



Media Release

11 November 2019

Inspirational Volunteer Awards winners announced

When she isn't removing snakes from people's yards or teaching people how to survive in the desert, Ann Gerlach is at the Yangebup Family Centre volunteering.

Mrs Gerlach has helped shape an award-winning cultural hub where people can embrace diversity and belonging.

The family centre has organised 'boomerang bags' to be sewn to avoid free bread being transported in plastic bags, it has hosted sustainability workshops, and arranged thousands of cards to be sent to defence forces abroad to communicate with loved ones back in Australia.

Mrs Gerlach was the recipient of the Mayor's Volunteer Award as the overall winner of the City of Cockburn's Inspirational Volunteer Awards for more than 15 years of service to the Cockburn community.

Mayor Logan Howlett said volunteering in Cockburn was going from strength to strength as residents pursued their passion in one or more fields by giving back to their community.

"The diversity of volunteering means that people of all ages benefit from those who give up their time to create a better future whether it be in junior sport, the arts, aged care, emergency services, community and resident groups, faith groups, the returned services and wherever people come together to contribute," Mayor Howlett said.

"Congratulations to our volunteers with special thanks to those who have been nominated for the 2019 Inspirational Volunteer Awards, the category winners and the overall winners.

"The richness of our community is based on your personal efforts and those who came before us and the volunteers going forward."

The awards were presented at Spearwood Dalmatinac Club yesterday.



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Other category winners announced include:

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander category – Heidi Mippy, Djidi Djidi
Aboriginal Women’s Corporation**

Heidi Mippy has made a lasting impact in the community, particularly with young Aboriginal people at risk. She also volunteers as Vice Chairperson on the Aboriginal Reference Group which meets regularly to communicate with the City, to strengthen understanding and celebrate the achievements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Community Leader category – Lechun (Carol) Zhang, Cockburn Chinese
Community Association**

Carol is the founder and leader of the Chinese Community Association in Cockburn, bringing together many people from non-English speaking backgrounds. She started with little experience but demonstrated great management skills to provide fun activities and events. A busy working mum, she is now seen as a role model to many.

Volunteer Organisation category – Assisting Your Life to Achieve Inc (AYLA)

AYLA began in the homes of its two co-founders but four years’ on operates from a large warehouse in Cockburn Central.

Starting out as an emergency food, clothing and furniture service, the organisation runs an Op Shop, several social support services and offers traineeships. About 150 volunteers support the group’s operations with a high percentage securing employment thanks to the work experience gained by volunteering with AYLA.

Volunteer of the Year – Robert Keller, Harvest Lakes Residents Association

Robert Keller has volunteered in various roles for most of his adult life, most recently for the Harvest Lakes Residents Association. Robert is a natural leader, committed to bringing the community together and keeps people informed of local issues, events and fundraisers. He volunteers in other capacities to help wildlife and the environment, and enjoys volunteering at his local primary school with his dog to support the Story Dogs program.



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