****

**2012 TrustPower**Taupō District  **Community Awards**

**Great Lake Centre   
3 September 2012**

**Special Commendation:**

Our first Award that we are going to announce tonight is a special commendation that we have been handing out for quite a few years now. This is for a group who is always outstanding, they run such a professional event fuelled with the work of volunteers, so outstanding in fact that we kicked them out of the Awards, and decided to give them $500 and a certificate every year to recognise their efforts. The special commendation goes to Lake Taupō Cycle Challenge.

Congratulations to you again for the iconic event you bring to this community!

**TrustPower Taupō District Youth Community Spirit Award**

*This Award recognises secondary school students’ service to school and community.*

**Joint Winners: Jessica Parker and Emma Robinson**

**Jessica Parker from Tauhara College** contributes to every facet of school life whether it be in her role as Deputy Head Leader, in the performing arts, as a peer support leader, house leader, school executive or the various school committees she is on.

But her reach doesn’t stop there – she spreads her love out into the community by involving herself in programmes to raise awareness around cancer and the environment. She has been involved in the 40 hour famine and ‘Live Below the Line’ which is an organisation creating an awareness of poverty. Jessica contributes to the local community newspaper around youth issues and is also involved in Duffy Books, Anzac Day memorials and the Waikato Regeneration Project. At her church she is a senior leader in the ONEIGHTY Youth Group and is a part of the worship band, playing the piano. You may often see Jessica singing at community events or at the Hospice here in Taupō. It is hard to know how Jessica also finds time to be a top academic student – but she does!

Your school describes you as a positive role model in all aspects of your life. You have very strong morals and core values. They say you are hardworking, highly motivated, committed and passionate person, someone who gives their time to others, asking for nothing in return! Well done Jessica – we look forward to hearing about you in the future!

**Emma Parker from Taupō-Nui-A-Tia College** is an impressive young lady who truly knows the value of community spirit. Emma is deputy house leader, a year 13 tutor representative, a member of the senior executive committee and is on the school council. She is also the convenor of the College Publicity Committee and is an editor of the TNT Times as well as being the Treasurer of the Zenith Club at school.

Out in the community Emma has volunteered her time to teach hip hop at Leanne Short’s School of dance, at Taupō Primary, Mt View Primary and at St Patricks School. She also co-choreographed Taupō Intermediate’s J Rock Dance Performance earlier this year. She has been an assistant photographer for the 2011 ironman competition and often takes photos for numerous school events. This talent has seen both her photos and stories she has written in the local Taupō Times as well. She has also acted on a voluntary basis at various museum exhibition openings. Like Jessica, Emma manages to do all of this while maintaining excellent academic results. Her school describes her as someone who shines the values of respect, kindness and consideration and is always willing to serve. We think you do a great job of demonstrating youth community spirit! Congratulations.

**Category A**

**Heritage & Environment**

**Runner-Up: Pukawa Wildlife Management Trust**

The First award tonight in our Heritage and Environment category goes to a group who are working hard to restore the Pukawa area – well done to the Pukawa Wildlife Management Trust.

The main driver for this Trust is to control pests and restore native birdlife to Pukawa. The voluntary trust and the volunteers trap and poison rats, possums and cats in an area of about 60 hectares of native bush surrounding the village of Pukawa Bay. There are many traps that are serviced throughout the year and these busy volunteers have also been creating and maintaining bush tracks.

To prove the weight of these volunteers - twice a year tracking tunnels are set and read and these consistently give readings of less than 5%. Bird surveys are also conducted twice a year and bird numbers are very high in the area.

Amongst all of this, the Trust organises workshops, research projects, Arbor Day plantings, newsletters, weed control and have regular meetings.

Thank-you to all you volunteers who regularly muck in to keep this area beautiful! Great work.

**Category A**

**Heritage & Environment**

**Winner: Taupō SPCA**

The winner in the Heritage and Environment category goes to a group who never cease to amaze us with all that they do the Taupō SPCA.

With over 2,500 voluntary hours per month – and around 120 volunteers, our furry friends in the Taupō district have a lot to be thankful for!

