

Three of Britain's Big Society heroes were honoured for their charity work this week, after being voted the winners of The Alternative Rich List.

A forum3 initiative, The Alternative Rich List is in its third year and recognises individuals who enrich other people's lives in ways money can't.

The three winners, Judy Ledger, Gary Foxcroft and Virginia McKenna were honoured at the UK's biggest not-for-profit recruitment, networking and volunteering event, forum3 last Friday.

Three winners were selected by the public for their unwavering commitment to society from local community projects to world-wide campaigns.

Judy attracted the public's vote for creating the national charity Baby Lifeline, which supports pregnant women.

Judy, from Kenilworth in Warwickshire, started the charity after the loss of three babies who were born prematurely and died.

Since Baby Lifeline's inception in 1981, Judy has raised more than £8 million and attracted the support of Sir Ben Kingsley, Sir Richard Branson and Dame Judi Dench.

Gary, from Lancaster, received recognition for his charity Stepping Stones Nigeria which helps to provide shelter, education, literacy, healthcare, food and hope to thousands of vulnerable children of the Niger Delta.

His work has led to the rehabilitation of over 200 children as well as improved conditions for many street children and those children accused of witchcraft.

Virginia, one of the UK's leading actresses in the 1950s and 60s, was recognised for her work as co-founder the Born Free Foundation, a charity which helps to release animals from captivity and conserve them in the wild.

In 1992, the Dorking resident helped release the last three dolphins from UK captivity into the wild, and she is currently campaigning to end the use of wild animals in UK circuses.

More than 5,000 people voted for a shortlist of 11 worthy activists and charity leaders, after the public nominated more than 150 people from across the UK to be part of this year's Alternative Rich List.

forum3 Director Deborah Hockham congratulated the winners, saying they were a true reflection of how everyday Britons can contribute to creating a Big Society.

"The 2010 Alternative Rich List was bursting with kind, self-sacrificing people who consistently put other people's needs ahead of their own" she said.

