State’s top 10 student volunteers honoured

Ten outstanding NSW students have been honoured for their volunteering work by the Minister for Volunteering, Peter Primrose, at a special presentation in Sydney today.

Mr Primrose congratulated the Year 9 and 10 students for their participation in the inaugural Premier’s Student Volunteering Awards program.

“This program has been a tremendous success in its first year and I am extremely proud to recognise the state’s 10 most outstanding student volunteers,” Mr Primrose said.

The following students will receive education scholarships worth $2,000 each as a contribution towards their studies:

- Kanav Bhama, Girraween High School (Western Sydney Region)
- Cassandra Cheeseman, The Jannali High School (Sydney Region)
- Aleesha Cockfield, Southern Cross School (North Coast Region)
- Gerri Maree Cruckshank, Wee Waa High School (New England Region)
- Mark Davey, Woolooware High School (Sydney Region)
- Brody Higgerson, Whitebridge High School (Hunter Central Coast Region)
- David Krowka, Woonona High School (Illawarra South East Region)
- Belinda Murphy, Hoxton Park High School (South-Western Sydney Region)
- Ning Zhang, Cabramatta High School (South Western Sydney Region)
- Cara Van Wyk, Hornsby Girls High School (Northern Sydney Region)

Billabong High School in the Riverina region was also honoured at the event and will receive a school grant worth $5,000 to support their student volunteering and service learning initiatives.

Across the state 5,795 students from 305 schools took part in the program this year, accumulating more than 110,000 hours of volunteering.

“These students have volunteered their time for a variety of projects and programs from flood relief, nursing home visits, community fundraising, meals on wheels, and peer support programs,” Mr Primrose said.

“This program aims to provide our younger generation with the opportunity to connect with their community and find fulfilment and satisfaction through helping others.

“I’m so pleased to stand here today to recognise not just these 10 outstanding students, but to congratulate all 5,795 NSW students who took part in the program this year.

“Through this program these young people have learned some valuable life lessons in compassion and humanity and have walked away with an enriching and humbling experience,” he added.
**Education Scholarship Recipients**

**Kanav Bhama, Girraween High School (Western Sydney Region)**

- “I saw this program as a way to give back to the community and convey my respect to current and past volunteers, and honour them for what they have done.”
- “Volunteering for Uniting Aged Care has taught me many lessons in life ... most importantly, whenever I visit, the smiles on their faces have provided me with endless satisfaction.”

“Kanav is a valued member of our volunteer team. The role he undertakes gives our older residents a positive image of younger people and they really look forward to his visits.” (Volunteer Coordinator, Uniting Aged Care).

“Kanav is a selfless, caring and thoughtful young man. He has been a role model for other students and inspired many to take up volunteering.” (Relieving Principal, Girraween High School).

**Cassandra Cheeseman, The Jannali High School (Sydney Region)**

- “I do my volunteering as a way to give a bit of the blessing I have had in life, to others.”
- “By volunteering I am reminded of the different and often challenging circumstances people are in, and that not everyone’s lives are simple and safe.”

“Cassie is an extremely caring and selfless person, putting other people’s needs ahead of her own. She is a wonderful role model for volunteering at this school.” (Principal, The Jannali High School).

**Aleesha Cockfield, Southern Cross School (North Coast Region)**

- “Volunteering has helped me gain self-confidence .... as well as lifelong friendships.”
- “One of the biggest challenges has been public speaking. I met it with practise, encouragement and by being prepared.”

“Aleesha is an outstanding member of the school community. She is a positive ambassador for the school and truly worthy of a PSVA Education Scholarship.” (Principal, Southern Cross School K-12).

**Gerri Maree Cruckshank, Wee Waa High School (New England Region)**

- “Volunteering has given me a real sense of self and achievement .... as a student I don’t have money to donate but I have time to give to help benefit my community and school.”
- “The biggest challenge I have found in regards to volunteering is isolation. I live 56 km away from my High School on a farm.”
- “When I get my licence I’d love to volunteer for Meals on Wheels.”
Mark Davey, Woolooware High School (Sydney Region)

- “My involvement in the Blaze Aid program was awesome ... working with farmers and community volunteers to rebuild fences after the Black Saturday bush fires... so these poor people could return to their properties and start over. The enormity of this situation was humbling.”
- “The challenges have been wide and varied, from working in poor conditions on the beach ... on wet miserable days ... to missing out on Christmas day with my family due to (Surf Life Saving) Patrol.

“Mark has fulfilled his volunteer roles with excellence and honour.” (Relieving Principal, Woolooware High School).

Brody Higgerson, Whitebridge High School (Hunter Central Coast Region)

- “Knowing I have contributed has allowed me to grow as an individual and active community member.”

“Brody is an innovative leader ... (he) gives his own time and thinking to motivate other students to participate. He has been instrumental in breaking new ground in our school’s volunteering and service learning program.” (Principal, Whitebridge High School).

David Krowka, Woonona High School (Illawarra South East Region)

- “I enjoy volunteering as it gives me a deep sense of self-satisfaction.... I feel I am helping to make a difference even if it is in a modest way. I sincerely believe that one person can make a lot of difference and this inspires me.”

“I honestly do not know where David finds the time to undertake all his school and extra-curricular activities ... He is a young man of the highest calibre and I have the utmost regard and admiration for him.” (Teacher, Woonona High School).

Belinda Murphy, Hoxton Park High School (South-Western Sydney Region)

- “Being at the PCYC has opened my eyes and my heart to many traumatised and depressed children and teenagers... As a result of my being there, they have found a happiness and interest within the club.”
- “Volunteering has been the start of my future. It has taught me what it takes to be put in particular work situations, and work through them in a sophisticated manner. Being a volunteer has shown me how to react to work arrangements and to be part of a working team.”

Cara Van Wyk, Hornsby Girls High School (Northern Sydney Region)

- “Knowing that you have given someone else some of your time makes your life somehow more valuable and precious. Volunteering has also given me the opportunity to meet amazing people who have inspired me.”
“I believe that the most important way of influencing others is through example so I live what I preach.”

“Cara is a passionate, motivating and well organised young woman. She is articulate, willing, hardworking and inspiring. Her efforts have produced tangible outcomes for others.” (Deputy Principal, Hornsby Girls High School).

Ning Zhang, Cabramatta High School (South-Western Sydney Region)

- “I see myself as one of the lucky ones. I want to bring hope, even if it’s just a tiny hope. This is why I participate in the NSW Premier’s Student Volunteering Awards program.”
- “I'm more confident with myself and I learned the meaning of teamwork.”

“An outstanding student with a long history of working and sacrificing for others. A great initiator of ways to make a difference.” (HT Teaching and Learning, Cabramatta High School).