The loyal volunteers could be involved in anything from fundraising, event organising, managing staff, writing newsletters, providing administration support, educating the community, cleaning – you name it…the volunteers do it!

In the past 12 months, the branch has seen an increase in the number of animals coming into their care, with the highest in the history ever recorded and over 700 animals rehomed!

A new school education programme has been established that reaches every Taupō school. This programme engages children, teaching skills that improve self-esteem and develop deep respect and compassion for animals. Another great initiative from these volunteers is the weekly information stall in the Taupō Town Centre on a Saturday – increasing the exposure of SPCA into the community even more.

Taupō SPCA has been described by the SPCA National body as one of the best SPCA and animal welfare facilities in New Zealand.

Thank you for your massive efforts, we are sure you are rewarded in many licks and purrs!

Category B  
Health &Wellbeing

**Commendation: Women’s Refuge**

We had a large number of entries in this Health and Wellbeing category, which I think tells us this is a very special aspect of the Taupō region. Hence we have two commendations tonight - the first going to the Women’s Refuge.

The Taupō Women’s Refuge volunteers support those in the community who have been victims of domestic violence. This unique service is available 24/7 so that when advocacy or intervention is needed there will be no delay!

A refuge safe house is available to women and children suffering the effects of family violence. The Refuge provides plans and walks alongside women through their journey of positive change. Earlier this year the Refuge launched its own website, which is completely Taupō specific to ensure access is available for information at any time.

The Taupō Women’s Refuge volunteers are extremely committed and passionate about providing this vital service. Thank-you to the volunteers who help out there community in this way!

Category B  
Health &Wellbeing

**Commendation: Taupō Victim Support**

The second commendation in this category goes to a group of volunteers who are also providing a vital service to the Taupō community – that is the Taupō Victim Support.

The 14 volunteers at Victim Support give around 1,500 voluntary hours per month to provide support to those who are victims of all sorts of incidents, including homicides, fatal crashes, suicides, accidents, sexual assault and robbery.

The volunteers are able to give immediate advice and information on people’s rights, refer them to counselling, assist at court, family group conferences and provide emergency grants to help start rebuilding the victims lives.

One story submitted by Victim Support reads “I look back and feel very privileged to have Victim Support walking alongside us through our nightmare…Victim Support in my eyes are the unsung heroes of the community and will always be winners in my eyes.”

Amazing encouragement to continue the work you do, it is so valued in your community!

Category B  
Health &Wellbeing

**Runner-Up: Lake Taupō Hospice**

For helping the terminally ill and their families, the runner up in the Health and Wellbeing category goes to thevolunteers of Lake Taupō Hospice.

Over 170 trained volunteers support Lake Taupō Hospice to deliver high quality palliative care to the terminally ill and their whanau.

Volunteers are a part of all components of this organisation. There is a pool of volunteers who visit patients in their homes to provide company, some run the Tuesday Club, which is a morning tea and activity for patients and their families. There is a team of massage, beauty therapists and a podiatrist who all make a big difference to how patients are feeling, and then there’s the talented people who offer a biography service, listening and recording the life stories of patients which stand as lasting, precious family treasures.

A troop of 30 volunteers prepare home cooked meals and baking for patients while there’s another bunch of good sorts maintaining and transporting equipment to and from patient’s homes. A mobile crew of gardeners take care of the grounds at the Hospice House and also visit the homes of patients. And last but not least there’s the volunteers offering counselling and bereavement support, administration services and coordinating the Hospice shop which is a vital income stream for this organisation.

In a time that is so tough, the volunteers of Lake Taupō Hospice are doing so much to ensure that community members are living every moment. It’s a vital service - thank you for providing it!

Category B  
Health &Wellbeing

**Winner: St Johns Ambulance Operational Volunteers**

The winner of the Health and Well-being category goes to some volunteers who are providing an extra special service, the St Johns Ambulance Volunteers.

From rushing the critically ill to hospital, to helping with first aid at local events; from talking to the lonely on the phone to teaching children and the wider community what to do in an emergency, St John Taupō staff and volunteers make an unwavering commitment to every New Zealander in and around the district.

