

MIRKA

ABP CLUB INDUSTRY KNIGHT 2009



As in previous years, when evaluating who is to be awarded the prestigious ABP Club Industry Knight, we again felt it extremely important to consider a person who has worked well beyond their cause of duty and well beyond the remit of their day-to-day role. In selecting this year's Knight, we again looked for somebody who had applied time and effort selflessly, applied time and effort of their own volition for the good of the wider industry.

Our third Industry Knight winner began his career in his home town of Skelmersdale doing a variety of jobs from working in a clothing factory, to fitting tyres. He quickly realised that what he really wanted to do was repair motor cars.

After a few years working for other people within the accident repair industry he decided to set up in business for himself in Southport in 1986.

With the help of just one apprentice, his reputation for quality and attention to detail soon saw a steady increase in business.

He now owns 4 strategically placed bodyshops in the north west of England with a combined turnover of approximately £10 million pounds a year, employing over 150 people and repairing around 10,000 vehicles per year.

He has won numerous bodyshop industry awards, including the IMI Motor Industry Achiever Award 2007/8 and in 2007 he became a Graduate of the City & Guilds Institute.

His greatest passion has been for training young people, something he began in 1996 when he set up the competition to select the UK competitor in the Autobody Repair category for the WorldSkills in St Gallen. Since then he has coached two bronze winners and Andrew Blair who won Gold in 2005. He has also assumed the role of Chief Expert for WorldSkills in this category.

Our Industry Knight has been quoted as saying, "We are a nation built on industry, with the blood, sweat and tears of manual workers, each of whom were proud to do what they did. Perhaps as a nation we need to give our craft skills workers the recognition they deserve and improve the perception and social standing of manual workers."

It was this attitude and dedication to training that was recognised in the 2006 Queens Birthday Honours list when he was awarded an MBE.

A great believer in raising industry standards, his business was heavily involved in the PAS125 steering group and was one of the first multi-site businesses to gain the Kitemark at all the shops in the group.

In August of this year, he announced that his son David was taking on all day-to-day operational responsibility within the business, leaving our Industry Knight to focus on group strategic matters such as WorldSkills and the newly formed Synergy Accident Repair Group.

**Therefore, our
much respected
ABP Club Industry
Knight for 2009
is of course:**

Karl Vella MBE

