

Going above and beyond

Veteran proud of community

By Laura Luvara

A SUNBURY volunteer and a Westmeadows youth organiser are this year's Hume Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year.

The awards were announced on Saturday during Hume Australia Day celebrations at the Broadmeadows Town Hall.

Citizen of the Year Sandra Taylor-Maqueda, who was also named Sunbury Kiwanis Club Citizen of the Year, was recognised for her work as founder and executive director of the Cancer and Natural Therapy Foundation of Australia.

She said the award was "totally unexpected".

Ms Taylor-Maqueda founded the centre in 1994 after her son Daniel survived a rare form of terminal cancer.

Opting for quality of life over traditional medical treatment, she used natural remedies to help comfort and, she believes, cure her son.

The centre helps hundreds of people each year who are dealing with cancer and chronic illness.

She said she was passionate about her work.

"Rewards are not monetary but come in very special ways, like the appreciation you get from other people."

Lucas Ryan, 18, was named Young Citizen of the Year for his role as key organiser of the Hume Youth Summit in 2007.

The event allowed hundreds of young Hume residents to voice their opinion on national issues.

"It's important young people have an opportunity to give their views on issues they're involved in," Mr Ryan said.

"I feel a lot happier living my life because I can now say what I want to say, and I am also able to hear the views of others."

Mr Ryan is also a member of the Hume Youth Ambassador and Leadership Group.

He will start a bachelor of arts at Melbourne University this year and said he was interested in a career in community work or politics.



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Mr Morgan said Mr Levey's involvement with veterans' affairs extended beyond the call of duty. He was known in Sunbury as a mentor and friend who would always push himself and others to get the best out of every situation.

"Once he got in the president's chair, he just never stopped organising," Mr Morgan said.

"He was always thinking, always thinking."

"And everything was for the RSL — everything was for the blokes."

He said having access to welfare information for veterans had been an invaluable addition to the community.

"He was a great bloke and he deserved it, he really did," Mr Levey said.

"He's very greatly missed — in my opinion the words 'over and above' accurately describe Geoff's commitment to the veterans community and the town."

Mrs Levey echoed Mr Morgan's opinion.

"If someone thought they didn't have the capabilities to do something, he'd nurture them to do it," she said.

"You always knew where you stood with Geoff and he nurtured and encouraged people to do their best, and often exceed their best."

"He was proud of this community and where he was living — he had that charm that made you just want to communicate with him."

"What he has managed to do in the community will stay in the community and remain a legacy of who he was — that tells you the depth of the person he was."

Mr Sertori said even when Mr Levey was in hospital in 2000 recovering from a horrific car accident that almost killed him and Mrs Levey, he continued to carry out his pension officer duties from his bed. "He was just a really good bloke," he said.

"He did well for pensioners in Melton and we had a welfare barbecue every Thursday and before he became ill, he was still there every week."

"He was just a really good bloke. Anyone who ever needed him for a lift or anything, he would always drive them or whatever they needed. He had that true Australian spirit of helping people out — he was true blue."

National day has a local flavour

AUSTRALIA Day celebrations in Hume had a laid-back feel this year, with new citizenship, home-grown music and food the essence of the day.

A total of 149 new citizens from 30 countries now call Hume home, after a citizenship ceremony at the Broadmeadows Town Hall.

The Hume citizen, young citizen and community event of the year were also announced at the event.

Guests were entertained by contemporary Australian singer Tim Henry, who performed the folk anthem *I am Australian* as well as songs by Ben Lee, Crowded House and Paul Kelly.

The celebrations finished with a traditional morning tea with scones and lamingtons.

Sunbury celebrations kicked off at 8.30, with the annual Kiwanis Club free barbecue breakfast on the Village Green, followed by a flag-raising cere-



Good guide: Bridget Harris, pictured in 2005, was the Kiwanis Young Citizen of the Year.

mony performed by local Guides and Scouts.

Among them was Kiwanis Young Citizen of the Year Bridget Harris, who won the award for her volunteer work as junior leader at the Wongguri Guide Unit. She was also school captain of Sunbury Downs Secondary College in 2006.

Senior Guide leader Annette Swaffield nominated Ms Harris for the award. She said Ms Harris had been a junior leader for the past five years and was responsible beyond her years.

Spirit of youth: Young Citizen of the Year Lucas Ryan, top right. **Picture:** Anna Joske

Leader: Hume Citizen of the Year Sandra Taylor-Maqueda, right. **Picture:** Michael Copp

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