

Todd is city's top choice

TODD Hartley has devoted his life to the region's youth, but Cairns' Citizen of the Year says his greatest achievement is not changing who he is as a person.

In front of a packed crowd yesterday, the former footballer and founder of Choice Australia received the award during Australia Day celebrations at Cairns Civic Theatre.

Running the not-for-profit organisation for more than 10 years, Mr Hartley has helped struggling youth with employment and training, and found placements for 54 workers affected by Cyclone Larry.

He has also launched Bala's Cafe and Choice Water to help raise money.

"When you believe in something, you are prepared to push past the challenges and understand that sooner or later your investments will bear some fruit and you will start to see some light at the end of the tunnel," Mr Hartley said.

"I haven't changed who I am. I haven't compromised my values or my appearance.

"I'm still a big bald guy with earrings and tattoos."

St Mary's College student Caitlin Pollard received Young Citizen of the Year for her com-

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- Todd Hartley

munity awareness and fundraising efforts for street kids project Harald's House.

Cairns hockey player Lewis Short received Junior Sports person of the Year, while Cairns Taipans player Aaron Grabau received Sports person of the Year.

Musician and conductor Jan O'Donnell OAM received the Open Cultural Award for her contribution to arts.

Mossman historian Noel Weare received Volunteer of the Year for preserving the heritage of Port Douglas.

A special courage award was given to Mossman teens Matthew Werner, Alex White and Sam Gibson for saving friend Reece Nesbit after he plunged 35m off a waterfall at Devil's Thumb, near Mossman.



Achiever: Todd Hartley founded Choice Australia more than 10 years ago.

Picture: JAKE NOWAKOWSKI

HONOUR ROLL

CASSOWARY COAST AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Citizen of the Year - Jan King
Youth Citizen of the Year - Gary Yang

Cultural Award - Annette Anderson

Youth Cultural Award - Janau Sugars

Sports Award - Paul Fleming

Youth Sports Award - Ben Murray

Sports Administrator Award - Michael Ernst

Community Event of the Year - Innisfail's Art Deco High Tea

Achievement Awards - Marty Westcott, Amanda O'Malley, Myra Sultana

TABLELANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL AWARDS

Citizen of the Year - Harry and Ellen Skennar

Young Citizen of the Year - Jack Koci

Community Event of the Year - Taste of the Tablelands

Coach/Sports Administrator - Ashley Cupitt

Senior Sports Award - Georgia Bruce

Junior Sports Award - Scott Mahoney

Senior Community Service Award - Noelle Jackson

Junior Community Service Award - Hans Raphiana

Senior Cultural Award - The Weird Mob

Junior Cultural Award - Leesa Gray

Development of Commerce and Industry - QITE

Environmental Excellence - Ravenshoe Visitor Centre

New citizens find place to belong

"AUSSIE Aussie Aussie, Oi Oi Oi" rang out as the national anthem faded away at Mission Beach and a culturally diverse crowd celebrated all things Australian.

"Today is a great day to be Australian," beaming Djiru elder John Andy told the gathering ahead of cheers for 17 new Australian citizens from India, South Africa, Papua New Guinea, Nigeria and New Zealand.

Tully doctor Alfred Ngini said it was good to belong.

"This is a beautiful country of friendly people, better opportunities and a better life," he said of his Nigerian family's desire to embrace their new country, while never losing sight of where they came from.

Cassowary Coast's Citizen of the Year Jan King epitomised all that was Australian, the crowd heard.

The tireless worker for Meals on Wheels clocks up hundreds of kilometres a week and hundreds of hours on the job each month to get dinner on the table at elderly people's homes throughout the shire.

Her labour of love has spanned 33 years.



Driving force: Jan King devotes many hours to Meals on Wheels.

"It's wonderful to see the oldies, and to know they're still at home partly because of the service you're bringing them," Mrs King said.

"Sometimes it's as much about listening, changing the light bulbs and giving the cat its pills as bringing the dinners."

The crowd munched on bacon and egg sandwiches supplied by Mission Beach Rotary Club in a venue decked out with Australian flags, and green and gold.

Pair's love of Australiana a winner



Boxer Scott Mahoney.

HERBERTON couple Harry and Ellen Skennar, who collected Australiana from across the country to build the Herberton Historical Village, have taken top Australia Day honours on the Tableland.

The pair devoted their lives to creating an authentic village and have been named as the Tablelands Regional Council's inaugural Citizens of the Year.

The Young Citizen of the year, Jack

Koci, received his award for commitment to the community and dedication to his former school, Mareeba High School.

Olympian Georgina Bruce won the Senior Sports Award. Ms Bruce teamed up with Victory Salute, her trusty steed, to contest the 2008 Beijing Paralympics in Hong Kong last year and brought home two bronze medals.

The junior title was taken out by boxing sensation Scott Mahoney.

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