



merton
partnership
working with merton's communities

CIVIC PRIDE
VOLUNTEER AWARDS
2024



CEO MESSAGE

Merton Connected's long held vision is a thriving Merton community where people's lives are enriched by voluntary and community action.

As we celebrate these extraordinary individuals and teams, let us also reflect on the ripple effect of their actions, touching lives and shaping futures in ways both seen and unseen. Enjoy the evening, and let's continue to inspire and uplift one another through the spirit of volunteerism.

Together, you truly are making a difference.



WELCOME!

Welcome to the 9th annual Merton Civic Pride Volunteer Awards, celebrating the outstanding community contributions of volunteers in Merton.

Tonight, we gather to honour those whose selfless dedication has made a profound impact on our community, embodying the spirit of generosity and service.

Their efforts span a diverse array of initiatives, whether it's fostering environmental sustainability, promoting youth empowerment or supporting vulnerable residents; each volunteer's work has left an indelible mark on our community, making Merton a better place to live, work and flourish.

Our heartfelt congratulations go to all winners and nominees, whose remarkable achievements stand as testaments to the power of collective action and unwavering determination.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Volunteer Manager of the Year

Employee Volunteer or Team of the Year

Volunteer Team of the Year

Young Volunteer Team of the Year

Environmental Volunteer or Team of the Year

Young Sports Club Volunteer of the Year

Cllr Maxi Martin Young Volunteer of the Year

Paul Smithers Sports Club Volunteer of the Year

Chris Frost Volunteer of the Year

Eric Leppard Lifetime Achievement

VOLUNTEER MANAGER OF THE YEAR

In recognition of individuals who manage or co-ordinate cohorts of volunteers and in their role have made an outstanding contribution to standards of volunteering. A volunteer manager who shows commitment to best practice in supporting volunteers, including volunteer involvement, recruitment, induction, training, personal development, rewards and recognition.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

JAMES RAE - CRITICAL SUPPORT

James is nominated for his passion for helping others, demonstrated through his fundraising efforts and personal generosity. He effectively manages his team while fostering a supportive environment, making him an inspiration to all those he works with.

MICHAEL HILL - MERTON SEA CADETS

Michael is a dedicated leader, he fundraises, teaches, and invests his spare time to ensure young people have the best experience in the Sea Cadets, going above and beyond by training to qualify as an instructor in various areas.

RAY STANDEVEN - POLKA THEATRE

Ray's dedication to inclusivity in Polka Theatre's Volunteer Programme, fostering a supportive environment where all volunteers, including those with disabilities and neurodiversity, feel valued and promotes an environment of equity, equality and inclusion.

ZARA HARRIS - WIMBLEDON GUILD

Zara has revolutionised the volunteer program at Wimbledon Guild, streamlining recruitment and retention of over 200 volunteers. She's become a sought-after advisor in the Merton voluntary sector for her expertise in volunteer management and engagement.

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER/TEAM OF THE YEAR

This award recognises a business/public authority or organisation that has donated employee time to benefit Merton's communities. The Awards can be given to an individual employee or a team/cohort of employee volunteers.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

CHARLIE BEATT - LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

For leading on the LFB Boxing Club, a 10-week program focused on coaching, positive role modelling, and regular exercise. Charlie's dedication has led to the successful completion of the first cohort, marking a significant milestone in their mission to support disadvantaged young people in the local community.

MERTON COUNCIL VOLUNTEERS

Cate, Jude, Oliver, Beth, Rachael, Ross, Mariko, and Jose from Merton Council were nominated for their dedication in revitalising Merton Vision's front garden, showcasing their commitment to community service. Despite busy schedules, they generously volunteered their time to transform the garden, fostering pride and unity.

ROSEMARY HASLAM - ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, MORDEN

Rosemary is nominated for her outstanding volunteer service at Friends In St Helier (F.I.S.H). For the past four years, she has devoted five hours every Thursday to support the elderly members. She assists with setup, welcomes members with warmth, and provides essential assistance throughout the day.

