

Italians pay tribute to a volunteer



Italian Woman of the Year Vicki Fontana receives her award from Kathryn Greiner at the Apia Club

VICKI Fontana (nee Pretti) and her father have both built important bridges in Sydney.

Augusto Pretti came to Australia in 1925 to help construct the Sydney Harbor Bridge.

His daughter Vicki, born two years later, has helped build bridges between the Italo-Australian and English-speaking communities.

Her tireless work was recognised by the Apia Club women's committee which named her Italian Woman of the Year at a ceremony attended by more than 1000 last week.

"It gives me a lot of satisfaction and pride," Mrs Fontana said.

"When you do volunteer work you get a lot of problems and criticism.

"I get a lot of enjoyment out of it but it was great to get recognition from the Italian community."

In keeping with the adage, Mrs Fontana's charity started at home.

"I started working with the Italian community because of the problems my parents faced when they came to Australia," she said.

"They always instilled

in me a sense of charity — they said you are lucky you can speak English.

"So I started out writing letters for Italian people and was always available as an interpreter if people needed me."

Mrs Fontana moved from Strathfield to Fairfield in the late 1970s.

There she works with the large Italo-Australian community.

"They need someone to be a leader," she said.

"I've taken them all over Australia and to New Zealand. If I wasn't there to do it they wouldn't have seen outside the suburb they lived in."

She has been involved with Marconi soccer club for about 15 years, is vice president of the Sorrella Radio Child Care Centre, works with the Scalabrini Centre for the Aged and has been fundraiser for Camperdown Children's Hospital, Royal North Shore Hospital and the ParaQuad Association.

"People say who is going to do it when I finish," she said.

"I wish one thing — that there were a lot more young people in the Italian community who would give volunteer service."

Apia Club women honor workers

THE following representatives of Sydney's Italian community organisations received medals for their services: Cav Di Nicola, Bruna Di Bon, Nolina Nadalin, Enza Falanga, Faustina Coiro, Pina Campisi, Mr Meilino, G Peretini, Teresa Monzo, Iole Baitieri, Lella Porreca and Marietta Ballini.

The medals were received at a reception at the Apia Club, Leichhardt, where the guest of honor was Kathryn Greiner, wife of the Premier, Nick Greiner.

Giovanni Scardinale received a medal for preparing the magnificent cake served at last week's function, and Marisa Pisano for collecting petition signatures in opposition to State Government plans to drop Italian language from the school curriculum.

Italian Woman of the Year Vicki Fontana received her award from Mrs Greiner. The medals are awarded by the Apia Club women's committee.



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