

WA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

- Western Australia's volunteers were recognised at the WA Volunteer of the Year Awards on Thursday 18 May at Crown Perth.
- The awards program is hosted by Volunteering WA, the peak body for volunteering in WA, during National Volunteer Week (15 - 21 May).

Volunteering WA was honoured to announce and congratulate the seven remarkable winners of the **2023 WA Volunteer of the Year Awards** on Thursday 18 May at Crown Perth, during National Volunteer Week (15 - 21 May).

More than 315 volunteers, managers, and volunteer involving organisations attended the Awards with special addresses from His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM, Governor of Western Australia; and Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Volunteering.

The awards recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions made by volunteers and organisations each year across seven different categories. In 2023, 22 finalists were shortlisted from over 230 incredible nominations.

Tina Williams, CEO of Volunteering WA, praised the generosity, efforts and dedication volunteers make to the WA community.

“Hearing the stories, impact and dedication that each of our finalists demonstrates is truly awe-inspiring. Volunteers show us that anything is possible, and that helping one another is how we move forward as a society,” said Tina.

“Volunteering is at the heart of the Australian community; and volunteers are Change Makers - taking action to make the world a better place by contributing as the often-invisible workforce that supports the nation every day.

“Volunteering WA’s role is to empower people and communities through volunteering, by supporting volunteer organisations and managers; and by celebrating and bringing state-wide focus to the volunteering experience through campaigns like National Volunteer Week, the Awards program, and our volunteer garden party at the end of the year.”

Nominations for the *WA Volunteer of the Year Awards* open in January each year, and information can be found at awards.volunteeringwa.org.au.

2023 WA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR WINNERS

WA Excellence in Volunteer Management Award

2023 Winner: Vicki Pollard, Peel Volunteer Resource Centre

Vicki Pollard has managed the Peel Volunteer Resource Centre for the past 15 years, which empowers volunteers and managers through upskilling and support, connecting volunteers with community organisations and supporting vulnerable groups through volunteering programs.

She is a member of the Minister for Volunteering's Community Reference Group where her leadership has contributed positively to succession planning and long-term strategic successes for multiple organisations.

WA Volunteer for Multicultural Communities Award

2023 Winner: Susanne Becker-Hamersley, Bunbury Multicultural Group

Originally from Germany, Susanne Becker-Hamersley has been involved with the Bunbury Multicultural Group for the past seven years previously holding roles of secretary, Vice Chair, and now Chair. The Group organises the largest annual multicultural festival in the South West.

WA Lifetime Contribution to Volunteering Award

2023 Winner: Dr Amanda Draper

Volunteering started early for Amanda when she would volunteer after school at Bunbury Nursing Home. Outside her full-time employment as Head of Mathematics at a Bunbury school, Amanda volunteers on governing boards, fundraises for cancer research groups, coaches soccer and basketball, tutors students, volunteers with St John Ambulance, and is the volunteer President of the South West Mathematics Association of WA.

Her volunteering extends all around Bunbury and the South West, with many locals feeling the benefit of her impact. In addition to her volunteering, Amanda has been a Foster Carer for 19 years, caring for over 60 children.

WA Young Volunteer of the Year

2023 Winner: Samuel Thomas, Sam's Spares

19-year-old Samuel Thomas co-founded the 100 per cent volunteer-run organisation, Sam's Spares, to aid in reducing the amount of e-waste sent to landfill, refurbishing second hand devices and distributing them at no cost to the community.

Over the past 12-months, Sam has taken in almost 46 tonnes of e-waste; diverted 28 tonnes of e-waste away landfill; and refurbished/reused 919 pieces of IT.

With a lived experience of autism and Tourettes Syndrome, Sam strives to overthrow stigmas and limitations put upon the neurodivergent community – proving that anyone with a passion and purpose can be a Change Maker. Sam plans to grow the not-for-profit and offer training and future employment to neurodiverse people and empower people to follow their passion.

RAC WA Volunteer of the Year

2023 Winner: Rahul Seth, Activate Mental Health

Rahul Seth founded Activate Mental Health and leads a team of 30 volunteers who deliver over 360 events each year to help reduce isolation for people with mental health difficulties.

Rahul is a passionate and dedicated individual who is filling a need in the community for those who are the most vulnerable. He has provided a platform for fun volunteering opportunities and promotes the importance of community and social connection for positive mental wellbeing.

Rahul Seth believes the key to mental health recovery and living a happy life is developing social connections through meetups, events and volunteering.

WA Excellence in Corporate Volunteering Award

2023 Winner: REIWA

The Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) empowers communities through its corporate volunteering programs. Nominated by The Salvation Army, REIWA supports the organisation through corporate volunteering, helping to connect 81 real estate agencies across WA with the Salvos to help mobilise volunteers, resources and support for people experiencing homelessness.

REIWA agents support The Salvation Army on the front line supporting vulnerable Western Australians. REIWA and its members are committed to be actively involved in WA communities and are making a real difference to those in need – they are The Salvation Army’s first point of call for urgent volunteers.

Community Volunteer Organisation of the Year

2023 Winner: Friends of the Community

With 45 active volunteers ranging from 12 – 84 years of age, Friends of the Community has a strong focus on bringing the whole family into volunteering, and can have three generations of one family volunteering at their events.

Friends of the Community is an association made up of dedicated volunteers, and through profits from its volunteer-run food trucks, has helped the community with over \$180,000 in donations.

Despite the slowing of events due to the pandemic, Friends of the Community volunteers have been able to fund new programs to help new migrants learn to swim, provide food and kitchen equipment to homelessness programs, and raise and donate thousands to charities.

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Volunteering WA

Volunteering WA is the peak body for volunteering in Western Australia, working across community, government, corporate and education organisations to build capacity of volunteer involving organisations, and support volunteering.

Volunteering WA empowers people and communities to enrich Western Australia through engaging, leading and advancing volunteering across the state.

www.volunteeringwa.org.au

National Volunteer Week 2023

National Volunteer Week (NVW) is Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteering with thousands of events and activities held across the country during 15 – 21 May 2023.

www.volunteeringwa.org.au/nvw

WA Volunteer of the Year Awards

During National Volunteer Week in May each year, Volunteering WA hosts the state's largest celebration with the WA Volunteer of the Year Awards.

<https://awards.volunteeringwa.org.au/>

The **WA Volunteer of the Year Awards** would not have been possible without our Award Partners: Office of Multicultural Interests (Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries); INVOLVE; Lotterywest; NeonLogic Agency; RAC; Silverchain; Stan Perron Charitable Foundation; AON Insurance; Department of Communities; Ferngrove Wines and ABC Radio.