VOLUNTEER TEAM OF THE YEAR

In recognition of a team of 3 or more people who have taken action to make a difference to their local community, environment and/or the lives of residents in the London Borough of Merton.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

ETHNIC MINORITY CENTRE VOLUNTEER TEAM

For assisting with administration, project management, and support services. From facilitating fitness classes to IT skills sessions, their contributions are invaluable in delivering community services to the Ethnic Minority community. They develop essential skills such as empathy, resilience, and teamwork, enhancing both their personal growth and the quality of service provided.

MERTON CITIZENS

Merton Citizens have been visiting 15 local organisations to drive positive change in Merton since 2018. They've championed housing, mental health, refugee support, and the Living Wage, fostering initiatives like empathy training, mental health support hubs, refugee resettlement, and Living Wage accreditation for Merton Council.

MERTON'S COMMUNITY FRIDGE FRIENDS

Fridge Friends, supporting Sustainable Merton, operate their Fridge sessions, distributing surplus food three times per week. With over 50 dedicated volunteers, they collect food from local businesses, distributing over 4,500 kg monthly, preventing waste. Volunteers fulfill vital roles in food collection, distribution, and community building, contributing over 400 hours monthly.

UKRANIAN HUB TEAM

A remarkable team of refugee volunteers who embody resilience and compassion. Despite personal adversities, they dedicate their time weekly, ensuring smooth operations and providing not only food but also comfort and support to those in need. Their presence is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, inspiring solidarity and fostering a sense of community.

ST RAPHAEL'S MEN'S DEN VOLUNTEERS

Founded in 2018 to encourage men's engagement with wellbeing services, this group, located in St Raphael's bespoke 'Men's Den', provides vital support through fundraising efforts, virtual sessions during the pandemic, and fostering friendships among attendees, led by dedicated volunteers Adam, Preston, and Jim.

YOUNG VOLUNTEER TEAM OF THE YEAR

This award recognises a team of 3 or more young people (under 18 years of age) who have taken action to make a difference to the environment and/or lives of residents of the London Borough of Merton.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

AURORA CENTRE (MERTON COLLEGE)

This is a group of young adults with learning disabilities from the Aurora Centre at Merton College who volunteer to tidy up and improve the sites of Morden Hall Park and Tooting & Mitcham FC. They have also created natural spaces and habitats across the sites for wildlife - and maintained access for pedestrians and cyclists along cycle paths.

HARRIS ACADEMY WIMBLEDON

The Post-16 Harris Academy Wimbledon volunteers actively engage in community activities with Sustainable Merton, participating in litter picks, environmental projects, and seed-swap events. Their involvement not only benefits the local community and environment but also boosts civic pride among young volunteers, demonstrating their commitment to making a positive impact.

MERTON COLLEGE STUDENTS

For the past four years, these volunteer students have been delivering Christmas parcels to socially isolated clients of Age UK Merton. They fundraise, collect items, and assemble care packages; spreading holiday cheer with cold weather essentials and Christmas treats. The students' dedication and kindness have left a lasting impact on local recipients.

MERTON YOUTH PARLIAMENT

The Merton Youth Parliament, comprising 30 diverse young people, advocates for the voices of children and young people across Merton, collaborating with various organisations like the MET Police, Safer Merton, and Public Health. Currently, they're spearheading campaigns addressing public safety, mental health, and substance misuse to support Merton's youth.

MITCHAM LIBRARY CRAFT CLUB

Four dedicated young women at Mitcham Library run the Craft Club with unwavering commitment and creativity, engaging beautifully with children every Monday afternoon and during school holidays. They have made a positive impact upon local young people and provided fantastic support to the library team with their pro-active approach.

ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEER/TEAM OF THE YEAR

In recognition of local individuals or teams who volunteer to enhance and/or protect our local environment, whether that be individuals involved in Friends of parks/open spaces or those who give up their time to monitor the quality of the local air or campaign around climate change.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

ADELE JENKINS

Adele dedicates her time to projects like the Merton Garden Streets Project and Citizen Science Air Quality Project. Her positivity and support uplift others, as she tirelessly contributes behind the scenes and encourages fellow volunteers. Adele's commitment, especially in the face of challenges, embodies the essence of making a difference in our environment.

