

Tuesday 10 May 2011.

AWARDS RECOGNISE OUR VOLUNTEERS' GREAT CONTRIBUTION

Forty-three nominees for the annual Volunteer Recognition Awards were recognised for their outstanding contribution to the community at a celebration held in their honour at the Civic Centre last night.

The Mayor Cllr Artin Etmekdjian said: "Volunteers helped 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."

The category winners are:

Individual: Joan Graham (New Horizons)

Joan has long been associated with New Horizons, a non-profit organisation, that has grown over the years to be a community leader in Mental Health and Disabilities support services.

Recently stepping down as President, a position she held for over 20 years, Joan is a hands-on leader with a strong sense of social justice. She is willing to give her time and energy to support those less fortunate.

As part of a committee of the Ladies Auxiliary at Macquarie Hospital, Joan was instrumental in obtaining a Government Grant to build a factory where people with disabilities could work, on land provided by the Area Health Department and they built the factory.

Joan is a committed community member and her dedication to the needs of people with a disability is inspiring.

Young Volunteer: Kim Rodgers (Ryde Youth Theatre)

Young people in Ryde have access to an engaging dramatic arts program thanks to Kim Rodgers' work as a Drama Tutor and Director with the Ryde Youth Theatre.

Through the program implemented by Kim, local young people have developed skills in performance, public speaking and group work. Additionally, they have been given the opportunity to gain confidence and self awareness.

To develop the program, that includes workshops and all aspects of production, Kim devoted a great deal of her personal time and energy and has willingly shared her skills and knowledge of the dramatic arts.

Kim volunteers because she feels that she can make a difference. Her Christian background gives her a strong belief that she is called to use her skills to help others.

Group: Achieve Australia - Vintage and Value Enterprises Team

Achieve Australia Volunteers are a committed group of people whose dedication, knowledge, compassion and fund raising, enhances the lives of people living with a disability in our community.

The Volunteers run the Needlecraft Emporium, Fabric Cave, second hand bookshop, nurseries and an annual fete at Crowle Home in Ryde and have created tremendous goodwill through the local community.

In the past five years their Annual Fete has not only raised awareness for their cause but also more than \$80,000 – all to assist people living with a disability.

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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