

INSPIRING LEADERS AND PERSONALITIES LEAVE THEIR MARK ON THE NORTH EAST AT ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM'S SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE



The North East business community were encouraged to 'make a difference' with their success at the region's largest entrepreneurial conference hosted by the Entrepreneurs' Forum.

One of the UK's most philanthropic entrepreneurs, Heather Mills, founder of VBites, addressed more than 300 business leaders at Together We Can Take On The World with her incredible story that has seen her overcome many adversities to become a pioneer in plant-based food products.

Brought up in Washington, Heather has invested millions in the North East with three manufacturing facilities for her family-run company, saving and creating hundreds of jobs in the process, which is the largest plant-based manufacturing operation in the world.

Heather, who lost her left leg after being struck by a police motor bike in her twenties, spoke about how charity and supporting others inspires her.

"Money doesn't mean anything unless you're making a difference with it," she said.

"If you're a true entrepreneur and get your family aligned with you, then you can have no fears to take that step that will make you successful. The limitation is always going to be cash flow, but we're going to make it happen. If I can stand here with one leg, you can stand here with two."

The conference's opening speaker, Jon Smith, spoke about how he overcame a stammer at the age of

15 to become a leading entrepreneurial sports agent working with the likes of Diego Maradona and the England National football team.

He has since established First Artist, a media, entertainment and events empire, and gifted entrepreneurs in attendance with a few 'tricks of the trade' in the art of negotiating – built on years of experience advising and brokering deals for global sporting stars.

Benjamin Mee, the man depicted by Matt Damon in Hollywood blockbuster 'We Bought A Zoo', also delivered an inspiring story filled with emotion about how he restored the fortunes of Dartmoor Zoological Park.

Jim Cregan also shared his experiences building Jimmy's Iced Coffee, which was created as a result of road tripping across Australia, into a household brand that is well-placed in supermarkets and petrol stations across the UK.

Popular North East businessman John Hays, of Hays Travel, rounded off the conference with an insight into his entrepreneurial journey, which has seen the Sunderland-based company grow to become the UK's best high street travel agent with annual sales of more than £1bn.

Hosted by BBC presenter, media personality and

illustrator Alfie Joey, the conference took place at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead. It was sponsored by event partner North East Growth Hub, as well as Sullivan Brown Resourcing Partners, Visualsoft, Park Commercial and Durham City Incubator, with MAKE it Sunderland sponsoring the conference brochure.

Together We Can Take On The World is one of the highlights of the Entrepreneurs' Forum's extensive calendar of events, which brings together more than 300 leading entrepreneurs from across the North East for a day of inspiration.

James Robson MBE, Chairman of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, said: "Our conferences are a major part of our calendar of events and this year's Together We Can Take On The World was another fantastic day.

"It brought together many of the region's business leaders and entrepreneurs, providing them with plenty of food for thought, which they can apply to their own enterprises and hopefully help to drive forward growth and job creation to further support and strengthen the North East's economy.

"I'd like to thank our line-up of inspirational speakers for sharing their experiences and stories over the course of the day, as well as our sponsors and partners, who have helped make it a success."

For further information about future Entrepreneurs' Forum events, email info@entrepreneursforum.net or call 0191 500 7780.