



Media release
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INNOVATIVE JOELY LANDS £250 TECH PRIZE FROM THE NOTTINGHAM

Inspirational Tooting Bec student Joely To celebrated the arrival of New Year with the news she had landed a Nottingham Building Society Innovative Young People of 2020 winner's prize.

Streatham and Clapham High School pupil Joely, 17, won the 14-17 age group and a £250 tech voucher prize for her outstanding work in setting up non-profit organisation [Pioneer](#) – which empowers more girls to study Mathematics to a higher level and guide them towards potential careers involving the subject.

In the first four months after being established during the first Covid-19 lockdown, Pioneer - which is entirely the brainchild of Joely - held over 10 webinars and data challenges for more than 600 students across the UK and Nigeria. She has even spoken about her Maths mission on two Spotify podcasts.

Joely impressed The Nottingham's judging panel due to her sheer desire and determination to help others with a mutual interest who don't have access to the same levels of support and understanding of which career paths involve Maths, alongside studying for four A-Levels.

Delighted Joely explained: "I was surprised and honoured to hear I had won. It is very humbling because I didn't set up Pioneer to win awards – it is there to help girls with a passion for Maths, like myself, have opportunities to develop their skills.

"Having constantly been told by universities at their Maths taster lectures that they lacked female applicants, I decided to research Maths societies for girls to join. However, all were aimed at undergraduate level and beyond, and I strongly believe that to create change it is crucial to start encouragement at a younger age.

"So I decided to set up Pioneer with the aim of nurturing girls' passion for Maths beyond the curriculum and to help them build their confidence in pursuing the subject at a higher level."

In late 2020 Joely's Maths teacher Juliana Kirby saw the building society's award scheme - established to shine a light on examples of those aged 10-21 who have found inspiring ways of furthering their education or boosting career aspirations - advertised and decided to nominate her.

Juliana said: "What makes Joely special is her sheer focus on adding value to the mathematical experiences of others; her future plans include ensuring that girls never view school subjects such as Maths simply in terms of the syllabus, but that they are aware of its real-world applications and are better informed about higher education and career choices.

“Joely is a thoroughly deserving winner of this award due to the many hours of hard work and dedication she has put into setting up and running Pioneer, and the inspiration she is proving to be for many girls who have a passion for Maths and the career choices it offers.”

The Nottingham’s Head of People and Development, Anne Leivers, added: “Early on in 2020 we launched our [Career Academy](#) to help drive the aspirations of young people through hints and tips as to how careers can be kick-started.

“However with the Coronavirus pandemic causing serious challenges for all, not least young people who faced unprecedented hurdles in their education or career aspirations, we built on that by introducing the Innovative Young People awards.

“We received many inspirational nominations which made some very difficult decisions for the judging panel, but we are satisfied that the winners are thoroughly deserving of their awards and we hope the prizes can play a role in helping them fulfil their ambitions.”

Innovative Young People of 2020 awards were also presented to winners, who live in other areas of The Nottingham’s heartland, in the 10-13 and 18-21 age categories.

Photo caption: Innovative Young People of 2020 award winner Joely To.

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Notes to editor

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About The Nottingham

Founded in 1849, The Nottingham is a mutual building society owned by its members with a long and proud history of doing the right thing and helping communities prosper. Today, The Nottingham is a top ten building society operating online and via a network of 40-plus branches across nine UK counties.

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