St John Taupō is a vibrant, connected organisation made up of dedicated people, passionate about serving the community and caring for others. Thirty volunteers work alongside paid staff caring for and saving the lives of hundreds of people within this community, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Last year alone, the Taupō ambulance station responded to over 3,800 calls for help. They completed over 950 inter-hospital journeys for over 1,400 patients and they covered over 130 local events.

All of these duties and tasks are in addition to other commitments of work, family and personal time and they do it for the overall benefit of the Taupō community.

Thank you for being there in times of need. Congratulations!

**Category C**

**Arts & Culture**

**Runner-Up: Taupō Youth Arts Trust**

For their support of all budding young artists in the Taupō district the Runner-up in the Arts and Culture category is the Taupō Youth Arts Trust.

Each year the Taupō Youth Arts Trust supports a range of events and activities in the Taupō district that aim to encourage youth to pursue and practise their chosen art form.

Across the year these volunteers are kept very busy organising workshops, arranging financial assistance for youth to attend competitions and workshops and overseeing the Youth Arts Centre.

But the highlight of their calendar is undoubtedly the Talent Quest, this event showcases local talent and there is an opportunity for participants to take home some exciting prizes! A huge amount of work goes into this event behind the scenes to ensure it runs smoothly.

The Trust also hold a Scholarship day where individuals can enter the fields of drama, music, or the visual arts and four $1,000 scholarships are awarded to assist the students with their tertiary studies.

The Taupō Youth Arts Trust has been responsible for a significant growth in youth art and culture in the Taupō district and we want to thank them for the wonderful support they provide for youth!

**Category C**

**Arts & Culture**

**Winner: Taupō School of Music**

The winner of the Arts and Culture category goes to a bunch of lyrical performers who at a young age are already displaying wonderful community spirit – the Keynotes Children’s Choir.

The Keynotes Children’s Choir is a branch of the Taupō School of Music who have been supporting, promoting and teaching youth in music since 1989.

This choir aims to foster a love of group singing and improve the self-confidence and vocal skills of its members. It’s free for any child in the district wishing to join!

There are currently 26 little gems that belong to this group and together they often perform at local functions for the enjoyment of others.

On top of weekly rehearsals, in the last 12 months alone this group have performed at “Big Music Day”, at the Taupō School of Music end of year concert, at St Andrews Church, at the Liston Heights Rest Home and they have street busked to raise funds for their group.

This wonderfully diverse group has continued to grow in numbers with students from as far as Marotiri School attending.

These little voices are making a big impact in the community and they clearly have an exciting future ahead. Congratulations and thank-you to those volunteers who put so much into the success of this group!

**Category D**

**Sport & Leisure**

**Commendation: Tri-Sport Taupō**

We have a commendation in our next category of Sport and Leisure and it goes to Tri Sport Taupō.   
  
Tri Sport Taupōhas around 35 committed volunteerswho together aim to increase participation in sport and recreation activities in the region. They aim to support their members in achieving their goals by providing training and competitions for all ages and abilities.

From October to March this group host an impressive number of events, youth training and competitions. They have co-ordinated volunteers for National events and have supplied volunteers to assist with challenges such as Ironman and Cycle Challenge.

It’s a huge commitment by this voluntary group with each event, training and competition taking a huge amount of research, planning and energy to ensure it runs smoothly.

And with a commitment like this it’s no wonder they have an impressive fleet of athletes under their belt including National Triathlon champions, National duathalon champions and around 20 athletes competing at the upcoming world championships.

Tri Sport Taupō are encouraging people to lead healthier lifestyles, enabling fantastic opportunities for all ages to get involved and also fabulous events for the community to watch! Well done.

**Category D**

**Sports & Leisure**

**Runner-Up: Taupō Association Football Club**

Runner-Up in the Sport and Leisure category goes to a group who go above and beyond to promote a supportive and welcoming environment - the Taupō Association Football Club.

For more than 55 years the Taupō Association Football Club has supported players of all ages and genders in the sport of football. Grassroots football has strong support in the Taupō district with over 560 players belonging to this club who are supported by over 100 volunteers.

