

DEFINITION | Citizen: a native or naturalised individual who owes allegiance to a state or nation (Merriam-Webster).

Credit where it's due

Lending a helping hand has won a pat on the back for these local residents

Awards | Nicole Cridland

DEBORAH Holmes has been helping people in need since she was a child.

Early memories are of setting up shop in front of her Malvern East home, selling things to raise money for the hungry.

Her parents were bemused and many have since called her "mad" for welcoming the disadvantaged into her own home.

But her selflessness was recognised last Thursday with a Community Service Citizen of the Year Award.

She was among five residents and three community groups honoured in a City of Stonnington Citizen of the Year Awards ceremony at Malvern Town Hall.

Ms Holmes established the Avalon Centre in 1987 in Caulfield North and moved it to Malvern East in 1997.

Volunteers offer support and friendship to disadvantaged and socially isolated people.

Therapeutic and recreational services bring light to the lives of people who have been isolated by an intellectual disability, mental health problems or homelessness.

Ms Holmes has also volunteered for 10 years at Inclusion Melbourne.

"People right on our doorstep need help," she said.

"The lonely, the mentally ill, the homeless.

"These people are being ignored."

Armadale lawyer Nicola Watts was recognised for her support and fundraising efforts for homeless youth.

For 10 years, Ms Watts has been a member of the Lighthouse Foundation's Malvern East committee and has been instrumental in raising much-needed funds.

The foundation has nine houses across Melbourne that provide homes for youth who have suffered long-term neglect and abuse.

Each home provides a sense of



Stonnington Citizens of the Year Deborah Holmes, awarded for community service, and Nicola Watts, recognised for her youth work.

Picture: STEVEN CRABTREE N09MP804

family and 24-hour therapeutic care to help young people heal and rebuild their lives.

As an independent family lawyer, Ms Watts has represented children whose situations were "pretty bad".

The Lighthouse Foundation provided positive results at the other end, she said.

"It is something I really believe in and the kids really do get the help they need to get back into life and society."

AWARD CITATIONS

ARTS/CULTURE: Wendy Ritchie for her role in the success and longevity of the Embroiderers Guild of Victoria

COMMUNITY GROUP: Windsor Senior Citizens' Club for more than 50 years providing a range of activities and events for Stonnington's older residents and for its contribution to encouraging and nurturing dancing opportunities through its dance club.

EDUCATION: Volunteer tutors of Inclusion Melbourne for supporting people with disabilities to live fulfilling lives in the local community.

Volunteer tutors provide one-on-one literacy and numeracy support to adults with intellectual disabilities.

SPORT: Tony Byrnes ("the face of Malvern District Auskick") for investing personal time into club activities, organising games at the MCG and Etihad Stadium, and increasing participation rates for girls.

YOUNG CITIZEN: Alicia Eva for being an ambassador for the participation of females in sport, particularly AFL, as a player and coach.

MAYOR'S LIFETIME AWARD: Stonnington City Brass for its long-standing musical contribution to the community evolving from Prahran and Malvern Tramways Employees Band in 1911 to one of the most superb brass bands in Melbourne today.