FIONA GRAHAM

Fiona's dedication to Sustainable Merton's initiatives, such as The Wheel Repair Cafes and textile reuse workshops, is exemplary. Through her tireless efforts and innovative ideas, she empowers community members to reduce waste and develop essential skills for a greener, circular economy in Merton.

KEITH HUNTER

Keith is the Chair of the Willmore End Residents Association and has worked diligently with the community payback team and others to improve Abbey Rec and achieve green flag status. He and the team also planted new trees and hedges along the greenaway, stripped out invasive species and installed a pond. He also organises regular tidy-ups and litter picks in the area.

LIZ SHERWOOD

Liz has been a volunteer for the Friends of Morden Park for many years, she works tirelessly maintaining the park and liaising with Merton Council and other volunteers to keep the park well maintained for the public to use. She can often be seen litter picking during a rainy morning or planting seeds on a sunny day.

THE FRIENDS OF CANNIZARO PARK

In the past year, this dedicated team has spearheaded remarkable transformations in Cannizaro Park. From securing prestigious awards to addressing drainage issues and fostering community engagement, their tireless efforts have revitalised this cherished landscape. With the support of 60 passionate volunteers, they continue to enhance Cannizaro Park's natural beauty and heritage for the benefit of Merton.

YOUNG SPORTS CLUB VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

In recognition of a young (under 18) Sports Club volunteer, coach, club secretary, linesman, referee, physio, first aider, tuckshop coordinator etc who has shown commitment to ensuring Merton residents are able to participate in high quality sporting activities.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

CORDELL SIMPSON - MORDEN LITTLE LEAGUE

Cordell was nominated because he's been a fantastic referee to watch. Known for his kindness and pleasant demeanour, he's highly regarded, and the team say they would love to see him officiating again next season. A true asset to the game!

DAVID GHEORGHIU - NIPPON JUDO

David serves as an exemplary role model for the boys in the Judo group. Devoting an additional two hours daily to coach them before his own practice, he spends every evening guiding the younger children. Through his disciplined approach and unwavering support, he sets a commendable standard for behaviour and dedication

IBRAHEEM CHAUDHRY - MORDEN LITTLE LEAGUE

Ibraheem's journey at MLL, from Assistant to Full Team Manager for the Under 8s boys section, demonstrates his remarkable dedication and leadership, earning respect from both adults and players alike. Despite his youth, his academic prowess and numerous accolades, including the DoE Gold Award and the Jack Petchey Award, highlight his exceptional contributions.

LUCY HENDERSON - HOLISTIC FITNESS STUDIOS, WIMBLEDON

Lucy, a former British bronze medalist in kickboxing, once held promise on the UK fight circuit until the pandemic halted competitions. Despite no longer competing, she generously dedicates her personal time to teaching kickboxing and martial arts to younger children at Holistic Fitness Studios Wimbledon.

SOFIA ENCY - NIPPON JUDO

Sofia, a British championships gold medalist in Judo at just 15 years old, selflessly volunteers every day to coach other children at the judo club. Known for her unwavering dedication, focus, and support for younger members, she upholds the high standards set by the coach, making her a valued presence in the club.

CLLR MAXI MARTIN YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR (UNDER 18)

This award is given to an exemplary young volunteer, who not only shows dedication and commitment, perhaps battling against their own adversity, but always goes the extra mile to support local charitable work and the local community. Councillor Maxi Martin worked as a Councillor for 18 years, she was dedicated to the community and its young people.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

ADAM MAUCHE - WIMBLEDON LIBRARY

Adam has truly excelled as a shelving volunteer, demonstrating exceptional initiative and efficiency in his tasks. In just four months, he's earned praise from both staff and senior volunteers for his proactive approach and dedication to maintaining a tidy and accessible library environment.

JAVNIEL MORRISON - AIM121

Javniel was nominated for their invaluable contribution to both the Easter and summer camps at Aim121, where his dedication and hard work has significantly enhanced the experience for all participants.

OLIVER MALLET - WIMBLEDON COMMON NATURE CLUB

Oliver Mallett, a 15-year-old Club Assistant, has been an integral part of the club's journey for over a decade. His caring nature and dedication ensure the safety of younger members, while his insightful contributions to program planning reflect his commitment to the club's success.

