

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **FIREFIGHTER, YOUNG TEACHER AMONG MID MURRAY'S AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD WINNERS**

A long-serving volunteer firefighter, a passionate young teacher, a talented 8-ball player and an event that helped raise the profile of mental health have been honored in the Mid Murray Council's annual Australia Day awards.

The winners were formally announced at a community morning tea on Thursday, 9 January, which also honoured the efforts and achievements of all nominees.

Keyneton CFS stalwart **Philip Graetz**, who has served with the brigade for 38 years, was named the district's **Citizen of the Year**. Mr Graetz has also volunteered his time for the past five years as a member of BlazeAid – a charitable organisation that co-ordinates the rebuilding of fences and other structures in fire-ravaged areas. A dedicated community member, he has also served as Secretary/ Treasurer of the Keyneton Progress Association for six years, as the Chairperson of the North Rhine St Peter's Lutheran Church for five years and as a member of the Rotary Club of Barossa Valley for eight years.

The **Swan Reach Progress Association** was recognised for its efforts in organising the **Ski for Life** event held on 8 March, 2019 with the **Community Event of the Year Award**. The event drew more than 500 people to Len White Reserve in Swan Reach as a major stop on a 456km water-skiing trek from Murray Bridge to Renmark, which raised much-needed awareness for mental health.

Dedicated teacher and active Swan Reach resident **Rohie Griffiths** was named the district's **Young Citizen of the Year**. Miss Griffiths was recognised for her tireless work to build connections throughout her local community, including with young people and the elderly. With her passion for her community and a positive outlook, she has also helped reinvigorate the Swan Reach Progress Association, and the Blanchetown Swan Reach Redbacks Football and Netball Club, where she volunteers her time as a member.

The Mid Murray Council's **inaugural Youth Achievement Award** will be presented to **Charlotte Lane-Hatton** on Australia Day at Mannum. A talented 8-ball player, who has already represented her sport at a State and National level and who holds a world record for speed ball, Charlotte also gives her time performing with the Mannum Community College Choir. The 13-year-old has also taken part in choir performances at the Adelaide Festival Theatre and with the Murray Mallee Regional Choir.

Mid Murray Mayor Dave Burgess thanked all of the award nominees for their ongoing commitment and service to their community.

"These awards are a reminder of the priceless contribution made by volunteers across our district," he says.

"Without their dedication, enthusiasm and passion for service to our communities, our towns would not be the vibrant, closely-connected places they are today.

"We are especially grateful for, and proud of the work of all of our volunteer firefighters such as Philip and their emergency services colleagues. The same should be said for our quiet achievers serving on our community groups such as the Swan Reach Progress Association who give so many hours of their time to create events that connect local people and build strong, positive communities.

“With the contribution of our younger residents including Rohie and Charlotte, who stand as positive role models to highlight what the next generation can achieve, I think our future is in great hands.”

The nominees honoured as part of the Australia Day Awards morning tea were:

#### ***Citizen of the Year***

- **Joy Smith** – a long-serving foster carer, Sunday School teacher, a member of the Black Hill Ladies Friendship Group since 2002, a member of the Lobethal Poultry Club for more than five years and also a member of the Strait Gate Knitting and Crochet group providing blankets for charity.
- **Shane McGrath** – the head of the Bowhill Progress Association who runs a successful kayak fishing competition each year to raise funds for homeless veterans and to pay for ongoing improvements to the town. He’s also helped beautify and revegetate Bowhill, and runs free camp outs to bring visitors to the town to support local businesses in the off peak season.
- **Kaye Falkenberg** – a dedicated member of the Cambrai, Mannum, Sedan and Blackhill communities including serving as Cambrai Hall Committee Chairperson (Committee member for over 30 years), Mid Murray Lutheran Parish Secretary and St Johns Lutheran Church Cambrai Secretary.
- **Valorie Bottroff** – a tireless Mannum community volunteer across many local events, fundraiser for the Mannum District Hospital, Mannum Community Development Committee life member and Trees for Life life member.
- **David Brinkley** – a long-serving member of the Younghusband Hall Committee (11 years as President).
- **WINNER: Philip Graetz** – a long-serving Keyneton CFS volunteer fire-fighter who has also volunteered his time for the past five years as a member of BlazeAid and who has served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Keyneton Progress Association for six years, as the Chairperson of the North Rhine St Peter’s Lutheran Church for five years and as a member of the Rotary Club of Barossa Valley for eight years.

#### ***Young Citizen of the Year***

- **Chelsea Barber** – a dedicated young community leader who has served across her school and wider community in areas including sport, music and school leadership roles.
- **Mitchell Heward** – a high all-round achiever who has given freely of his time across many areas including coaching football, serving in leadership roles at the Mannum Community College and organising school events.
- **WINNER: Rohie Griffiths** – a passionate teacher who has helped connect organisations and residents, including the young and the elderly, across the Swan Reach community, and who has helped reinvigorate the Swan Reach Progress Association and the Blanchetown Swan Reach Redbacks Football and Netball clubs.

#### ***Event of the Year***

- **Mannum RSL Sub Branch Centenary Dinner** – A celebration of the 100 years of community service of the Mannum RSL Sub Branch held on 11 August, 2019, attracted 130 people from all over the State including His Excellency Hieu Van Le, Governor of South Australia.
- **Mannum Community College and Mannum High School Past and Present Student Group for the Mannum Schools – 50th Anniversary Celebrations** – A two-day celebration of the past 50 years of education at the current site that attracted a total of 1000 people to events spread across the weekend.

- **WINNER: Swan Reach Progress Association: Ski for Life** – A community event that attracted a total of over 500 people to Len White Reserve on March 8, 2019 as a major stop on the 456km water-skiing trek from Murray Bridge to Renmark to raise awareness of and funding for mental health.

The awards will formally be presented at the Council's **Australia Day celebration, *Breakfast in the Park*, at Mary Ann Reserve in Mannum on Sunday, 26 January from 7am.**

The community event is supported by the Lions Club of Mannum, which will also present its Lions Youth Achievement Awards on the day.

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