

Press Release

For Immediate Release
Friday September 1st, 2006

TOP ENTREPRENEUR MAKES AWARDS SHORTLIST

Switch Sticks is named as finalist in the Silver Fox category

Blossoming new business **Switch Sticks** has been unveiled as one of four finalists at the Startups Awards 2006 in the Silver Fox category, handing it the chance to win the £5,000 top prize.

The short listing judges were impressed by Switch Sticks' concept and potential, placing the business among a handful of lucky finalists plucked from hundreds of entries.

Switch Sticks, is the innovative new walking stick retailer, which launched onto the UK market in January 2006 and is taking the UK market by storm, with sales exceeding all expectations. The sticks aim to combine everyday practical use with high-street fashion to provide the user with both comfort and style. The sticks are suitable for a variety of uses including coping with a medical condition, providing a cheeky and colourful symbol against mobility difficulties caused by old age or disability or even just as a simple fashion item to accessorise an outfit.

The Startups Awards, organised by Crimson Business' Startups.co.uk, comprises of 15 categories, each showcasing the best new businesses in the UK. The overall winner will walk away with a £5,000 cheque.

Endorsed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and underlining its commitment to identifying and rewarding the UK's best new businesses, the third annual Startups Awards is organised in conjunction with NatWest.

The winners will be unveiled at a prestigious awards ceremony and three-course luncheon to be held at the Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington on Friday 20 October.

Jean Smith, Switch Sticks comments: "We are thrilled to be a finalist in the Silver Fox category and very much look forward to the event in October. It's great that all our dedication and hard work has been recognised by Startups.co.uk, and we're delighted to be in with a chance of not only winning the category but also the much-coveted 'NatWest Startups Business of the Year' prize."

Startups.co.uk is the UK's largest independent online resource for budding entrepreneurs and the Startups Awards is one of the leading events on the small business calendar.

To be eligible to enter the Startups Awards 2006, businesses must have been trading for less than three years, be privately owned, and employ fewer than 60 people.

This year's judging panel consists of some of the UK's most successful entrepreneurs, including Trevor Baylis, inventor of the wind up radio, Sahar Hashemi of Coffee Republic and Adrian Chiles from Working Lunch.

The judges look at a wide range of criteria; in particular, business success either by increase in sales and unit volume, market research and identification of customer focus, organisational and team building effectiveness, strategic planning, overcoming obstacles and barriers to success, visionary leadership and social and community responsibility.

Additional sponsors include Blackberry, BT Plc, Sage, Viking, Bartercard, Brother and National Business Register PLC.

- Ends -



Notes to editors:

Switch Sticks

Switch Sticks is the modern walking sticks company for all ages. Founded by Vicky Mitchell in 2005, joined by her aunt, Jean Smith, and more recently Colena Abbosh, formerly at Accenture, the company produces high quality and innovatively designed walking sticks for all walks of life!

Vicky's skills in sales and marketing, Jean's nursing and retail background and Colena's IT and process expertise have come together to create a company that provides people with easy access to sticks that compliment their style and outlook. No longer will those with mobility problems have to endure boring mobility aids.

Seven designs are in production, and all sticks are made to European Standards by a manufacturer with an excellent pedigree in medical products.

Switch Sticks retail from £19.99 + P&P, are presented in a stylish gift box and can be bought online at www.switchsticks.com, mail order through PO Box 209, Morpeth, NE61 9AG. From next year you can also buy through their Sales Centre on 08451 114 114.

Startups.co.uk

The 2006 Startups Awards is organised by Startups.co.uk – the UK's largest website for people starting and running their own businesses. Startups provides free help and advice to 100,000 new visitors every month, which accounts for around 40 per cent of the start-up market. www.startupsawards.co.uk

NATWEST

The 2006 Startups Awards is headline sponsored by NatWest Business Banking. As one of the leading banks for small business, NatWest understands the difficulties of running a successful business and knows just how much work it takes. NatWest has an extensive network of local Business Managers and offer a dedicated relationship service to all business customers including a direct line to each business manager, free face-to-face advice and phones manned 24/7. In addition, it offers free and discounted business banking for up to two years, a free start-up course and a comprehensive range of banking solutions tailored to your business needs. www.natwest.co.uk/startup

For more information on Switch Sticks please contact:
Vicky Mitchell at Vicky@switchsticks.com or 07810 430594

For further information about Startups Awards 2006 visit www.startupsawards.co.uk or telephone 020 8334 1648
emmahulse@copperstream.co.uk.

For information on the 2006 Startups Awards please contact:
Heather Olhausen, Events Manager, Crimson Business, telephone: 020 8334 1648 email: heathero@crimsonbusiness.co.uk.

