



Press Release from Buckinghamshire Council

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Buckinghamshire says thank you – National Volunteers' Week 2020

Councillors visit volunteers to say thank you and deliver community award trophies.

It should have been a night of celebration and appreciation; the final Chiltern Community Awards, organised by the former Chiltern District Council, to thank all the wonderful people in the district who make a difference to the community.

Unfortunately, the escalating coronavirus crisis meant the awards ceremony on 12 March had to be cancelled, as it became clear it would not be possible to deliver the night the volunteers deserved, in a safe and enjoyable way.

Since the pandemic took hold, volunteering has become even more important than ever, providing a lifeline to many vulnerable people.

So this year's National Volunteers' Week (1 June – 7 June), is the perfect opportunity for the new Buckinghamshire Council to say thank you to all volunteers across the county – and for councillors to finally be able to deliver the trophies to those Community Award winners.

Cllr Gareth Williams, Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health, said: "We have all seen the amazing response of volunteers across Buckinghamshire to the coronavirus pandemic, and our community is stronger and more united than it has been for a long time. This Volunteers' Week, we're saying thank you to all the volunteers in Buckinghamshire; those who have been helping their community for years, and those who have continued or started volunteering to support others during the pandemic.

"Now that government restrictions on movement have been relaxed, it's also been an opportunity for myself and my fellow councillors to deliver those trophies to the winners of the Chiltern Community Awards, who have been waiting for their awards since March! Congratulations to all the winners, and thank you to every single volunteer."

The Chesham Community Fridge were the winners of the Chairman Special Award in the 2020 Community Awards.

The group, which now includes over 40 volunteers, set up a food bank, collecting unwanted but edible food from supermarkets and other food shops, then redistributing this food to the general public twice a week from the food bank.

The group promote the foodbank on Facebook, where they have built an online community of people, who share recipes for the food that is being offered. In 2019, the Fridge redistributed 33 tonnes of edible food that would otherwise have gone to waste or landfill and in the first four months of this year the Fridge has already redistributed more than 20 tonnes of food.

Pauline Kirkham, founder of Chesham Community Fridge said: "Covid has had a big impact in terms of the number of businesses donating surplus food and the number of visitors benefitting from the food. We received produce from many schools which closed suddenly and from many businesses sadly hit by closure. We were distributing to broadly 400 - 500 visitors per month in 2019. 2020 has seen a tremendous jump in visitor numbers.

We'd like to say thank you to all our food donors; some are businesses who have been able to continue to support us during the pandemic and some have had to temporarily halt as their operations have been impacted by covid, but we're grateful for all their support. Two of our biggest regular food donors continue to be The Felix Project (which collects surplus food from retailers, restaurants, hotels etc. across London and delivers to us every week) and Waitrose in Chesham. Other donors include Marks & Spencer (Amersham and Berkhamsted), Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi and The Co-op (Gt Missenden and Bovingdon), catering company Global Infusion Group based in Chesham and Rex Artisan Bakery in Little Chalfont."

The second recipient of the Chairman's Special Award was Colin Veysey. In 1988, Colin established a community transport scheme to help people in need travel to things like hospital appointments. He has been the chair ever since and encourages other people to volunteer and get involved. He is also involved in various youth and community action groups, entertains elderly people at a local care home with his musical talents, organises tea parties for older residents within the community to combat social isolation and supports fundraising for many worthy causes.

He was also one of the founders of a community newsletter, which he still edits many years on and is heavily involved in its production and distribution.

Colin is described as "a pillar of the local community, giving unstintingly of his time and effort to promote community cohesion, networking and bringing together all generations in the village." One of the people who nominated him for the award said he is "an inspiration and a friend to many and thoroughly deserves this recognition of his hard work within the community."

Full list of all Chiltern Community Award 2020 winners:

Frontline Services Award

Winner - PCSO Jen Shraga, Thames Valley Police

Group Award

Winner - Theatre Shed

Runners up - Amersham Men's Shed

Chiltern Community Champion Award

Winner - Elaine Brown

Runner up - John Pluck

Older and Bolder Award

Winner - Patricia Holdsworth

Runners up - David Wolstenholme, from Little Chalfont Community Library

Judy Biggs, from the MS Society

Young Volunteer Award

Winner- Kelsie Wright

Runners up – Harry Sendell-Baker and Abi Patterson, from MAD About Friday

Healthy Living Award

Winner- Luke Miller, Chesham Grammar School Table Tennis Centre

Runner up - Andy Harris, lead coach for the U8s Chesham Stags

Eco Ambassador Award

Winner - Doug Kennedy

Runner up - Chris Wege

Business in the Community Award

Winner - Jordans Picture House

Runner up - Citizens Advice Chiltern, special mention to Max Molho

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