

October 8, 2009

Riverhills man honoured for service to road safety

Riverhills resident Wayne Leo has been honoured with an RACQ-sponsored award for his work in spinal education awareness.

Mr Leo, who has been confined to a wheelchair since his spine was damaged in a hit and run car incident 25 years ago, received an Outstanding Service award at the 2009 Queensland Road Safety Awards presentation at Parliament House in Brisbane today.

For the past two decades Mr Leo has been an integral part of the award-winning Spinal Education Awareness Team (SEAT). Managed by the Spinal Injuries Association, the SEAT program is an education and injury prevention program which, due to the support of BHP Billiton, aims to visit over 100,000 Queensland school students this financial year at no charge to the school.

As a foundation presenter when the program began, he has volunteered his time and passion to SEAT, speaking to almost 245,000 people, mostly students, in that time – a significant achievement unrivalled by many volunteers.

In total, almost 1.3 million children have seen a SEAT presentation since 1987, meaning Mr Leo has personally seen around one-fifth of all the students inspired by our program.

Mr Leo's unwavering service to educating the community stems from his own experience of sustaining a spinal cord injury, when he was a young man with a growing family.

Since that time he has presented the SEAT program more than a thousand times, spending tens of thousands of voluntary hours speaking, travelling and educating children with the ultimate aim of inspiring them to practice safe behaviour, especially on our roads, and prevent them from sustaining a spinal cord injury

"If I can save just one child from a lifetime using a wheelchair, then all of these presentations and hours of sharing my story have been worthwhile," Mr Leo said.

The Queensland Road Safety Awards are a joint initiative of the RACQ and QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety-Queensland (CARRS-Q) which recognise the work and efforts of individuals and groups who have designed projects or programs to improve road safety on Queensland roads.

CARRS-Q director Professor Barry Watson said the road safety awards, now in their 10th year, recognised efforts to save lives on Queensland roads. Entries were judged on creativity, originality and "real world" application.

"Of the 134 road safety initiatives recognised since the inaugural awards in 2000, each has contributed to road safety in its own unique way," Professor Watson said.

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“The awards have consistently generated a high calibre of entries and this year has been no exception.”

RACQ’s general manager for external relations, Gary Fites, said the motoring club had been pleased to partner CARRS-Q in the organisation and major sponsorship of the awards since their inception.

“A great deal of positive progress has been made in road safety in recent years but despite this, much more obviously needs to be done if road trauma is not to remain one of our major public health issues,” Mr Fites said.

“Community attitudes are a vital factor in determining whether or not the road toll is reduced over the long term.

“And this awards program has attracted nominations for some excellent and highly innovative initiatives developed and inspired by strong community spirit.

“It is encouraging to see such a genuine commitment to road safety and community ownership of this important cause.”

The Queensland Road Safety Awards are sponsored by Queensland Transport, the Queensland Police Service, radio station 96.5, the Department of Main Roads and Leighton Contractors.

ends

(Full list of award winners attached)

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