

Media Release

Thursday December 2, 2021

Broken Hill student named 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year

Abbie Kelly from Broken Hill was today honoured as the 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year for her inexhaustible volunteering in her local community and can do attitude to making the world a better place.

At just 12 years old Abbie Kelly is making her mark as a community activist through her volunteering as an environmentalist, lobbyist, fundraiser, performer, and radio show host.

Abbie's ability to cultivate support for issues that affect her community is inspiring and far reaching.

Currently exploring Australia's war on waste and climate crisis, Abbie also volunteers for several community and national organisations including Clean-Up Australia Day, Land Care and National Tree Planting Day.

However, Abbie's true talent lies in her ability to encourage and rally the support of people to get behind important causes.

Recently, her efforts have gone towards organising a Broken Hill wide "Crazy Sock Day" which raises funds for Love Your Sister, for cancer research. Abbie has generated and secured partnerships from 10 local schools and over 30 businesses across the region.

Abbie's maturity sits well beyond her years and her passion for driving change makes her a real force for the future. She is a wonderful example of how younger generations of Australian's are active, critical and engaged in issues that affect their communities.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards were announced today across eight categories. The 2021 recipients are:

- **Adult Volunteer of the Year:** Sayeed Karimi from Regents Park
- **Senior Volunteer of the Year – joint winners:** Kay Ching-Kue from Chatswood, and Helen Mears from Coffs Harbour
- **Volunteer Team of the Year:** South Western Sydney Local Health District Palliative Care COVID-19 team
- **Club Volunteer of the Year:** John Rodd from Wagga RSL
- **Corporate Volunteer of the Year:** Aristocrat
- **Excellence in Volunteer Management:** Royal Rehab Volunteer Services, from Ryde
- **Volunteer of the Year and Young Volunteer of the Year:** Abbie Kelly from Broken Hill

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The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are an annual program run by **The Centre for Volunteering** to recognise the outstanding work of volunteers in every region across NSW. The awards are in their 15th year and have grown to become one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across Australia.

The 2021 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are supported by principal partners the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and ClubsNSW, which represents the state's 1,400 not-for-profit clubs.

The Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said:

“Despite COVID-19, volunteers have continued to work right across the spectrum of the sector.

“They’ve worked to deliver meals to the vulnerable; care packages have been provided for families in need in locked down areas; and lifeline phones have continued to be answered. Volunteers have made sure people in palliative care are treated safely, with care and dignity; they’ve helped keep aged care residents connected; and they’ve protected communities in the face of natural disasters.

“In short, volunteers have helped keep their communities going in a crisis. Today’s ceremony is to say thank you, not just to the finalists, but to each and every volunteer in NSW.”

NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services Alister Henskens said:

“Volunteers are the glue that helps bind our communities together.”

“Over the past 18 months they have risen to the challenges in emergency services, the environment, health, youth and community sport, to name but a few.”

“Volunteering stretches across all generations and all communities in NSW, and I congratulate all volunteers, not just the award winners and nominees, for their invaluable contributions.”

“Abbie is an inspiring young person who showcases the talent and can do attitude of volunteering and is a very deserving recipient of this year’s NSW Volunteer of the Year Award.”

ClubsNSW CEO Josh Landis said:

“After the challenging year we have had, I’ve never been more proud to support the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards and represent an industry where more than 30,000 volunteers help to make clubs such great places to bring people together.

“Well done to all the volunteers who were recognised at today's ceremony for their extraordinary work. These people have continued to donate their time and effort to support others, despite the challenges of COVID-19, floods and more.

“The 25 online regional ceremonies over the last three months have been fantastic, but to be able to say thank you in person today feels very special.”

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About the 2021 award winners

Adult Volunteer of the Year - Sayeed Karimi from Regents Park

Sayeed is President of the Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association.

During the Pandemic he initiated care packages to help migrants, refugees, people who have lost their jobs and the elderly – a program that has so far helped more than 500 refugees and asylum seekers and 250 vulnerable Australians.

A refugee himself, Sayeed has dedicated 15 years to supporting the community in Australia.

Senior volunteer of the Year joint winner - Kay Ching-Kue Tang from Chatswood

Kay has been a volunteer instructor at Willoughby City Council's MOSAIC Multicultural Centre for 27 years.

At 92 she commutes to MOSAIC to teach three classes a week, with students travelling up to two hours each way for her classes.

She is a strong advocate for and supporter of other Council initiatives such as organic gardening, sustainability, social inclusion and community awareness of health and wellbeing issues.

Senior volunteer of the year joint winner - Helen Mears from Coffs Harbour

Helen has been a United Hospital Auxiliaries volunteer at Coffs Harbour Health Campus (CHHC) for the past 40 years. She has fundraised for medical equipment, staffed the hospital's cafe and gift shop, and recruited, managed and inspired countless volunteers.

Helen has been the President of the local UHA group, the Pink Ladies, for over 30 years, overseeing the donation of more than \$3 million.

During 2020, when all volunteers were stood down due to the COVID, Helen volunteered to order stock and was heavily involved in the reopening of the gift shop and ensuring it was safe for all volunteers to return. When the vaccination program was rolled out at CHHC, she volunteered her time, mostly on weekends, to pack care packs for all staff who were receiving the vaccination.

She also volunteers in the Special Care Nursery, provides a monthly homemade morning tea for Mental Health and caters for regular meetings at Shearwater Lodge, an accommodation centre for cancer patients.

Club Volunteer of the Year - John Rodd from Wagga RSL

The retired cattle farmer and Wagga RSL member sources steers for local high schools and mentors agriculture students as they prepare the animals to show at events such as the Royal Easter Show and the Melbourne Show.

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All steers are auctioned to raise money for local schools and charities, including Country Hope, Wagga Women's Health Clinic and local Willans Hill Primary School.

Volunteer Team of the Year - SWSLHD Palliative Care COVID-19 team at Liverpool and Camden Hospitals

The COVID-19 palliative care team was set up in 2020 – a time when the impact of visiting restrictions in hospital and community settings, limited people at funerals, border closures and no memorial services made their work more needed than ever.

The volunteers have supported bereaved families right through the pandemic, including the Into the Dreaming Resource Boxes, which provide a culturally safe space within a deceased patient's hospital room for their family and community.

Excellence in Volunteer Management - Royal Rehab Volunteer Services, Ryde

The Royal Rehab Volunteer Services team have been incredibly successful bringing on 648 new volunteers in recent years.

The team focusses on organisation, effective communication and consistency to ensure the smooth placement and ongoing support of Royal Rehab volunteers. They always take the time to acknowledge and recognise their volunteers and ensure they are well supported and suited for their roles.

Corporate volunteer - Aristocrat Technologies, for volunteering with the Cerebral Palsy Alliance

Employees from Aristocrat have provided the equivalent of \$2.5 million over 13 years of volunteering to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

Aristocrat funds CPA's Accessible Gym, Sports and Exercise Programs, which have supported thousands of people living with disability to achieve their personal best in sport. Aristocrat also support CPA's Aquatic and Hydrotherapy Programs; 10-week autism swim safety programs; learn to swim programs; sports camp pool-based activities and triathlon training as well as many fundraising events, and the Annual Children's Christmas Party.

During COVID-19 Aristocrat helped fund Tele practice Starter Kits for CPA families.

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