OLDER PERSON’S AWARD - RICHMOUNT RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Richmount Rural Community Association welcomes around 45 older people to their community centre in the village of Scotch Street every Thursday from 10am to 3.30pm. Home cooked lunch is provided as well as a programme that promotes physical activity and is mentally stimulating. Other projects with the Richmount Elders include a stitching club, training in IT, gardening, health promotions, drama, art, photography and storytelling. The group constantly diversifies and innovates to target and reach out to older people in their community, with a particular focus on older socially isolated males. The group’s aim is to provide a better quality of life and health amongst older people, alleviating social isolation, and giving members a sense of self-worth and importance in society. With cross-community, cross-border and intergenerational themes, there are also numerous day trips; and even week-long group holidays that are greatly enjoyed by members.

YOUTH SECTOR EXCELLENCE - ONE EIGHTY RESTAURANT

One Eighty is a unique restaurant in Portadown which provides supported training for young people with learning difficulties. Every year, new students come to One Eighty where they are trained to the highest of standards in all areas of the restaurant’s day-to-day management that enables them to achieve a level 1 hospitality qualification. This excellent restaurant not only provides a wonderful town centre dining location for customers but also provides a relaxed atmosphere where the young students are able to greatly build their confidence in working with the public. The aim, and success, of One Eighty is its ability to ensure that the students will go on to lead independent lives and build successful careers.

GOOD RELATIONS - POLISH NI COMMUNITY NETWORK

Polish NI Community Network was set up nine years ago by a group of like-minded Polish citizens who felt an overwhelming need for a Polish run organisation to help meet the needs of a large number of recent migrants in their area and beyond. The group discovered feelings of depression and isolation amongst some Polish people and how this had manifested into negative outcomes including self-harm, suicidal thoughts and anti-social behaviour. Through the provision of support, education, events and initiatives, Polish NI Community Network has helped members realise that they are valued within Northern Irish society. Through good relations projects, Polish NI Community Network has encouraged greater understanding within communities for both the Northern Irish and the Polish cultures. Building relationships, developing communication and the promotion of equality is integral to the work of Polish NI Community Network, having a positive impact on everyone within the community of each area they work in.

NEW COMMUNITY GROUP - DARKLEY RURAL COMMUNITY GROUP

Darkley Rural Community Group was established in 2017 to transform the area and improve the lives of those living in Darkley village and the surrounding townlands. They have a popular Facebook page, community newsletter and website to improve communication amongst villagers. A number of successful events have already taken place, including their Christmas Extravaganza. Working tirelessly, the group have formed connections with many other groups and organisations and have been successful in receiving funding that equates to over £17,000 to help generate community pride and acquire local community assets.

With the support and appreciation of local people, Darkley Rural Community Group has greatly enhanced community life. Their dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers have formed an action plan that will see Darkley transformed in the years to come and provide a vibrant hub for this rural community.
SMALL COMMUNITY GROUP - RICHHMOUNT RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Richmount Rural Community Association was founded in 2006 to benefit the rural village of Scotch Street, but it’s hugely successful programme of activities has meant it is a community hub that attracts and engages members from all across Portadown, Richhill and Loughgall. Its diverse resources and activities include a community centre, a playgroup, a cinema and a community garden. It has extensive training facilities and leads a huge volume of projects including an older people’s project, and a good relations programme that reaches out to all sections of the community, inclusive of all religions and ethnicities inclusive of all religions and ethnicities and they have developed cross border links with other groups. Richmount Rural Community Association has produced a community magazine, website and social media to promote its activities that celebrate local heritage and the arts; as well as empowering its members through the introduction and development of new skills. The services of this group address social isolation and help generate a sense of pride in the local community and beyond.

LARGE COMMUNITY GROUP - ABC COMMUNITY NETWORK

ABC Community Network continues to develop and apply good practice as it works with a growing number of voluntary and community groups across the borough, currently supporting over 240 organisations. Established in 1996, it has a diverse membership base, providing support to both existing and emerging groups including volunteer led groups that work with older people, BME groups and those that support members with disabilities.

