

Media Release

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Katoomba Op Shop veteran named 2025 Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year

Cancer Wellness Support volunteer John Eva has been named the 2025 Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year for his advocacy and support for people living with cancer across the region.

Mr Eva was recognised today at the 2025 NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards ceremony at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba.

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are hosted by The Centre for Volunteering to help promote and support volunteering across NSW.

They are now in their 19th year and celebrate the work of thousands of individuals and volunteer teams from a diverse range of organisations across the state.

Recipients of other individual and team awards were also announced today.

Blue Mountains Adult Volunteer of the Year: Joanne Costigan from Mount Riverview

Joanne is a nurse, mum of three and dedicated volunteer with Blue Mountains Food Services' Cook + Connect program, guiding young people with disabilities through hands-on cooking sessions.

Participants learn practical skills and safe food handling techniques, while preparing morning tea and lunch. Jo has created a safe, stable environment for young people with disabilities to thrive.

Blue Mountains Senior Volunteer of the Year: John Eva from Leura

John first connected with Cancer Wellness Support (CWS) more than eight years ago, following the heartbreaking losses of both his brother and partner to cancer.

Since then, he has given his time and expertise to the Katoomba Op Shop that generates over \$2 million a year, making up 93% of the group's income.

John is a passionate fundraiser, working tirelessly to ensure people across the Blue Mountains, Penrith and Hawkesbury can continue to access free CWS therapies, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Blue Mountains Volunteer Team of the Year: The Selvaggi Food Services Team

The three-person Selvaggi Food Service Team delivers much needed food hampers to over 200 people in need across the Blue Mountains.

With many locals facing tough choices between paying bills and buying food, the team plays a vital role in Gateway Family Services' Essentials emergency relief program.

Their support goes well beyond weekly hampers - contributing to the Christmas Hamper Project, Kids Hampers, and fundraising events like garage sales and market days, which help keep the pantry running year-round.

Centre for Volunteering CEO Gemma Rygate said in difficult times, volunteers often come forward to meet a crisis with compassion.

"Volunteers are the quiet force, whether helping ease cost of living pressures, supporting those in crisis or responding on the front line of floods, fires and emergencies," Ms Rygate said.

"Their dedication isn't just admirable; it underpins a more resilient and compassionate society. These exceptional individuals give selflessly - often while juggling careers, study, and family life - yet they still choose to show up for others when it matters most."

The NSW Minister with responsibility for Volunteering, Jodie Harrison said:

"Congratulations to the recipients of the Blue Mountains Volunteer of the Year Awards. You've been recognised as heroes by the people in your communities who know you best.

"Thank you for your ongoing contributions, which make New South Wales the best state to live and work in. These awards are an important way we recognise your passion and dedication to your local communities.

"The NSW Government is continuing to work with The Centre for Volunteering to build a more diverse and inclusive volunteering sector so that all our volunteers feel respected and acknowledged for their work."

Blue Mountains volunteer award recipients will be invited to represent their region at the Gala State Ceremony at the end of the year, where the NSW Volunteer of the Year is announced across each category.



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About the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards

The NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards are in their 19th year and have grown to become one of the largest celebrations of volunteering across Australia.

They are an annual program run by The Centre for Volunteering to recognise the outstanding work of volunteers and Leaders of Volunteers in every region across NSW.

Individuals or teams can be nominated in one of seven award categories:

- Young Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Youth – Hon Rose Jackson
- Adult Volunteer of the Year
- Senior Volunteer of the Year
- Volunteer Team of the Year
- Emergency Volunteer of the Year – sponsored by the Minister for Emergency Services – Hon Jihad Dib
- Not-for-Profit Voluntary Governance Award
- Volunteer Leader of the Year

Twenty-five regional ceremonies are held in towns and suburbs throughout NSW from mid-August until November.

The regional finalists will be invited to a Gala State ceremony in December in Sydney where the NSW Volunteer of Year is announced. Recipients for the NSW Volunteer of the Year are also announced across the seven categories.

The Awards are run by the Centre for Volunteering. The NSW Government are the principal partners for the awards.



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