

Friday 12 May 2023

2023 VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION AWARD WINNERS

City of Ryde is proud to congratulate the winners of our 2023 Volunteer Recognition Awards, announced last night during a glittering ceremony at Marsfield's stunning Curzon Hall.

The winners were selected in the lead up to National Volunteers Week, with 67 nominees across four categories, one of the largest number of nominees ever received.

City of Ryde Mayor Clr Sarkis Yedelian OAM – who was on the judging panel along with City of Ryde Deputy Mayor, Clr Shweta Deshpande, City of Ryde CEO, Wayne Rylands, 2022 Volunteer of the Year Sheena Smith, and 2022 Young Volunteer of the Year Abby Hill – said the high number of entrants once again proved that Ryde was a City of kind, selfless, and generous people.

“What unites all of our nominees is the desire to help others, to freely give of their time, their resources, and their labour, while asking for nothing in return,” he said.

“We marvelled at each and every one of our nominees. They have made their families, their loved ones and most importantly – their community – proud.”

City of Ryde CEO Wayne Rylands said volunteers were essential in helping to make Ryde such a successful and attractive place to live, work, and play.

“We have a dedicated and talented team at City of Ryde and our duty is to serve this community and make it a better place,” he said.

“But we can't do that without some extra help – and that's why our many generous and caring volunteers are such an important part of our community fabric.”

Here are our winners:

Individual Volunteer of the Year: Greg Power

Greg has been a member of NSW State Emergency Service for 11 years and during that time he has assisted not only members of his own community, but people in peril all throughout the state and beyond.

As a Team Leader at the NSW SES Ryde Unit, it's Greg's job to direct volunteers to respond to calls for assistance from residents who have been impacted by flood and storm emergencies.

It's a 24/7 role, with Greg and his volunteer teams often working in terrible conditions, with people under significant stress in high-risk environments.

Greg is a highly skilled and trained leader, and his services are often called upon when the SES mobilises to respond to emergencies in other parts of the city and state.

He has represented Ryde for up to a week at a time while helping people during flood events at Moree, Menindee, Lismore, Forbes and interstate to the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. He has also attended significant emergency events in Pittwater, Western Sydney and to storm-impacted homes on the Northern Beaches.

In the unfortunate event that disaster ever strikes, you know you are in safe and dedicated hands with Greg Power.

Young Volunteer of the Year: Royce Zeng

For someone still so young, Royce has already shown a remarkable dedication to helping people through volunteer work.

His list of achievements is impressive. From looking after the wellbeing and development of students in one of Macquarie University's most notoriously difficult courses, to consulting for non-profit organisations, charity fundraising, and even fighting bushfires, Royce is a true community champion.

He has been President of the Actuarial Students' Society at Macquarie Uni since 2022, hosting weekly social and career events to help his fellow students navigate through what can be rigorous and stressful studies.

Royce was also a part of 180 Degrees Consulting, which is the world's largest not-for-profit consultancy. At the Macquarie branch, he spent 18 months helping to strategise for three different organisations.

Royce is also an active volunteer bush firefighter with the NSW Rural Fire Service, based at Hornsby Heights. In March, he went on a five-day deployment to Narrabri in north-west NSW, helping to mop up a large 4,500ha fire that had been declared a State of Emergency.

Royce believes that no matter where you are, you will always be able to make an impact and he goes out of his way to volunteer because of a genuine passion for helping people.

Group Volunteer of the Year: CCA NSW Community Learning Tutors

The 60 volunteer tutors at CCA's Community Learning Centre are not only skilled educators but they provide an invaluable service to our community in helping to form lasting connections and friendships.

The tutors, who range in age from 30 to 80, come from diverse backgrounds and include professional musicians, artists, photographers, an Australian Music Examinations Board examiner, a dance company director, a physiotherapist, and registered coaches.

Together, they give more than 3,600 volunteer hours of time each year so 300 students can access 80 different classes, learning new skills or improving existing ones in disciplines like Tai Chi, cooking, musical instruments, singing, dancing, photography, art, and more.

The volunteer tutors are role models of lifelong learning, and they also recognise the importance of learning from each other.

They create a non-threatening, nurturing and positive atmosphere in the classroom which makes learning fun and relaxing. It's a place where strangers can become friends.

We also announced our 10 community heroes. They are:

Elizabeth Moran

Liz has been a member of the Girl Guides since a child in 1973, before moving into volunteering as a young adult in 1987. Liz started as Unit Leader with Roseville Guides in 1987, and in 1999, she took on the role of Region Treasurer for Northern Sydney Region (NSR) of Girl Guides, a position she has held for the past 24 years.

John Manenti

Known as 'Johnny Appleseed' by his many friends, John is a tireless worker for the Granny Smith Festival, which is an annual highlight for the City of Ryde. Without John's dedication in attracting sponsorship, the Festival would not be what it is today. His care for the community also extends to helping raise funds for Ryde Hospital.

Lindsay Mar

Lindsay is a dedicated local volunteer, having spent many years working for the City of Ryde Eisteddfod, community radio station 2RRR, Neighbourhood Watch, the West Ryde Easter Fair, and the Granny Smith Festival. The significant feature of Lindsay's community work is the breadth of connections he can provide by being so actively involved in each of the groups.

Margery East

Margery has been a member and volunteer of CWA Eastwood-Epping for about 15 years and during this time she has held many executive positions. She has also volunteered with Meals on Wheels twice a week for about 3 1/2 years, as well as at Sydney Town Hall and Sydney Living Museums.

Pamela Wood

Pam has been a member of the Rotary Club of North Ryde for more than eight years and has fulfilled the roles of President and Secretary at various times. The Ryde community has benefitted from Pam's instigation and leadership of programs and projects that have involved the elderly, people with disabilities and local school students.

Rolf Schafer

Rolf has been a volunteer for St John Ambulance NSW for 40 years, transferring to the Ryde Division in July 2001. He committed the equivalent of 12 weeks volunteer time to NSW Ambulance in 2022, including training, professional development, meetings, and administration. This included attending 210 events, with 987 duty hours.

Samantha Profilio

Samantha is a vital part of the St Charles Primary School community. Not only does she volunteer four days a week at the library, but she is also secretary of the school's P&F committee, works in the second-hand clothing shop, and assists in the setting up, running and clean-up of school events such as the disco, election day BBQ and other community fundraising events.

Sunja Yoon

Sunja makes lunch for the elderly Koreans who attend the CASS Ryde Community Services Centre every Friday, taking them back to their homeland with a menu that includes easy-to-chew nutritious porridge as morning tea, as well as soft meat dishes such as Bulgogi, Bibimbap and traditional side dishes like Kimchi.

Werner Klarenaar

Even at 82, Werner remains a dedicated volunteer for City of Ryde Bushcare, working for an average of four hours a day at Brush Farm Park. He has invested his own money towards buying plants and has created all the walking tracks, as well as installing bridges, terraces and moving huge piles of rubbish.

Yeghia Gharibian

Yeghia has volunteered for the Armenian Youth Federation for the past eight years as both a member and a leader. He is also actively involved in the Young Optometrists not-for-profit organisation, and as a member of Sydney North Health.

**Media Contact: Brett Thomas, City of Ryde Communications m • 0466 479 556
e • BrettT@ryde.nsw.gov.au**