Whilst the fields are only used during the winter season, the volunteers who maintain the fields, equipment and facilities are active throughout the year. Whether they are preparing for the coming season or recovering from the last - these volunteers are busy painting, carrying out maintenance, fundraising, maintaining the grounds and applying for funds.

Thanks to the strength of the Taupō Association Football Club this region has also hosted a number of significant tournaments over the last year including the FIFA Oceania Qualifying and Secondary Schools National Tournaments.

Thanks to the Taupō Association Football Club, people of all ages are able to enjoy football and from this have sprung great friendships, confidences and great memories. Congratulations on yet another great season and all the best for the future.

**Category D**

**Sports & Leisure**

**Winner: Great Lake Taupō Hockey Club**

The winner in the Sports and Leisure category goes to the dedicated volunteers of the Great Lake Taupō Hockey Club.

As you can imagine there are many people who volunteer their time to make this sport happen. To start off with there is the volunteer committee, the managers, umpires, all the helpers and those who assist at fundraising and different events.

The Club put in a lot of effort into promoting hockey in Taupō through initiatives like their free “Have a Go Hockey” programme. Over the last two years over 2,000 students from Taupō and the surrounding district have gone through this programme. Another new initiative started by the club is the development of boys and girls Under 11 and Under 13 Taupō representative sides. This is to give junior players a chance to play representative hockey and further develop their skills.

The club, through fundraising, has been able to take teams to different tournaments around the North Island, and they have had lots of success – which reflects the commitment of the coaches, team management and the players to their teams. They have also hosted events such as the “Festival of Hockey” for out of town teams to visit and play.

Last year the Club got a new kitchen, which required a lot of fundraising but can now supply food at events, tournaments and business house hockey.

Over 650 players, coaches, managers and umpires use this facility every week during the hockey season for training and games – not to mention the number of parents and supporters who come along. This is a wonderful community facility – with many people who support it to see its success and this Award is for all of you. Congratulations!

**Category E**

**Education & Child/Youth Development**

**Runner-Up: Literacy Taupō Inc.**

We have now reached our fifth and final category. The runner-up in Education and Child Youth Development goes to a group of very active volunteers providing programmes to adults in the Taupō region – Literacy Taupō.

With 35 active tutors, Literacy Taupō delivers a free literacy and numeracy programme to adults in the Taupō region.

In the last year Literacy Taupō have completed over 4,500 hours of tuition covering topics such as cooking, budgeting, computer literacy for beginners, driver’s license theory, CV writing and Te Reo Maori for beginners.

The services they provide reach a wide range of learners including Industry Training Organisation, Work and Income and Social Service Agency referrals.

One of their long term goals is to further increase the number of tutors who are trained to be teachers – so if any of you want to jump on this bandwagon of teaching others – get in touch with these guys!

By providing these programmes to those in need, the students gain confidence which leads to employment and more community involvement.

Thank you Literacy Taupō for providing this for your community!

**Category E**

**Education & Child Youth Development**

**Winner: Riding for Disabled**

The winner in the Education and Child/Youth Development category goes to the very deserving volunteers at Taupō Riding for the Disabled.

The new sensory walk initiative that was completed in the last year by these volunteers is a magnificent extension to their Riding for Development Programme. This sensory walk is an area where the children ride their ponies in a specifically designed area to enhance their awareness of nature, heighten their sensory perception with a variety of sounds, smells, textures and shapes built into the design. The central feature of the walk is a series of ponds including a waterfall and a flowing creek.

Different surfaces on the path make different sounds under the horse’s hoofs’, meaning the rider needs to adjust their balance. Volunteers have planted all of the native trees and plants along the path. There are many birds that have been attracted to the area. This sensory walk is a favourite part of each programme for the younger and adult riders.

For people with a disability, horse riding may be the only source of continuous activity and regular exercise they get. An amazing initiative with so many benefits! This programme develops and improves physical abilities such as balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination, communication and social skills.

All of these aspects help increase the rider’s self-esteem, and gives them a sense of belonging. Well done!

