

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

13 January 2021

Fenland's community heroes recognised at virtual Pride in Fenland Awards

Inspiring volunteers and groups who go the extra mile to support their communities were celebrated last night (12 January) at the 13th annual Pride in Fenland Awards.

The event, which was held online for the very first time, honoured the incredible contributions of unsung heroes from across the district.

The 2020 ceremony was due to be held in a packed Wisbech St Mary Community Centre in March last year, with civic dignitaries, nominees and their families in attendance. But with COVID-19 restrictions continuing, Fenland District Council and the Fenland Citizen took the ceremony online to ensure the achievements of local people in 2019 and early 2020 didn't go unrecognised. The winners were announced on the Council's YouTube channel yesterday and can be watched back here: <https://youtu.be/FOnisbz83dE>

This year's 2021 Pride in Fenland awards will be entirely dedicated to those who have gone above and beyond throughout the COVID-19 crisis, with nominations to be opened in the coming months – so watch this space!

Last night's awards were presented by Cllr Susan Wallwork, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Communities, and Cllr Sam Clark, Portfolio Holder for Social Housing and Leisure, with the Judges' Special Award presented by Jeremy Ransome, Editor for the Fenland Citizen.

Cllr Wallwork said: "The standard of nominations was outstanding, making the judges' task of choosing winners and runners-up particularly difficult! There were so many inspiring stories of people devoting countless hours to their communities, often without any recognition. Their efforts and dedication truly make Fenland a better place."

Cllr Clark added: "We know that voluntary efforts in Fenland are outstanding and our Pride in Fenland awards demonstrate this year after year. Holding the 2020 awards online has meant that these efforts won't be forgotten due to COVID, and that even more people will be able to enjoy the ceremony."

The winners and runners-up in the five categories are:

VOLUNTEER IN THE COMMUNITY (presented by Cllr Susan Wallwork)

Winner: **Margaret Bird**, for her tireless work in the community over many years. Her work has included volunteering at Doddington Hospital for 20 years and Wimblington Community Car Scheme for ten years. She was also the District Commissioner for the Girl Guides and is still active in the organisation – including going for badges!

Runner-up: **Stephen Short**. Stephen's nominator said he is devoted to making Manea a "wonderful place to live" for families and individuals – so much so that he drives back from his home in Wales to organise and support village events!

YOUNG PERSON IN THE COMMUNITY (presented by Cllr Sam Clark)

Winner: **Billy Cunningham**, for being an outstanding member of the Volunteer Police Cadets of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Billy chose to become a cadet despite knowing he would probably experience some negativity from his peers because he is a Traveller and is incredibly proud of his heritage. But he decided that the best way to change people's opinions was from a positive position and he has become a real asset to the Police Cadets.

Runner-up: **Jade Merson**, for her incredible dedication to running Wisbech Sea Cadets on a voluntary basis, alongside work and young family commitments. She represents her Sea Cadet unit at every Remembrance Day parade, leading the cadets in front of large crowds, and undertakes charity fundraising throughout the year.

GROUP, CLUB OR ORGANISATION BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY (presented by Cllr Wallwork)

Winner: **The Friday Group**, for providing support for early dementia sufferers and their families in a loving, respectful and happy environment. Run entirely by volunteers, the group offers stimulating activities, entertainment and friendship when people need it the most.

Runner-up: **Chat-Tea**, for going the extra mile to make a difference to vulnerable people in the community. The devoted group of young people dedicate the first Sunday of every month to offering a meal and companionship, free of charge, to people experiencing food poverty and isolation anxiety.

SPORT IN THE COMMUNITY, sponsored by Freedom Leisure (presented by Cllr Sam Clark)

Winner: **Les Mills**, for his outstanding commitment to March Cricket Club and his local community over a number of years. Cricket Club Chairman Les is a qualified cricket coach, welfare officer, Fenland Trophy Cricket League founder and much more. He has ensured that the club is seen as one big family, while also reaching out to members of the local community to offer sporting opportunities.

First runner-up: **Tim Clifford**, for going above and beyond to ensure the many Manea football teams can play. Tim not only coaches, but he sources grant funding, attends committee meetings and marks out all the football pitches in his own time and for the benefit of the community.

Second runner-up: **Ernie's Amateur Boxing Club** in Chatteris. What started in Ernie's garage has grown to be a very popular sports club which has been teaching young people discipline through boxing for many years.

JUDGES' SPECIAL AWARD (presented by Jeremy Ransom, Fenland Citizen Editor)

Winner: **Deborah Slater**, for her dedication to ensuring her home town of Whittlesey has life-saving equipment. Deborah set up Defibs for All in Whittlesey nearly seven years ago with the aim of ensuring no-one in the town was more than three minutes away from a life-saving defibrillator. She has worked tirelessly to fundraise to buy the essential equipment, as well as to fund the testing of young people, and to train people in how to use the defibs. Her example has inspired other towns to follow suit and provide publicly accessible defibs in as many places as possible.

Runner-up: **Carol Turner**. Carol, from Ponders Bridge, was nominated not once but eight times by a variety of people for her dedication to the village. Despite sadly suffering from her own serious health issues, she remains the 'heart and soul' of the community, always willing to help others wherever possible.

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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226