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Compassionate leader in foster care a finalist in national community sector awards

A leader in foster care who has made a difference to the lives of thousands of children in the Shepparton-Mooroopna region, has been named one of five finalists in the Unsung Hero category of the 2013 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

Ms Anita Pell has spent three decades as a carer, foster care worker and program manager, setting up a foster care camp to ensure children and their carers can have a well-deserved annual holiday.

The Unsung Hero Award recognises individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to enhancing the wellbeing of individuals or communities in need.

Ms Pell began providing emergency care for young children in 1978, before becoming a long-term foster carer for two children, while raising her own three children and pursuing a career in the community sector.

“In the early days, I knew every child and foster carer by name, celebrated their birthdays and achievements, and was an advocate for their needs. I still go to a lot of birthday parties, debutante balls and weddings, and stay in contact with many of the young people who are now in their twenties,” she said.

Ms Pell is continuing to lead work nationally in developing a new professional model of foster care.

The judges commended Ms Pell as a passionate foster carer, who took up a leadership role in government while continuing to support families, advocate for improvements to the system, and use her skills and knowledge to implement positive change.

Ms Pell and the other finalists will be flown to Adelaide to attend an awards dinner, where the winners will be announced during the Australian Council of Social Service National Conference on Monday, 25 March 2013.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank. The Unsung Hero Award winner will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Social Impact and Organisation Award winners will each receive a \$10,000 development grant.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$21 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

Visit hestaawards.com.au to purchase tickets for the awards dinner or to learn more about the awards.

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