

April 15, 2013

MEDIA RELEASE

Children's special needs advocate voted Seasons Community Champion

The mother of a handicapped child who founded a number of support groups for parents of children with disabilities has been chosen as the winner of the Seasons Community Champions Award following an online public vote.

Paula Newton was one of eight finalists for the community award scheme, which is supported by the Community Newspaper Group. It seeks to recognise and honour those unsung heroes who go out of their way to help people in their community. Finalists included a dog shelter volunteer, a special needs assistant, a care home volunteer, a volunteer at a camp for children with special needs, a community advocate, and a cancer mentor.

Finalists were selected by a panel of judges who, after facing some difficult decisions, chose eight entries to go to a public poll which received 1,188 votes. They attended a reception in their honour on Monday at Chez Pierre in Nedlands, where Ms Newton was announced as the winner and awarded \$2,000 from Seasons Funerals.

Ms Newton, who recently moved to Northam, received the most votes on the basis of the community work she performed whilst living in Brentwood. As the mother of a child with a rare condition, Cardio-Facio-Cutaneous (CFC) Syndrome, Ms Newton set up a support group (*Parents of Children with Special Needs Support Group*) for parents of children with special needs through the Office of Disability Services in Brentwood and later set up a Facebook group for parents of children with CFC syndrome, where visitors can compare their stories and check common complaints of their child's condition.

Paula also successfully fought for the City of Melville to advertise that children with disabilities were able to attend holiday recreation programs.

Ms Newton and her husband Rod have six children (5 biological and 1 adopted): four with psychological issues and one that is handicapped and fully reliant on her parents. On top of all this voluntary work and family challenges, Ms Newton has been a foster mother for ten years, specialising in emergency cases and long term placements.

It was also decided to present Kellie Knox, who achieved the second highest number of votes, with a Highly Commended certificate, a cheque for \$200 and dinner for two at Chez Pierre.

Ms Knox, who lives in Bibra Lake, works full time as an Education Assistant for children with special needs. In her free time, she assists in the running of Rotoract Gosnells. The Rotary-sponsored service club for young people aims to provide young people with skills and knowledge that will help them in personal development, as well as helping them identify and address the social needs of their local community and developing a better understanding between people around the world.

Ms Newton also volunteers as a “buddy” at *Handicamp*, a Rotary-sponsored live-in camp for young people with disabilities. Each camper has an able-bodied “buddy”. The “buddies” assist the campers to participate in all activities. They look after their physical and medical needs such as dressing, showering, diet and medication.

General Manager of Seasons Funerals, Erin Erceg, said that the Seasons Community Champions Award was a great opportunity for people to get recognition for the hard work and hours of free time that they give in order to help other people in their community.

“Working in our industry, it is inevitable that we meet people from all areas of the community. We are lucky to hear the stories of so many people – both living and those who have passed on – and our staff have often been struck by just how many of these people did, or are still doing, amazing things in their community that have never really been acknowledged,” said Ms Erceg.

“As the Community Champions Award celebrates community spirit, we felt it was important that the winner was selected by the community itself through a public vote on our website.

“Paula and Kellie are worthy winners and on behalf of Seasons Funerals I am delighted to be able to reward them in some way for their contribution to society”, she said.

ENDS

INTERVIEWS: Contact Zoë Buswell from Riley Mathewson below to facilitate an interview with Seasons General Manager, Erin Erceg; or any of the Seasons Community Champions Award finalists.

IMAGES: Contact Zoë Buswell from Riley Mathewson below.

A summary of all finalists is attached to this email.

For further information, please contact:

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About Seasons:

We are storytellers.
Stories that tell of your loved one's life.
Stories that make their life live on.
Stories told by our family to honour your family.
Incomparable stories.
Stories that deserve an incomparable funeral.

Seasons offers state-wide services and has chapels in Balcatta, Belmont, Canning Vale and Kelmscott.

About the Seasons Community Champions Award:

- All completed entries were reviewed by a panel of judges, who selected eight finalists.
- The finalists were voted for by public vote through the Seasons website – with the winner being the finalist who received the most votes.
- All finalists attended a dinner in their honour at Chez Pierre, Nedlands where the winner was announced.
- The winner will receive a cheque for \$2,000 from Seasons Funerals.
- There was also a Highly Commended award recipient who received \$200 from Seasons Funerals and dinner for two at Chez Pierre.

The Seasons Community Champion Judges:

- **Erin Erceg:** General Manager of Seasons Funerals
- **Hon. James Clarko AM AE JP:** former speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Stirling City Councillor and prominent community figure
- **Kerrie Robinson:** Team Leader at the Billy Dower Youth Centre
- **Linda Winchester:** CEO of CASM (Citizens Advocacy South Metropolitan)
- **Graham Castledine:** Partner, Castledine & Gregory Law and Mediation