

GSDS volunteers recognised for services above and beyond

The Rural Fire Service, Lower Hunter, held their Awards Presentation in September with RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons officiating and, pleasingly, four of the members honoured are also GSDS volunteers:

Alex Kokas received a Long Service medal for 39 years of service to the RFS and the National Medal (an external award), presented for service above and beyond. Alex is Senior Deputy Captain at Flat Tops Rural Brigade, having joined RFS while living in Crescent Head.

John Maher also received his Long Service Medal for 39 years of service to the RFS. Having received a National Medal a few years previously, John has just retired as Captain at Flat Tops Rural Fire Brigade. He was captain for nearly all 39 years and he helps us at every GSDS event.

Mark Bennett (our Di's husband) received his Long Service Medal for 22 years. He received a National Medal in 2010, is a member of the Clarence Town Brigade, and Deputy Group Officer, Lower Hunter.

Diane Bennett OAM JP, received her Long Service Medal for 20 years. Having received a National Medal in 2010, she's Captain of the Clarence Town Village/Rural Fire Brigade.

GSDS congratulates them on their good community spirit and for giving so much time helping others.

A proud day for Alex Kokas (Shane recalled the 'Kokas' name as he was presented with his Australian Fire Service Medal the day Jo-Anne received her OAM).



Got an outdated camera (one that takes film) which is of no use? We would be very keen to hear from you. Please call Jo-Anne, 02 4996 5596 or email: admin@donkeyrescue.org.au



Behind the scenes

Some of our 'front-liners' have been in the wars lately: just after the Christmas in July celebrations, Di Bennett suffered a heart attack (her second)! Meanwhile, Sandy Kokas had brain surgery to remove a large aneurism and Robyn Jones was in hospital for a knee replacement.

To cap it all, Di's son (Dean) delivered his new son at home on the kitchen floor with Sarah, his wife, thinking it better to have Archie before leaving for the hospital.

Fortunately, everyone mentioned above is now doing well.

GSDS: Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held at Glen William, recording the appointment of Jan Iwaszkiewicz as our Vice President.

Jan (pronounced Yarn), and his wife Christine, have been horse and donkey owners for many years. They are dressage judges, have bred performance horses, and still train and exhibit horses.

Their knowledge and experience with equines is a great asset to GSDS and we happily welcome both to our Committee.

Christine is a solicitor at their own CMI Law Firm (Raymond Terrace) and she has offered to help GSDS supporters with their wills—free of charge for a standard one—should anyone wish to remember the donkeys after their passing.

Thank you Christine from the donkeys.

Committee Members now include: Di Bennett OAM JP, Christine Iwaszkiewicz LLP and Dr Yvonne Skarbek. We welcome Yvonne, who is also an experienced horse woman and we are most grateful for her love of donkeys.

We wish to record our thanks to our committee members and also to outgoing members, Terry Daniel and Kathy Isherwood. We appreciate your efforts, time and achievements in working for the benefit of the Sanctuary and the donkeys.

Donkey Serenade

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NEWSBRAYER • SANCTUARY HAPPYNINGS • DONKEY BRAYINGS



Christmas in July and our 21st birthday

I'm thrilled that this year's event was the best ever—by far! We have struggled to fill seats previously but everyone wanted to join our celebrations this year—we even had to decline some requests. Many fellow animal welfare organisations attended, with some of the larger groups being from Dog Rescue Newcastle, Free the Bears and WSPA (thanks to WSPA for a lovely apple tree; the donkeys will enjoy its produce).



Other attendees included Hunter Animal Watch, Animal Aid Abroad, RSPCA, DABS, Doggie Rescue, Save the Brumbies, Paws & Claws, Animal Rescue Link-up and Paw Hearts. We had a great time and enjoyed visiting the donkeys afterwards.



Once again, Di Bennett did all the planning—her organisational skills are exceptional and the hall looked superb (we got many favourable comments and also for our cake; if I do say so myself).

We presented several awards,



Top: Long-time supporter Joan Pearson bought a table of friends.
Middle: Marvellous Pat Hepworth and special guest Cameron Archer.
Bottom: Our hall was packed.

acknowledging some of those who have done so much for so long. They included new Patrons, Life Members, Honorary Life Members and Guardians, and it is an honour to have such respected, notable people support GSDS Inc.

Last but not least, Craig Stokoe surprised Di Bennett (Committee member and long time GSDS volunteer) with a special certificate prescribing her "Head Donkey Slave".

Our special guests this year were Dr Cameron Archer and Jean, his wife. He is the Director and principal of TOCAL Agricultural Centre and provided an engaging speech on animal welfare in general and the role GSDS plays.

Cameron later wrote: "I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you and all at GSDS for the hospitality displayed to Jean and myself at the recent 21st birthday celebrations...it is a pleasure to be associated with such an important organisation in our community".

