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FOR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

2012 Citizen of the Year – Suzanne Ward OAM

2012 Young Citizen of the Year – Geoffrey Ward

At an Australia Day ceremony today, City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Artin Edmekdjian, announced the 2012 City of Ryde Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year, in recognition of their service to the local community. The recipients are:

Mrs Suzanne Ward, OAM – Citizen of the Year
Mr Geoffrey Ward – Young Citizen of the Year

In acknowledging their outstanding contributions, Cllr Edmekdjian said the two winners exemplified the character and fine qualities of the people who make up the City of Ryde.

“Both Suzanne and Geoffrey deserve the admiration of the community and to be acknowledged as role models with these, our highest civic awards,” the Mayor said.

“Both winners have added enormous value to the lives of so many in our local area, showing once again that community spirit and leadership is thriving in the City of Ryde.”

Later in the day Suzanne Ward and Geoffrey Ward were introduced on stage to the large audience at the Australian Day Family Concert at North Ryde Common.

Biographies

Suzanne Ward, OAM - City of Ryde Citizen of the Year 2012

Decades of dedication to her family and the community has earned Suzanne Ward the respect and admiration of all.

Suzanne and husband Terry adopted and raised five babies with varying physical and intellectual disabilities, including epilepsy, spina bifida, and asperger’s syndrome.

Those children, whose ages now range from 41 to 47 years, are self supporting, employed and living independently in the community and are a testament to their parents’ dedication and drive. Each challenge faced was another opportunity to expand the world of a child with a disability. As the family grew, new challenges presented themselves cementing the Ward’s belief that their children should have all the opportunities as all Australian families. Through this dedication and optimism, the Ward children have enjoyed success in gymnastics at the Special Olympics, State representation in basketball, as well as swimming, sailing and water polo.

Suzanne is a nurse by profession, specialising in children's illnesses and later in aged care, and has served as a Crowle Foundation board member since 1990. Her fundraising energies include the Children's Hospital at Westmead, Community Aid Abroad Eastwood and the Exodus Foundation. Other voluntary duties include Koronga and Hassell Street special schools, the Sheltered Workshop Chatswood and the Gladesville RSL Youth Club.

'Sue is a dedicated woman and loving mother to five children' ...these are the words of admiration from her son, Tim, and are echoed throughout the community.

In 2005, Suzanne received the Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

Geoffrey Ward - City of Ryde Young Citizen of the Year 2012

Geoffrey is a young person with strong community commitments. He volunteers for his church, bushcare groups and community organisations such as refugee youth groups and the Scouts.

Since the age of nine, Geoffrey has been a dedicated member of the Ryde City Concert Band and as principal French horn, has played most of the band's performances at local events including Citizenship Ceremonies, the monthly performances at Eastwood Plaza and also plays the Bugle on ANZAC Day. He can be relied upon to step in and fill the shoes of the 1st Trumpet or band conductor. He is also the driver and band roadie.

His skills also run to operating the audio visual equipment for the North Ryde Community Uniting Church. He is also secretary of the Church Property and Finance Committee.

Since becoming leader of the 1st East Ryde Scout Troop in 2009, it has grown into a well disciplined and positively focused group of 30 boys and girls aged 11 – 14 years.

His enthusiasm to support community organisations never waivers and for the past four years, Geoffrey has been a volunteer assistant with camps for "at risk" teenage children, organised by the Sydney Indo-Chinese Refugee Youth Support Organisation. He gained his heavy vehicle drivers license enabling him to drive the bus for the various camps.

In 2010 Geoffrey gained a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Geographic Information Systems from Macquarie University and holds a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.