RUEL SCOTT - AIM121

Ruel has been nominated for his significant contribution as a volunteer supporting the Easter and Summer camps at Aim121. His dedication and efforts have positively impacted the experiences of camp participants, showcasing his commitment to enriching their time.

TARA BHATIA - WIMBLEDON LIBRARY

Tara has been an integral part of the board games club for over two years, initially starting as a summer reading volunteer. Her dedication and reliability shine through as she sets up and facilitates the club every Saturday, despite her own personal challenges, bringing unmatched enthusiasm and charm to the library.



PAUL SMITHERS SPORTS CLUB VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

In recognition of a volunteer sports coach who dedicates their time and is committed to ensuring that Merton residents can enjoy the benefits of sport and physical activity, giving them the opportunity to feel more motivated, confident and healthy.

Paul Smithers sadly passed away suddenly in 2022.

He was the Youth & Community manager at Fulham FC Community Foundation for many years and dedicated a great deal of time to supporting local Merton young people to reach their potential through the KICK programme.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

DAN WRIGHT - MORDEN LITTLE LEAGUE

Dan consistently exceeds expectations for his team, taking the time to understand each member's strengths and weaknesses to enhance their skills and confidence. His dedication to motivating and nurturing his team fosters an environment where everyone thrives, demonstrating his passion for managing and supporting each individual

NEIL SIMPSON - MERTON CRICKET CLUB (JUNIORS)

Neil's dedication to cricket at Merton Cricket Club is unparalleled. From establishing junior cricket programs to organizing ECB All Stars sessions, his commitment has been instrumental in nurturing young talent and fostering a love for the sport in the community. Despite his responsibilities as a single parent, Neil's passion for cricket shines through, creating fun and enjoyable experiences for young players and making a lasting impact.

SHAUN CONNELLY - MORDEN LITTLE LEAGUE

Shaun's service at MLL spans 18 years, during which he's held various roles, including Welfare Officer, team manager, and League Secretary. His tireless efforts have elevated the league to new heights, particularly during the challenging times experienced during the COVID lockdown. His calm demeanour and organisational prowess will be greatly missed as he retires, leaving behind a remarkable legacy.

ZINAIDA KARNAUKHOVA - POLISH FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Zinaida has been nominated for her exceptional commitment to organising ping-pong sessions, Sporty Mondays, and Morden Hall Park walks, despite facing challenges as a war refugee. Her dedication and selflessness exemplify the spirit of community service, she keeps spirits high and participants motivated and engaged.

THE CHRIS FROST VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award is given to an exemplary volunteer, who not only shows dedication and commitment, perhaps battling against their own adversity, but always goes the extra mile to support local charitable work and the local community. The Award is named in honour of Chris Frost, who herself was a role model. She was the charismatic CEO of Merton Voluntary Service Council (now Merton Connected) for more than 30 years. Chris championed voluntary action, volunteering and partnership working within and across the voluntary and community sectors.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

JILL MITCHELL - DEEN CITY FARM

Jill's consistent dedication and commitment to volunteering at the farm for five years, supporting volunteers with various learning difficulties, including her own son, and fundraising for the organisation and others, make her a notable nominee. Her positivity, resilience, and hard work, even during challenging times, demonstrate her significant contributions.

JULIET BOYD - SUSTAINABLE MERTON

Juliet's long-standing support for Sustainable Merton and her local community, spanning many decades, is commendable. As a trustee and active volunteer, she contributes significantly to various initiatives, including organising Abundance Wimbledon and community table-top sales.

RUTH DUFFY - WIMBLEDON GUILD

Ruth's dedication and compassion shine through in her volunteer role, particularly as an Exercise Class Volunteer where she supports vulnerable clients with limited mobility. Her warmth and leadership within the volunteer team inspire others, while her dedication to becoming fluent in Japanese demonstrates her commitment to inclusivity.

CHARLOTTE (SKYLAR) FREEMAN - FOCUS SURREY

Skylar, a neurodiverse student at Merton College overcomes their own challenges to energetically and compassionately support children with Autism using alternative communication methods. Their dedication, team spirit, and commitment to creating a positive atmosphere highlight their valuable contributions as a volunteer.