Many thanks to those who donated items for our auction: John and Lori Wong for a weekend away at their Scribbly Gum Cabin, Blue Mountains; Joan Pearson kind offer of a private boat cruise on Sydney Harbour (it raised \$1,000); Pat Hepworth supplied a range of first class work clothing, including Drizabone coats; Fuzzy Toy Factory donated gorgeous, ginormous stuffed toys; Kim Scholfield made three beautiful crocheted rugs (so beautiful that she even received orders for more); Peacock Grove Biodynamic Farm donated a pizza-maker, Jenny Short supplied some wonderful jewellery featuring donkeys; and many other generous donations.

They helped raise over \$7000—about double our previous 'best'. And, thanks also to the volunteers who helped on the day serving meals and cleaning up. Plus, a special thanks to Alan Ball, photographer on the day, and to Alex who took everyone to the farm (delayed at the hall, I couldn't get out there before everyone left).

Don't miss next year: combine it with a weekend, staying at the Carriageway and visiting some vineyards along with the marvellous Hunter Valley Gardens while you are here.



Jo-Anne made this delicious moist mud cake—about a metre square and enjoyed by all (this photo doesn't do it justice).

And, of course, we would like to wish you a Happy (December) Christmas.

Welfare Officers & Help Lines

Dr John Kohnke BVSc RDA and GSDS Patron
Call for free advice on feeding/health care of donkeys: 0419 995 626

Hunter and Myall Lakes
Steve and Julie Molnar 0419 258 399

Merrima Veterinary Hospital
Dr Ted and Jennifer Finnie 6548 5171

Sydney Metropolitan
Geoffrey Farrance 02 4572 3472

Hawkesbury District NSW
Tracy Porter 0408 411 966

Mid-north Coast NSW
Sister Helen 02 6562 2313

Tamworth, Armidale, Manilla, Barraba,
and Gunnedah districts
Jill Howard 0427 441 899

Far-north Coast NSW
Carmen Briffa 02 6649 3839

Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Bowral districts
Margaret Barlow 02 4256 2683

Port Macquarie
Fran Barratt 02 6584 9497

Queensland South,
Eastern Wide Bay, Burnett
Michelle Stevens 0417 953 855



Gympie and surrounding areas
Sue Clark 07 5484 9255



Mackay, Whitsunday, Issac Region
and surrounding areas
Alexandra (Sandy) Kokas 0414 364 642

Townsville and Queensland Far North
Vicki Stuart, Mick Small 07 4788 8995

Tasmania
Gayelene Harrower 03 6229 3326

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Alex Kokas
Jackie Frick
Geoffrey Farrance
Alexandra (Sandy) Kokas

Honorary Life Members Dr Patrick H McCarthy Dr. Med. Vet., Phd
Bishop John and Gayelene Harrower
Sister Helen Jamieson
Sisters of the Church, Kempsey

Guardian Angel Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE
With us forever

No sanctuary-funds used in producing this newsletter;
artwork and printing donated by LPN.



Owners' donkeys

Far and wide: The number of 'donkey neglect' reports we receive, from the public, has spiked recently.

Due to the long distances involved, two of these were referred to RSPCA and we thank Inspector Kylie Prouse for checking on these cases and reporting to us. We appreciate Kylie's, and also Amanda Lantry's, help with matters that are too far away for our attention.

Our phone-help line has also been running hot from owners with problems, including tooth and hoof abscesses, compaction, lice infestations, arthritis, laminitis, colic, rain scald and several bad injuries. There've also been requests for assistance with training and management concerns, and advice on feeding sought from NSW, Tas, Qld, SA and Victoria.

Distressingly, two privately owned donkeys needed to be euthanized and this, of course, has caused their owners much pain. Donkeys are more dog-like than horse-like and are adept at working your heartstrings.

Surrendering owners visit their donkeys Paula Blanch and her friends, Robyn and Kathy, occasionally come to visit their beloved donkeys who are now living at the Sanctuary farm. Paula had to move into town and couldn't keep her donkeys, however, she knows they are safe and we welcome their visits.

We are very happy with the care you are giving our girls. There is not one day goes by that I don't ache for them. I have never known the capacity for love from a larger animal before I had my donkeys. They look wonderful and I love them sooooo much. Bless you and your team for being so caring. Amongst so many, I am sure God is particularly fond of you!
Love Paula



There's no denying the mutual feeling as Paula revisits an old friend.

Canvassing their support

Art teacher Michael Bell (The Hunter Institute, TAFE NSW) contacted GSDS to request that students from the Newcastle Art School might have a day at the Sanctuary farm to draw, paint, and sculpture donkeys.

We were delighted to oblige and 38 students duly arrived, set up easels and began mingling, meeting and painting the donkeys. The donkeys, of course, were most curious with some making a nuisance of themselves before settling back into their routines, leaving their new paddock companions to carry on.

Over a couple of weeks the students worked on their artworks and sculptures. They then displayed their superb work at the Front Room Gallery in Hunter Street, Newcastle in a wonderful fundraising effort to help us.

