

Friday 12 May 2017

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AWARD WINNERS

In an evening of celebration at a Ryde Civic Hall gala reception, sixteen individuals and four groups were honoured at the annual City of Ryde Volunteer Recognition Awards last night.

The Mayor Cllr Bill Pickering said the endeavours of volunteers make our community better and stronger. “It is not an understatement to say that this army of volunteers are our unsung heroes.

“They give their time and energy so generously to those in need, ensuring that services are delivered and that help is not far away.

“Volunteers improve the lives of countless of our fellow citizens, and strengthen the social well-being of our entire community. It is an honour to be in their company.”

The Mayor also paid tribute to those who nominated the volunteers for the various Awards, as without their action the work of individuals and groups could go unrecognised.

WINNERS OF THE CITY OF RYDE VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AWARDS

Volunteer of the Year – DOMINIC FONTI

For twenty five years, Dominic Fonti has volunteered at Ryde Saints United Football Club, starting with the Club in 1993 while his kids played. His varied duties have included treasure, president, canteen operator and team manager. He is described as passionate, selfless, reliable and committed whether he is out in front leading or working in the background doing the unglamorous jobs. Many consider Dom “the backbone of the Club” and their most valued member ever. Dom also volunteers with other local organisations, including Meals on Wheels and Catholic Care assisting people in desperate situations.

Dom considers volunteering to be beneficial for everyone. He believes that everyone can make a difference and everybody counts. He is respected and loved by many.

Young Volunteer of the Year – EDEN LEE

For the past three years teenager Eden Lee has balanced her demanding commitment to HSC school studies and the challenge of obtaining a Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award with volunteering up to 10 hours a week at the Eastwood Chinese Seniors Club. Eden has used her time and IT skills to update the Club’s more than 1,300 membership register and has taken on the extra duty of designing their monthly newsletter. Through her volunteering commitment she has gained valuable work experience and helped save the club the cost of outsourcing computer work. What started out as a short-term volunteering involvement for Eden has turned into a much longer and more rewarding experience for her and the many new ‘Gradpas’ and ‘Grandmas’ she has suddenly gained.

Volunteer Group of the Year – EASTWOOD LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

The Eastwood Lunar New Year Celebration Committee was established in 2008 by local community groups. Their work has seen the Lunar New Year Festival grow to be Eastwood’s second biggest event (after Granny Smith Festival) attracting a crowd of over 20,000 on the grand celebration day. The month-long celebration

includes lead-up events involving local businesses, a community cooking competition, inter-school table tennis competition and the Grand Celebration with 50 fete stalls, cultural performances, Dragon and Lion dances and fire crackers. Its success is thanks to the dedication of the Committee which is made up of volunteers from various backgrounds. Their common goal is to make the celebration an inclusive event that celebrates their heritage by bringing everyone in the community together.

Special Commendations

YOHANS BASTIAN Yohans joined North Ryde Community Aid in 2015 and assists with their 'Old n Bold' mens-only social group. He collects the men for lunch, helps serve and clear the meals and facilitates conversation among the men, many of whom are frail, physically isolated and suffer from various illnesses. Yohans arranges his work schedule to assist NRCA mid-week so his clients receive the care and attention they need and appreciate so much. His peers say that Yohans is a quiet and reserved young man and his contribution is very highly valued. At last year's Grandparents' Sunday he took on the barbeque duties for three hours straight. It is no wonder his parents are so proud of him.

MELISSA KONG Melissa is one of the most recognisable faces and voices in Eastwood thanks to her tireless volunteer work at many community events. For the past 9 years, she has served as the lead master of ceremony at the Eastwood Lunar New Year celebrations, including during the main celebration day and cooking competition. Melissa also drives fund raising efforts, does minute taking, promotional material designs and sponsor liaison. Melissa has donated more than 500 hours to volunteering thanks to her involvement with many other groups such as Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, Australian Asian Association of Bennelong and Grandparents Day. Her fluency in English, Cantonese and Mandarin has contributed to the success of many events making them truly inclusive to all.

MAY PETERS May has been involved with Eastwood-Epping Branch of the CWA, The Lantern Club and Pink Lady at Ryde Hospital collectively for over 16 years. At the CWA Rest Centre in Eastwood, May contributes to the success of fund raising activities, heads the raffle committee, coordinates the Open Day and uses her quiet charm and lovely Irish accent to ensure people are ready to lend a hand. May is famous for her jams and condiments and her cooking prowess has not only won prizes but helped raise much needed funds a great deal of which has gone to help women and children in rural NSW with extra school expenses and children who attend the School for the Blind and Deaf at North Rocks.

KEVIN SHAW Kevin has been an active member of the Ryde Historical Society since joining in 1987. He has held many executive positions within the society, including president, treasurer, public officer, website manager and member of the Ryde Heritage Advisory Committee. He regularly conducts tours of Willandra, Field of Mars Cemetery, and the historic Villages of Ryde, to name just a few. One of most valuable benefits to the community has been Kevin's meticulous research and documentation of the history of the Ryde district and the generous sharing of his time. His published histories, regular articles for The Ryde Recorder, along with the information loaded on the website will ensure Ryde's history is available to everyone into the future.