment

City of London Names Credit Suisse's Giles Keating "Volunteer of the Year"

Text: Michèle Bodmer and Heinz Deubelbeiss



Giles Keating was named Volunteer of the Year at the Lord Mayor's Dragon Awards for his involvement in the community in which he lives. The Tech4all charity, which he helped establish 10 years ago, helps London's homeless stay connected with access to a free voicemail service aptly named VoiceMail4all.

Lord Mayor John Stuttard presented Giles Keating with the "Volunteer of the Year" Dragon Award for his commitment to the community. The economist is already looking into ways to set up the voicemail service his charity provides in UK cities beyond London.

The City of London celebrated the contributions made by individuals and businesses toward the social and economic regeneration of their communities at the Lord Mayor's Dragon Awards event on October 10. At this year's celebration, Giles Keating, head of Research for Credit Suisse Private Banking and Asset Management, received the Volunteer of the Year award from Lord Mayor John Stuttard. "The Dragon Awards are an important way to reward those who are working hard to give back to their local communities and to set the standard in neighborliness for all enlightened Greater London businesses," says the Lord Mayor.

Gaining Stability With Technology

Keating is the driving force behind VoiceMail4all, a project that offers homeless people free access to a voicemail service, which enables these individuals to find a job, hear from family and friends, keep in touch with support workers, or look for more permanent housing. Through Tech4all, a registered charity devoted to reducing poverty through the use of technology, the VoiceMail4all project was launched in 1997 with a small-scale pilot project targeting 20 homeless individuals. Since then, Tech4all has gained funding to establish a full pan-

London service operated by St Mungo's, the city's largest homeless organization.

Keating believes that the telephone has completely permeated society and that individuals who do not have phones face enormous problems. "Having a phone is a sign of stability and a settled existence, a sign of belonging to society. By giving a homeless person access to VoiceMail4all, we enable them to maintain contacts and forge new ones. A telephone is almost a piece of home. It helps users to get into contact with medics, family and friends, and with accommodation and employment offices," he explains. "VoiceMail4all is an advantage when it comes to looking for work, as users can now leave a telephone number where they can be contacted. Mobile phones don't do this – homeless people lose them easily, or have them stolen, or they run out of credit – and a landline number gives a greater sense of stability to potential employers than a mobile number."

The work of Amartya Sen, the Indian economist who received the Nobel Prize in 1998 for his concerns with how cultural and technical achievements affect a society, inspired Keating. "As an economist, I'm interested in matters of economic development and also in the spread and availability

of technology. When, over 10 years ago, I considered voluntary work, I tried to find a field where I could contribute my specialized knowledge, as I wanted to achieve the greatest effect through my involvement. That is why I helped set up Tech4All."

Looking Ahead to Helping More People

On average, Keating spends at least a few hours a week on the project, attending quarterly meetings and events, approving materials and finding potential new funding sources. "Many of our donors are charitable organizations, but we also have private benefactors and Credit Suisse has also made significant contributions," he explains. "The company has supported us in many ways, specifically it helped many of its employees in London to become involved."

As is typical for economists, Keating is looking beyond the current achievements of the project toward its future. "Over a 1,000 people have benefited from VoiceMail4all in London and the number is rising. We are working with local organizations to set up this service in other UK cities. We hope that the Lord Mayor's Dragon Award will bring the idea into the spotlight and lead social institutions to contact us and open up the service across Europe and beyond." <