**Classic Hits Volunteer of the Year Award**

Now, 2012 is another special year for the Community Awards in this district, with the Classic Hits Volunteer of the Year Award. This award is exclusive to this community, and thanks to Classic Hits and The Radio Network it allows us to recognise the efforts of some local individual volunteers who have been nominated for their amazing contributions to the community over the years. Classic Hits is also providing a $500 radio advertising voucher to this year’s Community Awards Supreme Winner as part of their prize pack.

I would now like to hand over to Stephen Spargo of The Radio Network to present the Classic Hits Volunteer of the Year Award.

**Classic Hits Volunteer of the Year Award: Shirley Murray**

Shirley Murray works a full 45 hour week for the Taupo SPCA as an Animal Manager – but completely free of charge. For the last 35 years she has been a committed volunteer pitching in wherever she can.

Shirley attends the animal centre seven days a week and could be seen doing anything from liaising with the public, accepting abandoned animals, assessing animal health, feeding, organising DE sexing, vaccinations OR even cleaning the cages.

Shirley never blinks an eye to a new challenge – she recently set up a new procedure at the new animal centre which was a huge job. There are ten different areas for cats in the new building and this needed to make sure the right procedures were in place for the area to runs smoothly.

Shirley has trained all of the cat volunteers over the last 35 years and with over 500 cats coming through the centre each year that no mean feat!

What a committed volunteer – that the SPCA simply couldn’t do without! Thank-you for your incredible work over the last 35 years – we acknowledge all you do tonight, congratulations.

**SUPREME WINNER**

**TONGARIRO NATIONAL TROUT CENTRE SOCIETY**

The Supreme Winner of the 2012 TrustPower Taupō District Community Awards is the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society.

Let’s hear this group’s story of how they enlighten and educate both children and visitors about trout, the Taupō fishery and New Zealand’s freshwater ecology.

The Tongariro National Trout Centre Society is a volunteer based organisation who provide many different activities and events for the community. The Centre is very popular in the eyes of many children in the district with its Kids Fishing Days, school visits and the Genesis Energy Freshwater Aquarium.

Fishing for your first trout with a volunteer angler is a big part of Taupō’s local identity. On regular days throughout the school and public holidays the volunteers at Tongariro National Trout Centre hold Kids Fishing Days where children are taught to cast a fly rod and catch trout from the children’s fishing pond. The volunteers teach the children, help with administration, weigh the fish, run the BBQ on the day and of course fillet and smoke the children’s catch. Up to 200 children attend each fishing day including many from out of town. With seven of these days throughout the year, that’s a lot of children learning this pleasurable activity.

Another special task carried out by these volunteers is taking students on school visits at the Centre. In the last year over 3,000 students visited the learning centre from 66 schools. The programme is run in partnership with the Department of Conservation and its main aim is to raise awareness of the importance and value of the Taupō trout fishery and freshwater conservation in New Zealand. The tour is run by volunteers who show the children wild trout and teach them some of the key aspects that help manage this special natural resource.

The Genesis Energy Freshwater Aquarium is a big part of this learning programme; it enables students to think about the wonderful fresh water resources in the Taupō area.

The visitor centre is manned by volunteers who normally work four or five days a week. They do front counter duties, help with the children’s activities and walk around and talk to visitors. At the visitor centre you can see a collection of artefacts telling the story of the fresh water fishery.

Volunteers also help at the Whio Family Fun Day each year, where over 600 people come to have fun and learn about the Whio and what is happening to ensure this endangered bird continues to inhabit our rivers.

The volunteers love what they do saying they think they are the luckiest volunteers when they see the delight on the children’s faces when they catch a trout!

Although these volunteers are giving young children a buzz of a trout on the end of their line, and bringing them face to face with a Whio for the first time, the most important and valuable key they are instilling is educating young minds about the deep importance of clean freshwater in the future.

This centre is an iconic visitor attraction that wouldn’t be possible without these volunteers! Thank-you for sharing your community story – we will be seeing you at the TrustPower National Community Awards weekend next March! Congratulations!