

# VOLUNTEERING *and* CONTACT ACT

Media release **UNDER EMBARGO** until 9:00PM Tuesday 22 May 2018

## LOCAL VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED AT 2018 VOLUNTEERING AWARDS

Volunteering and Contact ACT hosted the 2018 Volunteering Awards on Tuesday 22 May at the National Arboretum to recognise the outstanding contribution volunteers make to the Canberra Region.

“We received almost 100 nominations,” said Vicky Darling, CEO of Volunteering and Contact ACT. “This is a record breaking year for us, and it goes to show how essential volunteering is in our beautiful city.”

The **2018 Volunteer of the Year** is Natalie Wright, nominated for her volunteer work with the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Over the past seven years, Natalie has shown students how to give back to the community through the St Vincent de Paul Society Mini Vinnies Program. The program encourages students, twelve and under, to volunteer their time, to fundraise, and most importantly, to advocate for social justice issues such as homelessness. Natalie has grown her original group of 25 students to over 120, to become the largest Mini Vinnies group in Australia.

“Natalie is an excellent example of how a young person with a busy career can still make time for volunteering,” said Ms Darling.

The **Canberra’s Choice Award** was voted by the public and was presented to Soroptimist International Canberra Inc, part of a global volunteer organisation creating opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls.

“We received over 11,000 votes, which is another record breaker for us,” said Ms Darling. “Soroptimist International Canberra Inc was the clear winner and we’re delighted their contribution to volunteering has been recognised by the people of Canberra.”

The **Volunteer Team of the Year** was presented to the Big Heart Project Committee, nominated by the Love Your Sister charity, founded by brother and sister duo Samuel and Connie Johnson.

The team of 15 volunteers was led by Canberra Mum Connie Johnson, who passed away from breast cancer in September 2017. The passionate volunteers organised a record breaking fundraising event by encouraging Australians to donate 5 cent coins to help vanquish cancer. “With their help, with their support, with their love, I have been able to build this into the event of my dreams, the day of my dreams,” Connie Johnson said.

“The Big Heart Project Committee is an incredible demonstration of team work and community spirit,” said Ms Darling. “It was an honour to recognise their wonderful volunteering efforts.”

“Our ceremony is held during National Volunteer Week and this year’s theme “*Give a little. Change a lot.*” represents the millions of volunteers who make a profound impact in their communities and on society, through giving a little time,” said Ms Darling.

# VOLUNTEERING *and* CONTACT ACT

“At 36.8%, Canberra has the highest rate of volunteering in the country. The 2018 nominees were outstanding and represent what it means to be a Canberran. It was our pleasure to host the awards for the 27<sup>th</sup> year and celebrate volunteering’s contribution to our community,” said Ms Darling.

**2018 Volunteer of the Year** – Natalie Wright

**2018 Volunteer Team of the Year** – The Big Heart Project Committee

**2018 Senior Volunteer of the Year** – Delia Quigley

**2018 Young Volunteer of the Year** – Allannah Marshall

**2018 Profound Influence of the Year Award** – Andrew Prowse

**2018 Innovation Award** – Fiona Jarvis

**2018 Corporate Volunteering Award** – Beyond Bank Staff

Interested in volunteering?

Visit the Volunteering and Contact ACT website [www.vc-act.org.au](http://www.vc-act.org.au) or call 6251 4060

---

## **Materials:**

Please find attached a booklet of biographies of all category winners.

## **Available for interview**

Vicky Darling - CEO of Volunteering and Contact ACT

## **Media contact:**

Sarah Wilson

Phone 0262514060

Email [policy@vc-act.org.au](mailto:policy@vc-act.org.au)

**Media release** *UNDER EMBARGO until 9:00PM Tuesday 22 May 2018*