

Desiree is Citizen of the Year

DESIREE McKenzie is one of those people who goes above and "beyond the call of duty".

So says Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna.

Last week, Ms McKenzie, who works as the Te Kuiti Community House Trust co-ordinator, was named the Waitomo district's Citizen of the Year.

"She is very worthy of the award as her work with Waitomo youth has been outstanding," says Mr Hanna.

"Through the community house and her helpers, Desiree does everything with passion and goes well beyond the call of duty."

The community house door has been open for those in need of help since 2012.

Ms McKenzie says she loves helping people and seeing people's joy when they achieve a goal – big or small – is what drives her.

Nominated by those she helps through her community house role, Ms McKenzie's first reaction to news of her award was complete embarrassment.

"I thought 'how embarrassing'. I don't do what I do here in Te Kuiti at the community house for the awards, I do it for the kids and the residents."

She has run well attended programmes like Sit and Be Fit, an hour long exercise and socialising session; co-ordinates use of the 4H Community Mobility Van as well as organising the community's Health and Welfare Forum meetings.

But her most successful project is the Community Learner Driver Programme, which recently celebrated its 100th graduate (*Waitomo News*, May 14).

"I love my job," says Ms McKenzie. "The more you give to the community, the more it gives back to you."

"And the community has already given back to me tenfold what I've given them."

"The smiles on their faces when they get their licences, the way they're proud of themselves for accomplishing something, is priceless."

"Doing the testing with them blows me away, because getting a licence is one of life's most important accomplishments. It leads to opportunities and independence, and I get to share in that moment and experience with them."

Ms McKenzie's achievement will be recognised at a formal ceremony on June 7 at the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre.



DRIVEN TO HELP: Te Kuiti Community House Trust co-ordinator Desiree McKenzie's efforts to help more than 100 youths obtain restricted driver's licences is one reason why she is the Waitomo district's Citizen of the Year.

Four other influential Waitomo residents will also be recognised at the ceremony with Lifetime Achievement Awards.

They are: Ray Coffin nominated by the Regional Maori Council for his work with Maniapoto Maori Wardens over the past 47 years; Hari Nahna nominated by Te Kuiti St John station manager Irene

Straker for his 30 years of service to Te Kuiti St John; Mike Johnson, also nominated by Ms Straker for his 26 year commitment to Te Kuiti and Piopio St John, and Dot Ball who will be acknowledged for her 50 years of service to Maniapoto netball. She was nominated by Royalans Netball Club and Maniapoto Netball Centre member Jenny Small.

WAITOMO DISTRICT
Citizens Awards

You are invited to join us in celebrating the achievements of the following people

Desiree McKenzie

Desiree was nominated for **Citizen of the Year** by users of the Community House for her passion for the Waitomo Community and her willingness to make it a better place for all.

In particular there was reference to the work she has done to help make the driver training programme such a success.

Lifetime Achievement Awards

Ray Coffin was nominated by the Regional Maori Council in particular for the work he has done for the Maniapoto Maori Wardens over the last 47 years but also for the many committees and activities he has been involved in over many years.

Hari Nahna was nominated for his outstanding service to Te Kuiti St John over the last 30 years.

Mike Johnson was nominated for his 26 years of service to St John for both Piopio and Te Kuiti.

Dot Ball was nominated for her dedication to Maniapoto Netball for over 50 years.

Presentations will be made to recipients on Sunday June 7th at 2pm Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre

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