

30 July 2010

Council announces 2010 Shoalhaven Medal Winners

Editor's note: This release is embargoed until Friday 30 July 2010 at 7pm.

A rescuer and the organiser of Shoalhaven's Relay for Life are joint winners of the 2010 Shoalhaven Medals. Craig Hockings and Phillip Smith have been awarded Gold Shoalhaven Medals for 2010 for their bravery and selfless work in the community.

Mr Hockings was at a local Shoalhaven beach in January this year when he witnessed a family of four caught in a rip and were carried 200 metres offshore. With concerns for their safety Mr Hockings paddled out to them on a surfboard and eventually gathered all four family members. Without the intervention of Mr Hockings there was a real danger that this incident might have ended in tragedy.

Phillip Smith is the Chair of the Shoalhaven Relay for Life, a fundraising body that raises funds for cancer research. With Mr Smith as Chair, the association was able to lift funds raised from \$40,000 in 2003 to more than \$230,000 in 2010. Mr Smith is also involved in Mercy Ships, an organisation that seeks to alleviate suffering and distress by providing medical and other services to people affected by war in their own nation.

Shoalhaven City Mayor Councillor Paul Green said the Shoalhaven Medals are one way that Council recognises the generous, brave and kind hearted efforts of those people who work tirelessly in our communities.

"This year we have people who have saved lives directly, people who work behind the scenes to make city roads safer and our drivers more skilled and aware," Cllr Green said. "We also have citizens who through their generosity have been making the city a better place through their hard work and community foresight."

Winner of the Silver Medal for 2010 is Ross Cooper. Following the loss of his son in a car accident Mr Cooper joined an alliance of NSW Police, Ambulance Service and Drug and Alcohol Educators to form the Skilled or Killed Young Driver Safety program.

The program aims to heighten the awareness of young people about the skills required to enjoy driving safely on our roads. Ross presents the story of his son's death to the young students who will become drivers throughout all high schools in Shoalhaven City.

Mr Cooper has expanded his presentation to include drink-drive offenders, Sydney high schools and various prisons.

Joint winners of the Bronze Medal are John Ings, Sharon McCutcheon, and Ruth Cave.

John Ings has been involved with a number of community organisations in Berry during the past 15 years. He is involved in Land Care, Clean Up Australia, Berry Alliance, Berry Public School Parents and Citizens Association, Berry Criterium.

Sharon McCutcheon is cofounder and artistic director of Circus 35 South, a community circus based in Ulladulla. She is also a qualified teacher and has worked as an actress, dancer, writer, choreographer and director in amateur and professional companies for 20 years. She is also involved with the Blessing of the Fleet, Ulladulla Youth Centre and the Dance Factory Academy in Ulladulla.

Ruth Cave has been a dedicated community volunteer for the past 18 years. She has volunteered for community groups such as Meals on Wheels, Adult Day Care, Bush Care, Park Care, school reading assistance, patient transport for local hospitals, the Probus Club and the Shoalhaven Eisteddfod.

Clr Green presented the 2010 Shoalhaven Medal winners with their medals at an official celebration on Friday 30 July from 5.30pm at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre. This is the second year the Shoalhaven Medals have been awarded by Council.

Background information

Craig Hockings, from Callala Bay, was involved in the rescue of a family of four at Target Beach in Jervis Bay. Mr Hockings helped to rescue a six-year-old boy, his 21 year old sister, 41 year old father and 69 year old grandfather after they had been swept 200 metres offshore by a rip.

Phillip Smith, from Bomaderry, has been the chair of the Shoalhaven Relay for Life since 2005 and has been able to lift fundraising from \$40,000 in 2003 to more than \$233,000 in 2010 and rising. Phillip is also assistant principal of the Nowra Christian School. He and his wife, Paula, also support Mercy Ships, a charity that works to provide support to areas of war in nations. Phillip and Paul offer their services in nursing and stewardship to provide nursing services, food and water for people affected by the war in their nation.

Ross Cooper, retired from Vincentia, started the SKYDS project following the hit and run death of his son. As road deaths and injuries and crashes in the region were above the state average due to several factors, an alliance was formed to provide information and education for young people about to become drivers. The Skilled or Killed Driver Safety program targets all year 10 students in Shoalhaven and they hear the story of Ross and Kerry's son and the risks of driving.

John Ings, from Berry, has been involved with Berry Alliance since 1995 where he has been Treasurer, and President. He is involved with a 32 page newsletter from the Alliance which is printed and distributed to 2,200 addresses. He also established Berry Landcare and Future Care. He also coordinates and manages Berry's Clean Up Australia Day. He has been president of the Berry Parents and Citizens Association.

Sharon McCutcheon, from Ulladulla, is a teacher and actress, dancer, writer, choreographer and director of amateur and professional companies for 20 years. She has been involved in teaching children and adults in the city for the past 15 years. She has been a member of the Milton / Ulladulla Entertainers for 13 years. She has been an associate member of the Blessing of the Fleet Committee for the past three years. Sharon is the cofounder and artistic director of Circus 35 South, a community circus based in Ulladulla. The circus has about 150 students aged from three years to 63 years and runs classes, workshops and shows locally and nationally.

Ruth Cave, a retired nurse from Riversdale, Ruth has been involved in Meals on Wheels for 18 years, the Bodaree National Park park care group for 10 years, and provided reading assistance to students at Shoalhaven Heads Public School for 15 years. She is also involved with Nowra Adult Care, the East Nowra Public School breakfast club, and the Scripture Union Christmas holiday beach mission.

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