

SPORT

Neil's legacy is honoured

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Awards

Inspirational Anthony honoured with award at Suffolk Sports Awards

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Neil Anthony's successful career in sport and leisure services was recognised with the Elena Baltacha Award at the Suffolk Sports Awards.

Anthony, of Chevington, near Bury St Edmunds, passed away after a battle with cancer last year at the age of 53.

The hundreds of guests at the 11th staging of the awards at Trinity Park were all on their feet, in an emotional display of gratitude and compassion for Anthony, who had sport running through his veins and always put others first.

The Elena Baltacha Award, named after the late tennis player who resided in Ipswich, is given to a courageous and in-

spirational figure for sport in Suffolk.

Anthony's passion for sport led a successful career spanning over 30 years in sport and leisure services, from working for local authorities, helping to shape the cultural landscape in sport, to writing local and national policy.

A long-standing member of West Suffolk Athletics Club, his ambition to open up access to sport and create opportunities for all is evident in the sport projects across the borough that he was involved in.

Anthony was a leading member of the National Executive of the Chief Cultural & Leisure Officers Association for many years, and he was key to the formation of Abbeycroft Leisure, as well as helping to shape the cultural landscape of the area including the opening of The Apex and Christmas

Fayne in Bury St Edmunds.

His family were at the heart of everything he did and sport was integral to his family life.

Anthony and his wife, Christine, a keen runner and supporter of sport, met in PE College over 35 years ago and shared a passion for sport.

The couple's three children have followed in their footsteps, with Anthony also a table tennis team manager for a local club and governor at two local schools.

Anthony overcame adversity and defied doctors while recovering from major heart surgery to run the London Marathon last year, and alongside his 20-year-old son Jack they raised £3,000 for Cancer Research UK.

The awarding of the Elena Baltacha Award will honour his memory and gives recognition and praise for Anthony,

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PICTURE CONTRIBUTED



RECOGNITION: Neil Anthony's family accept the Elena Baltacha Award at the Suffolk Sports Awards on his behalf

who is sorely missed by colleagues and the community and everyone he worked tirelessly to help.

Anthony's wife Christine said: "Although it was an emotional night for us, my family felt honoured to pick up this award for my husband Neil.

"He showed determination and enthusiasm in life and

in sport right to the end and this was recognised by being awarded the Elena Baltacha Award."

■ Culford School tennis scholar Kyle Bilchev won The Archant UK Young Sports Personality of the Year award as one of the most promising junior players in the UK.

Bilchev has had an amaz-

ing run of success in the last 18 months, representing Great Britain as well as becoming the National 12 and under champion in 2015.

She also placed sixth in the Junior 14 and under World Championships last year, and reached the quarter-finals of the 14 and Under European Championships.