

Friday 18 May 2012

## **AWARDS RECOGNISE OUR VOLUNTEERS' GREAT CONTRIBUTION**

At a celebration acknowledging volunteers outstanding contribution to the community, twenty eight nominees and winners of the annual Volunteer Recognition Awards were honoured at a special ceremony at the Civic Centre last night.

The Mayor Cllr Artin Etmekdjian said: "Volunteers help build great communities. They generously give their time, skill and compassion to improve not only the lives of countless fellow citizens, but also the economic and social well being of our entire community.

"Congratulations to the winners and all those nominated. Our special thanks also to the people who brought to our attention the work of these wonderful individuals and groups."

### **Volunteer of the Year: Diana Zeynali**

Diana Zeynali typifies the outstanding qualities of volunteering putting others needs ahead of her own. As a full time carer to her husband, she still devotes many hours a week to North Ryde Community Aid and the Armenian Senior Citizens Social Club.

In her homeland of Iran, she volunteered at her nieces and nephews preschools, in youth sport and community clubs and supported orphan victims of the tragic earthquake in Armenia in 1988 as part of the emergency assistance team.

Diana and Masis emigrated to Australia in 2003 and shortly after their arrival Diana continued her volunteering, helping the elderly and those in need. Whether it is taking them to medical appointments, shopping or preparing a morning tea, she is always available.

Not confined to assisting the elderly or the isolated, Diana also volunteers for Armenian community activities such as Ararat Scouts, cultural groups and Garoon magazine.

The community benefits in untold ways from volunteers like Diana. She gets great satisfaction from helping others and believes that everyone can find a few free hours to share with others to make them feel wanted and happy.

### **Young Volunteer: James Camilleri**

James is an active member of the Ryde Youth Council (RYC). He is committed to representing young people across the City of Ryde through the RYC and other local youth initiatives, events and consultations. In the past year he has advocated for local young people and the RYC at regional and state levels.

As Public Relations Officer for the RYC he promotes the activities of the group and regularly engages with Council staff around RYC messaging and promotion of youth activities.

James draws on his leadership, social conscience and communications skills to mentor younger members of RYC to assist them in overcoming personal obstacles, helping them grow and achieve their own potential.

James received the City of Ryde Young Citizen of the Year award in 2011.

**Volunteer Group of the Year: SALT**

**SALT** (Seek justice. Alleviate hunger. Lift the burden today. Transforming lives.) is an initiative of Macquarie University students in collaboration with The Salvation Army.

Led by student Daniel Bofinger, the group of 15 committed volunteers collect excess food from 18 food outlets on Macquarie University campus. The food is then delivered to residents in Ivanhoe Social Housing Estate.

As a group there is a great sense of pride in their work and reward in knowing that food that is still consumable is going to people who need it and not being wasted.

The **SALT** initiative not only improves the quality of life for residents in the Ivanhoe Place Estate, it also fosters a sense of community among campus stakeholders and emphasises the University's commitment to social justice.

The Awards are held every year in conjunction with National Volunteer Week to honour the largely unseen army of volunteers who benefit the lives of so many in our community.

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Photos available upon request