

Monday 24 May 2021

Council hosts Community Awards 2021

Council hosted its annual *Community Awards 2021* on Thursday 20 May at two ceremonies at Glen Eira Town Hall.

As part of the events, Council presented its annual *Citizen of the Year*, *Young Citizen of the Year* and *Community Group of the Year Awards*. The Awards recognise residents and community groups in the City of Glen Eira who have significantly contributed to the local community.

Twenty-eight individuals and community groups were nominated for *Citizen*, *Young Citizen* and *Community Group of the Year*, as well as two very special award winners for *Outstanding Service, Contribution or Achievement — COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Council would like to thank the volunteers at Bentmoor Men's Shed for handcrafting this year's awards. The awards are made of redgum and decorated with copper. The birds symbolise the soaring achievements of the recipients and the reflection pool reminds us of the importance of looking back over the year and acknowledging the wonderful work being done by community members.

Council also presented its *Volunteer Recognition Program Certificates of Appreciation* to 106 volunteers — 29 people for 500 hours of service; 17 people for 1,000 hours of service; 17 people for 2,000 hours of service; 31 people for 10 years of service; 11 people for 20 years of service; and one person for 40 years of service.

Citizen of the Year: Gwen Fitzgerald

Gwen Fitzgerald from Caulfield South has dedicated the last decade to helping those in need in her community through her work in establishing Tony's Café. The Glen Eira community has benefitted greatly from Tony's Café, a small operation that provides meals, help in finding emergency accommodation, free showers and other necessities to vulnerable people in Glen Eira. Gwen and her team provide more than a warm meal. She brings people together and provides some respite from loneliness. Finalists in this category were Jennifer Hunt from Caulfield and Kirsten Brooks from Carnegie.

Young Citizen of the Year — Laura Cucè

Laura Cucè from Caulfield North is a gracious and outstanding young leader in her community, who has been nominated by her teacher at Shelford Girls' Grammar. Laura is highly-motivated academically, and the personal responsibility she demonstrates for her learning and academic growth and development makes her a role model for both younger students and peers. The finalist in this category was Sahiti Ravi from Bentleigh East.



Community Group of the Year: Moorabbin Area Toy Library

Moorabbin Area Toy Library has supported local families with the 'tools for play' for more than 30 years. Established in 1987, the not-for-profit organisation is located in Bentleigh East and is run by a dedicated and passionate volunteer committee and member volunteers. The group's aim is to make sure that all families, regardless of circumstances, have access to quality toys that will support the changing developmental needs of children.

Outstanding Service, Contribution or Achievement — COVID-19 Pandemic: Samantha Bihary

The Glen Eira community has benefited greatly from the projects Sam has initiated in her neighbourhood. Sam set up a local WhatsApp group of residents willing to provide assistance to fellow neighbours in need. The group — called MyNeighbours — grew to more than 150 members, and continues to share advice, resources and practical help. The MyNeighbours group was also the springboard for Sam to set up a cooking roster during lockdown called MOTTY (My Own Table To You), to provide home cooked meals to those neighbours who were in lockdown on their own — either living alone or as single parents. Sam also launched (and continues to run) the Cabinet of Kindness, a super-sized street library outside her home, filled with donations by neighbours, for neighbours.

Outstanding Service, Contribution or Achievement — COVID-19 Pandemic: Connect Health & Community Volunteer COVID-19 Response Team

The Connect Health & Community Volunteer COVID-19 Response Team in Bentleigh East willingly stepped up to the rigours of COVID-safe training, practices and volunteering by spending hundreds of hours transporting residents to social support activities at Connect Health & Community when permitted and assisting at the Bentleigh East COVID-19 screening station to ensure a safe environment for all Connect Health & Community volunteers, clients and staff. The team also provided 790 hours of knitting and sewing between July and September for members of the local community.

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