TERRY DALCHOW - MERTON VISION

Terry's selflessness and compassion are evident in his support for at least three clients with tasks like shopping, DIY, gardening, and reading correspondence, even while caring for his mother. His dedication, including volunteering six hours a day for four weeks during Christmas, highlights his commitment to the community and exceptional empathy.

ERIC LEPPARD LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

This award recognises individuals who have dedicated a significant number of years to volunteering with one or more organisations. It is dedicated to Eric Leppard, who passed away in 2022 and spent the last 25 years of his life volunteering with several local organisations, including Deen City Farm, Wimbledon Magistrates Court, Homestart Merton, and Merton Home Visits Library Service.

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

CHRIS GRAY

Chris, an octogenarian volunteer has dedicated over 30 years to the Merton community and 20 years at NEMCA, consistently exceeding expectations by helping with events, offering support, cooking meals for seniors, and stepping in whenever needed. Her unwavering commitment makes it a welcoming hub of support for North East Mitcham.

GILLIAN THICK

Since moving to Wimbledon in 1978 and becoming head of Religious Studies at Wimbledon High School, Gillian has been a driving force behind the Christian CARE Association. She inspired her students to support the charity and, after assuming leadership in 2010, expanded its reach to address the growing needs of families during the cost of living crisis, showcasing her profound dedication and empathy.

JAMES SMITH

James, a volunteer coach at Morden Little League for over 18 years, is known for his reliability, positive attitude, and fairness, ensuring all players get equal game time and making training and games enjoyable. He is well loved thanks to his passion for making training fun and engaging for all.

JEANETTE LUFFMAN

For over 30 years, Jeannette has held nearly every role at Morden Little League and is currently the League Chairperson, Kit Coordinator, and Under 13s Boys Coordinator. Known for her tireless dedication to providing free football for all, she is the first on site every Saturday and the last to leave, often managing multiple teams and running errands during the week.

JOANNE DALEY

Despite facing extreme health challenges and personal hardships, Joanne has been an inspirational leader, managing and growing the grassroots charity to significantly impact the local community through empowerment, feeding programs, and mental health support. She has provided unwavering dedication, support, and encouragement to the WAM Global team and beneficiaries.

ERIC LEPPARD LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

SHORTLISTED NOMINEES

JOY & LOUISA ROBINSON

Joy and Louisa are identical twins, they run weekly dance classes at NEMCA for all ages and consistently go above and beyond to support the children they teach as well as organising fundraising and events. They host extra practice sessions before dance exams, put on additional shows to engage the community, and always do so with a smile.

MARIO ROMANI

Mario, a dedicated and experienced coach, ensures all children and young people can attend daily Judo at Nippon Judo Club in Merton, promoting exercise, routine, and discipline. He is a cab driver during the day, using his income to subsidise the club and he has significantly increased the physical activity of hundreds of children in the area.

MARY BRODRICK

Mary is an exemplary lifetime volunteer, having dedicated over 40 years to serving her community in various roles including social work, legal justice and psychiatric care. Gaining her CELTA qualification aged 70, she dedicates her time to helping individuals from diverse backgrounds integrate into the UK by volunteering with Learn English Together in Merton.

MICK TAYLOR

Mick has volunteered as a photographer for over 25 years, contributing his skills to numerous events for Merton Connected and other organisations. For the past 20 years, he has volunteered for Merton Heritage Service and the Wandle Industrial Museum as a curator and archivist, providing valuable information and tours. Mick's longstanding dedication and contributions to the borough are highly valued and appreciated.

ROGER STEELE

Roger has dedicated over 20 years to raising awareness and organising educational events at Wandle Industrial Museum, including talks and events for primary school children in Merton. Additionally, he serves as the treasurer for Merton Neighbourhood Watch, actively coordinating events and meetings to expand schemes across the borough and foster a stronger, safer community here in Merton.

THANK YOU FOR COMING!

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If you have any questions about volunteering, our digital platform or want to join our Volunteer Managers Forums, please e-mail Loana at volunteer@mertonconnected.co.uk

“ The heartbeat of the community, the architects of hope, and the champions of change.

Your dedication illuminates the path towards a brighter tomorrow.

Thank you for shaping Merton with kindness, one selfless act at a time.

