

Aberdeenshire's Future award

Clara Gray

Clara from Lumphanan is a member of the Aboyne Youth Forum and a Young People's Right Defender. She has just finished her final year at the Academy and demonstrates a passion for her community which is almost unrivalled. She cares about the young people who live in Aboyne, and about doing the right thing for everyone. It isn't just a local platform on which she campaigns. She has been working with the Children's Commissioner to progress young people's rights at a national level. Her ambition and drive have also seen her campaign internationally. Human Rights and young people's rights are her passion, but she has also just completed her Saltire Award which is received for recording over 850 hours of volunteering – all while excelling in her exams so far. Clara wants to inspire young people to excellence and help them be their best

The Inspirational Volunteer Award

Amy Muir

Amy is a photographer, in her own right celebrated for her work. But it is the part she plays in the Ballater community which makes her so special. She had the idea of setting up a Farmer's Market in the village and has been at the front of its growth since 2016. It is now considered a firm favourite on the farmers market circuit by stall-holders and shoppers alike. Each year from April to November it brings people in to Ballater and supports the local economy. She hasn't stopped there. Amy is currently working with a group who have just established The Ballater Allotments concept, with the first shoots already beginning to show.

None of this has been without its challenges. Her work studio was destroyed in the fire at Ballater station in 2015, and then just a matter of months later her home flooded during Storm Frank. But it hasn't held her back and Amy is recognised as a truly inspirational person.

The Heart of Aberdeenshire Caring award

Aberdeenshire Refugee Resettlement Team

This team was established after Aberdeenshire Council committed to resettling families via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme. They currently support almost 200 people who have settled across Aberdeenshire, and the ambition of the team is to make sure they have opportunity to make this their home, to support their care, their education and their children's development. The work is done with one ambition – to nurture and empower our new Scots to become happy and active citizens. Many of those resettling here live with the physical and emotional scars of a life unimaginably hard, and they are encouraged at their own pace to find the peace they need in Aberdeenshire. The Council has a great reputation on the national stage for the work to resettle our new Scots, and none of it would be possible without this dedicated and often un-sung team of caring individuals.

The Cultural Award

Alix Gunn

What do you have planned when you are 80? Teaching highland dancing twice a week, running a community social and raising money for cancer research? That is exactly what Alixa Gunn does. This determined grandmother has been teaching dance to kids in Fraserburgh for more than 63 years. She has taught thousands of pupils and many have followed her footsteps into teaching. She is at the helm of the only known dance school in the world to have 4 generations as active members. As well as taking classes each week, she runs a social dance in the town, attended routinely by around 40 couples. Over and above all of that she has raised around 100,000 pounds over the years for Cancer Research. It is thanks to Alixa that Scottish dance traditions are alive and well in Fraserburgh.

The Beautiful Aberdeenshire Environmental Award

Aden Community Allotments

Established just four years ago, the allotments now comprise 64 individual and family plots. The team nominated manage the day-to-day running of the site and add that extra "green" sparkle wherever they can. This includes opening plots to groups supporting disadvantaged people, plots for The Foyer and other charities, a community orchard and demonstration plot, not to mention their regular Tea in the Cabin days. As many as 150 people come along to these days which contribute to family life in Mintlaw. Of course, reducing their carbon footprint is a major factor, as well as reducing food miles for local produce and supporting local wildlife and pollinators. The committee enthusiasm is infectious, and they put Mintlaw at the heart of everything they do.

Local Hero Courage Award

Katie McDonald

Katie from Turriff is just 15 but has already achieved so much in her young life. It was the death of her little brother when her mum was 16 weeks pregnant, as well as other life experience of living with baby-loss, that prompted Katie to champion her cause. She was determined to ensure that her brother Charlie's name would be spoken and that she would do all she could to break down the taboo that often stops people talking about the loss of a child. As well as hoping to get more of us talking about baby-loss, she set out to fundraise. Her aim was to buy a cuddle-cot for the maternity hospital, a cooling cot in which a child can be lain in after it dies, or is delivered, to allow the parents and families to say a proper goodbye. Her efforts were so successful that she was able to buy them three! She has shown the most incredible courage to take all of her own life challenges and use them to help other families. Katie is a truly courageous young girl.

The Community Spirit Award

Keith Jensen

Keith has given years to the Sandpiper Wildcat project. Sandpiper support lifesaving in rural Scotland, and the Wildcat project aims to create a network of trained volunteer cardiac responders around the North East. Keith is a trainer and mentor. His influence extends through Aberdeenshire and he has a positive impact on the many, many people who have been under his instruction. He is one of the most important strengths of the project, and there are a lot of people in Aberdeenshire would not be with us today were it not for the work of Keith. It is his enthusiasm and positivity which earned him this nomination and his efforts to train us all to help save lives is infectious.

Lifetime Achievement award

Alison Young

Some people just come to represent the community in which they live, and Alison Young from Ellon is one of those people.

She has just retired as director of music at Ellon Parish Church, a role she embraced for nearly 30 years. During that time she organised the choir, youth bands, and singing events. She conducts the Aberdeen Gaelic Choir and has been involved with the Haddo House Choir and Ythan Singers. Alison is a piano teacher and has passed on her enthusiasm for music to countless students. Her links to the Ellon community means she was fundamental in providing support to the Syrian refugees who settled in the town and she has been a core part of helping them find meeting places and helping with language classes. She hasn't got any of them singing yet, but not for want of trying! Alison's special place in Ellon can be best explained by this from one of the many people who nominated her:

"She has met people at the lowest and happiest time in their lives, and through a gentle touch, helped them to know that they are valued. I know this because when my wife was not well she was outstanding, gently guiding and supporting. Now that my wife is gone, she is there when I need her, allowing her faith to shine and make a difference when life gets complicated."