Pleasingly, this raised a magnificent \$1,540 and they visited us recently to present the cheque and receive a lovely certificate of 'thanks' that Jill had designed.

We were thrilled to host the students and Michael and would be very pleased to have them as guests at another time.



Donkeys international

Some of our collection of donkey images from around the world



BUS GROUPS For a unique day out with the donkeys, come and join us on one of our special "Picnic with the Donkeys" days. Come and enjoy a wonderful BBQ lunch with all the trimmings and bottomless cups of tea and coffee, all you have to do is phone or email Jo-Anne for the available. We happily cater for vegetarians. And please remember, we are closed from December through to March 17 each year.

Who are you?

We are still getting donations from un-identified donors. While we really appreciated the support we must know who you in order that we can forward a receipt.

As a registered charity, we must conform with the authority's strict instructions on records. **So, if you were expecting** a receipt but have not received one, please contact me as it may be sitting in our 'To send' box: Jo-Anne 02 4996 5596.

To keep postage costs down we usually send receipts back with the next edition of Serenade. However, if you require an immediate record, please enclose a stamped and self-addressed envelope.

Help us cut costs

Please, please tell us. If you are reading a printed copy of Serenade but have an email address, **please inform us of it now.**

We must cut costs urgently and that includes postage. Quite simply, this can't be covered with funds meant for donkey care.

If you wish to keep getting a printed Serenade we must ask for two books of (current) postage stamps by return mail. Unfortunately, if we don't receive them we have to remove you from our mailing list.

We apologise for needing to request this—your support is essential to our survival as Australia's foremost donkey refuge.

Christmas Catalogue: It is packed with marvellous gifts (for any occasion) and you can also add an amount for the continued mailing of a printed version of Serenade.



CARERS' CORNER

We couldn't cope without our wonderful team of devoted carers, here's a note from one of them.

Simpson is living the life of Riley

Simpson, with Kat, at rest after his 'big' walk.

Katerina reports: ...he has mastered opening the front door, side gates and (worryingly) our front gates. He's a cheeky boy and brays continually so we've arranged for a beautiful ewe to join him soon. He has also befriended the neighbour's cows.

We have decided against getting a dog as he is now our 'alpha dog'. And he will be performing mascot duties at our local school.



How about a Ruby for Christmas?

Ruby is a real character, having grown up with a family of boys who enjoyed her playing their games. Unfortunately, one them became ill and the family had to move into the city, near the hospital, so Ruby came to live at GSDS.

Always keen to participate, here she is dressed up and representing Sicily at our International Day of the Donkey.

Ruby needs to have a few sponsors so, if you can help, please contact Jo-Anne as there are several ways of supporting her (and others), including with sponsoring a special donkey as a single sponsor or together with others.

Intensive Care Unit Report

Wrong, wrong, wrong: Amongst our incoming donkeys, two have arrived covered in ticks. And disturbingly, they had been treated with a cattle preparation which had left sore raw patches along their backs. These preparations leave acid like burns and often kill the hair follicles, leaving areas bare indefinitely.

We've now medicated them and are providing soothing baths every few days to help their healing process.

No mean feat Calypso also arrived. She's a lovely jenny but has chronic foot problems and is particularly touchy about hoof care.

The girls can pick her feet out and apply hoof oil but when the farrier tries to trim her feet she transforms into a fighting machine. She is a typical 'sedation-by-vet' case but it's a costly exercise.

Thank heavens for our new crush and we can only hope that, with care, she'll get used to having her feet handled correctly.

Early one morning we found Max (another ICU patient) down and trapped under the stable gate. Having dug a shallow ditch along

the length of the gate, he must have lain down and then slipped, pinning himself under it.

He was exhausted and we couldn't free him so Kristen (one of our new girls) contacted her friend, Joshua Mundy, to help and I called the vet and Jenna.

While the vet attended to Max with injections to ease his pain, the others made a make-shift slide with conveyor belting so as to drag him free and into our first stable, where the sling is.

Hitching a tow line from the belting to car's bull bar, Max was eased the length of the stable block and then rolled over so they could attach the sling and then winch him up to his feet.

Thankfully, our wonderful helpers were successful and the vet administered some pain killers and an intravenous drip to speed his recovery.

Max is now up and happy again but we will design our new ICU to preclude this reoccurring.



Max standing up with the aid of our 'sling' (intended for cows, we must purchase an equine version).



Horrific sore patches are the effects of an incorrect treatment with cattle preparation.



Calypso's severe hoof condition requires our intensive and continued attention.



Amazing news

Long-time supporter and new Patron, Shirley Brine surprised us by financing the bulk of what is needed for our new ICU. This is such a wonderful 21st birthday present for both the donkeys and GSDS Inc.

And importantly, monies that we have already raised can be spent on internal fittings, gates and footings, yard fencing, ground works, electricity, a water tank...

And a special thanks to Laurie Akkanen (husband to Jeanette of Free the Bears fame) for building our ICU at a discounted price, with Jan Iwaszkiewicz and Alex in charge of its organisation.