The vital support provided to these groups by the ABC Community Network includes but is not limited to admin and finance services, funding support, the provision of meeting and office space, training, networking and volunteering opportunities and even a community garden. ABC Community Network's on-the-ground support in the voluntary and community sector has helped to increase the skills and knowledge within groups, and contributed greatly towards the development of more cohesive and sustainable communities.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE - THE FITZONE FOUNDATION

The Fitzone Foundation works relentlessly to provide communities in the Craigavon area with the knowledge and tools to improve their lives with healthier lifestyle choices. Community consultation is important for the foundation as they ensure that progress is being made and that group and individual needs are being met through their work. This group offers a large volume of diverse programmes including Introduction to exercise, Community Health Checks, kids circuits, Ladies Circuits, Health In Mind, Pilates and Cook it. The foundation works to benefit and improve the health and well-being of the community regardless of age, ability or background. The group has grown dramatically since it established 7 years ago. The Fitzone Foundation directly impacted more than 4,000 people in 2017 and is currently meeting its target to reach more than double that amount of people in 2018.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR - JOE CENTER

Joe Center has been a volunteer with the Fusiliers Museum in Armagh for more than a decade and has worked days, evenings and weekends on generating a comprehensive list of those who died in The Great War - over 1,200 names in total. Visiting graveyards, churches, meeting people, and working with the local papers, Joe has been able to trace family connections and gather treasured photographs and historical information that has not been previously available or known about. Joe has dedicated himself to following up on contacts both nationally and internationally to make sure that there are no fallen soldiers whose names are lost to time. There are currently no names on the Armagh War Memorial and Joe’s efforts are greatly appreciated by the entire community as he is committed to ensuring that those from all backgrounds are remembered for their sacrifice during the War. Joe is providing an opportunity for loved ones to be remembered and not forgotten and has developed a real sense of community pride for all thanks to his efforts.
INNOVATION - OASIS YOUTH

Twenty-one peer mentors were recruited by Oasis Youth and underwent extensive training to play a mentoring role that supported 60 children as part of the ‘Portadown Gets Active’ Programme. The peer mentors were vital when it came to the programme’s aim of tackling holiday hunger and addressing a gap in free school meal provision during summer, Halloween and Christmas school holidays. Responding to the needs in the area, the programme was diverse in its approach with not only food bank-style initiatives but also providing participants with education on physical activity and healthy eating. The peer mentors were invaluable when it came to implementing this programme and developing new skills amongst participants. All mentors obtained OCN accredited awards and combined to give 720 hours of volunteering to their community. The mentors are ambassadors for their community and have increased in knowledge, skill, confidence and ability to lead and motivate a group as part of this innovative initiative.

UNDER 18 YOUTH VOLUNTEER - DREW FLACK

Drew Flack comes from a long family tradition of volunteering so it was no surprise when he showed a passion for giving back to the community from such a young age. Having grown up attending Goal Line Youth Centre, Drew started volunteering three years ago and has never missed a 2-hour Friday evening session that works with junior members of the club. Drew often gives up his Saturdays to volunteer and spends 4 weeks of his summer holidays volunteering to lead the Goal Line Summer Scheme which caters for 7-11 years olds of mixed abilities. His cheerful personality is infectious and he has particularly excelled in his ability to include and encourage the young people with disabilities that attend the club. He has shaped the culture of volunteering within Goal Line as an advisor for the Junior Volunteer Buddies and brings his knowledge of sports to the programme of activities. Reliable, confident and adaptable, Drew is completely selfless in his commitment and enthusiasm for Goal Line and seeing its young members succeed.

LIFETIME ACHIEVER - MELVYN HAMILTON

Melvyn Hamilton is a long-term member of Waringstown Presbyterian Church where he has been involved in the Boy’s Brigade from a young age, has served on many committees, and taken on the position of an Elder. He runs a luncheon club that caters for elderly residents from within and outside the village, providing a lifeline for the large numbers that attend. Melvyn is also dedicated to regular visits and care for older members of the congregation.

Melvyn is a keen bowler and belongs to multiple bowling clubs, heavily involved in the organisation and management of the committees as well as enjoying competing in the sport. He believes in furthering awareness and knowledge of the sport and even writes weekly press reports for team matches.

A founding member of the Waringstown Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, Melvyn took on the role of Chairman and was extremely effective in taking it from an idea to a highly successful scheme that continues to develop and provide a safe community today. It doesn’t end there, as Melvyn also founded the Waringstown Community Development Association where his ability to motivate and inspire a team saw the development of yet another fantastic group that has brought significant benefit to the lives of people in the Waringstown area. Melvyn leads by example and had dedicated his personal time and energy into both on the ground footwork and the strategic input required to help the community.