



# Media Release

Monday, 30 November, 2020

## **Inspirational Volunteer Awards: Cockburn's 2020 winners announced**

While the COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying time for most sections of our community, it provided ideal conditions for the winners of the City of Cockburn's 2020 Inspirational Volunteer of the Year Awards, to excel.

The Award's two categories – Volunteer of the Year, and Volunteer Organisation of the Year – attracted a healthy 49 nominations despite the challenges experienced by volunteer organisations as WA dealt with the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 and its restrictions.

This year, the Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to joint winners – Renae Barker, President of Cockburn Toy Library and Phil Charles, of Feed it Forward Maori Stylz WA.

Second and third place was awarded to Lani Slaughter, President of Treeby Community Association, and Alex Wycherley of South Beach Community Association, respectively.

The Volunteer Organisation of the Year award went to Cooby Cares, with second and third place awarded to Yangebup Family Centre for its Cultural Cooking Program, and the Cockburn Chinese Community Association, respectively.

The Volunteer of the Year award attracted 32 competitive nominations, with joint first place winners chosen from a field of deserving candidates.

Membership activity at Cockburn Toy Library soared after Ms Baker introduced an online mystery box click and collect scheme during the pandemic shut down period.

The library provided sanitised boxes of toys at a time when no other children's groups or playgrounds were open. This meant the service barely stopped, and in the past 12 months members borrowed 4,872 toys, almost twice as many as the previous year, despite being closed for several weeks due to COVID-19.

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Mr Charles established Feed it Forward Maori Stylz WA after seeing an opportunity to redirect unsold food items to people in need during the pandemic when employment and wage instability threatened to leave many without basic items.

While still operating his own business, he worked closely with major businesses to collect and distribute items like bread and vegetables at his own cost to people who may otherwise have gone without.

And all with expert social distancing protocols in place, a ready smile and no expectation of anything in return.

The Volunteer Organisation of the Year award category attracted 15 nominations, with first place going to Cooby Cares which is staffed entirely by volunteers, and has just experienced its busiest period since forming in 2016.

Establishing new occupational health and safety practices to enable an uninterrupted social welfare service to the general community, Cooby Cares ramped up its efforts to support at-risk and disadvantaged people during the pandemic.

Its monthly deliveries expanded from 120 to 400 boxes over the past nine months, providing food, toiletries, household items and clothing to individuals in need.

Since COVID-19 there has been equal growth in requests for cleaning products, bed linen, towels, children's clothes, and baby items.

They also organised care packages for people with no or low incomes, such as the elderly, as well as people in isolation and reached out to health workers and other local organisations.

The group also prepared and distributed a Community Assistance Contact List which was included inside each care box delivered, so people could seek help if needed.

Mayor Logan Howlett congratulated the City's volunteering community who had stood tall and responded to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

"The creativity of many individuals and organisations has inspired many to engage and support others in the community, a true reflection of why so many are proud to call



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Cockburn their home,” Mayor Howlett said.

“To those who were recognised in these awards you have joined an increasing number of people acknowledged for their contribution to our community. Well done.”

This year’s awards were presented at the City of Cockburn’s Spearwood Administration Centre yesterday, Sunday, 29 November.

Our other deserving winners were –

**Volunteer of the Year, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Lani Slaughter, President of Treeby Community Association:**

This busy working mum spends hours improving the lives of Treeby residents, enhancing the neighbourhood, preparing grant applications, volunteering at and running COVID-safe events and actively advocating for crime prevention measures to achieve an alert community with a low crime rate.

She also spends many volunteer hours keeping the community safe with the Coogee Beach Surf Life Saving Club.

**Volunteer of the Year, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Alex Wycherley of South Beach Community Association:**

Mr Wycherley spearheaded two campaigns for his community group, the first utilising his medical background to prepare for COVID-19 by activating fellow community members to shop for and help vulnerable neighbours in need.

In response, 45 community members registered to help their neighbours, including facilitating contact with and access to health professionals for those not wanting to attend clinics.

He has also undertaken extensive research to further a community desire to change its name from North Coogee to South Beach.

**Volunteer Organisation of the Year, 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Yangebup Family Centre for its Cultural Cooking Program:**



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For 27 years, Yangebup Family Centre has been providing grassroots community development activities to empower and encourage people to get to know each other in a diverse and inclusive way.

One of the centre's popular offerings is the Cultural Cooking Program which rather than dwindle due to COVID-19, grew into an even larger hub as it transitioned from in-person gatherings to a thriving online community.

While its supporters were disappointed when the group had to put its activities on hold, the centre was able to promote it via social media, exposing it to an even larger audience of people keen to connect over food.

A chef held live online cooking demonstrations from her home and by the end of June, the group had more than 500 members sharing their diverse cultures and food, and forging new friendships at a time when social connection has never been more important.

## **Volunteer Organisation of the Year, 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Cockburn Chinese Community Association:**

Since becoming incorporated in 2018, this organisation has worked hard to help raise its members' quality of life by enabling their integration into the Cockburn community while maintaining and developing their culture.

It has a hub at the South Lake Ottey Centre for popular activities, events, gatherings and workshops for all age groups.

During the pandemic, group members encouraged community members to help each other get through it together.

Volunteers helped those in quarantine with grocery shopping, organised a face mask donation to Cockburn Care, held a DIY video competition and dance competition which raised funds that were donated to local charities.

They also provided the community with up to date factual information as events unfolded due to the pandemic, helping to minimise anxiety.

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Winners of the 2020 Inspirational Volunteer of the Year Awards with Councillor Phil Eva and Deputy Mayor Cr Lara Kirkwood (far left), and Mayor Logan Howlett and Cr Phoebe Corke (far right).

For more information contact:  
Media and Communications Officer  
City of Cockburn  
T: 08 9411 3551  
E: [media@cockburn.wa.gov.au](mailto:media@cockburn.wa.gov.au)