

Friday 17 May 2024

2024 Volunteer Recognition Award Winners

The City of Ryde is proud to congratulate the winners of our 2024 Volunteer Recognition Awards, announced last night during a dazzling ceremony at Marsfield's beautiful Curzon Hall.

The winners were selected in the lead up to National Volunteers Week, with 37 nominees across three categories which includes Individual, Youth and Group Volunteer Recognition Award Winners.

City of Ryde Mayor Cllr Trenton Brown was on the judging panel along with City of Ryde Deputy Mayor, Cllr Daniel Han, City of Ryde Executive Manager City Life Marnie Mitchell, 2024 Citizen of the Year Winner Lyn Mann and 2023 Young Volunteer of the Year winner Royce Zeng.

Cllr Brown said, "The 2024 Volunteer Recognition Awards celebrates nominees who freely give their time while asking for nothing in return. Our city appreciates the extra help to make the City of Ryde a vibrant and successful place to live and work.

"Every one of our nominees has made their families, their loved ones and most importantly – their community – proud."

The nominees come from a diverse range of backgrounds and organisations such as schools and universities, community, environmental, charity and cultural groups.

City of Ryde CEO Wayne Rylands said volunteerism requires a special level of selflessness, empathy, community spirit, and generosity. City of Ryde residents have shown they have these values in abundance.

"The volunteers nominated for these awards are a testament to the true spirit of giving in our community and they all deserve a big pat on the back," Mr Rylands said.

"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.

"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," he said.

Here are our winners:

Group Volunteer of the Year Winner

Presbyterian Aged Care Social Support Group

Over 20 years, a dozen volunteers have each dedicated about 18 hours a week organising social and cultural groups like the Presbyterian Aged Care Chinese South African and Armenian groups. To prevent seniors from becoming isolated and lonely, volunteers organise morning teas, lunches, social outings, digital seminars, craft sessions and exercise classes. The Strength and Balance classes help seniors with weight management, prevent falls and increase upper body strength.

The digital classes provide the group with confidence in an online world, including educating them about scams and how to use the most popular apps for seniors. The volunteers assist seniors who have mobility and technical issues, they serve food and clean up afterwards. The volunteers have a genuine interest in the well-being of seniors, as they get to know clients on a personal level and are there to listen. The Support Group reunites seniors who have lost contact over many years, or it allows them to make new friends and enjoy cultural traditions. Some of the volunteers drive a fair distance, a few have English as a second language, and some have their own health issues.

Individual Volunteer of the Year Winner

Simon McNamara

Simon has an exceptional volunteer CV, especially with the various roles in the NSW State Emergency Service (SES). From Team Leader to his current role as Rescue Officer, this year Simon will celebrate his 30th anniversary at the NSW SES Ryde unit. Simon has won 11 SES awards which includes the NSW Premier's Bushfire Emergency Citation for Contribution and Service to Bushfires from 2019 to 2021 and NSW SES Commissioner's Commendation for Service in 2016. Simon is on call 24/7 as a plumber and with the SES, as he also assists NSW Police, Fire Rescue NSW, Rural Fire service and other emergency teams in Sydney and regional NSW.

The Ryde resident trains and assesses up to 60 SES volunteers each year and sometimes during natural disasters, Simon is away from his family and business for nearly a week. However, Simon is dedicated to keeping Ryde safe during emergencies so the community can sleep well at night. He educates inspiring young minds with visits from local Scout and Cubs groups. For 29 years, he has volunteered at the Granny Smith Festival, including as a marshall for the past 10 years. On Clean Up Australia Day in 2014 and 2016, Simon helped collect 500kg of rubbish from the Parramatta River.

Youth Volunteer of the Year Winner

Nune Hovivian

Nune often volunteers up to seven hours each week to the 1st Denistone East (Ararat) Scout Group, which ranges from four to 19-year-olds. The coed group is part of Homenetmen, which is a pan-Armenian diaspora devoted to sport and scouts. Homenetmen has 111 chapters in 25 countries and all of the participants in the Denistone East Group speak Armenian. Last year, there were only four scouts and thanks to Nune's programs the number has increased to 18. The Australian Catholic University (ACU) history student introduced activities including Timezone, Ten-pin Bowling, Laser Tag and Trampoline World, subsidised by the Armenian community.

During COVID, the 24-year-old transitioned the Scout Group to online activities and she assisted in creating other Scout programs. When new children join the group, many kids struggle with self-confidence and creating friendships. Nune has provided a great environment for scout-aged children to find and establish friendships and give them a sense of belonging. Although Nune doesn't have a licence or car, she catches public transport and

never misses an activity or meeting. She currently works in retail at Top Ryde Shopping Centre.

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