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Young GP registrar wins national primary health care award

A young GP registrar, who founded a charity to promote health and fitness in Indigenous and refugee communities, has won the Young Leader Award at the 2013 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards.

John van Bockxmeer, a graduate from the University of Western Australia, won the award for improving health outcomes in rural areas of Western Australia.

The awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working in primary health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

Mr van Bockxmeer founded the charity — Fair Game — which recycles sports equipment, and delivers sport and fitness activities and a nutrition program, to promote healthier activities in Indigenous and refugee communities.

The organisation began with a handful of members and now includes 30 young doctors, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses and students. It has helped more than 1,500 Indigenous Australians, refugees and people with chronic disease in remote areas.

In Perth, the organisation tackles youth crime and substance abuse by organising sporting and leisure activities on Friday evenings, for teenagers in lower socio-economic regions.

As a student, Mr van Bockxmeer was the co-founder of Australia's inaugural 'Red Party' event, seeking to raise awareness of HIV. The fundraiser has subsequently become an annual event, raising more than \$170,000 for orphans of HIV victims in Africa.

Mr van Bockxmeer seeks to raise awareness of issues affecting primary health care, by contributing to a health-based blog discussing such issues as infectious diseases, lifestyle-related illnesses and substance abuse.

In addition to his commitment in general practice, Mr van Bockxmeer has worked in Emergency Departments across WA, at London's Charing Cross Hospital Accident & Emergency and in the Dili National Hospital in East Timor.

HESTA CEO, Anne-Marie Corboy, congratulated the winners of each category.

"The judges received nominations from around the country and had a difficult decision choosing 13 outstanding finalists. The winners are a credit to their organisations and are all contributing to improved community health outcomes, often in areas of high need," Ms Corboy said.

The winners of the 2013 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards were announced at an awards dinner in Melbourne on 6 June.

Mr van Bockxmeer and the Individual Distinction Award winner each accepted a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant — courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor ME Bank. The team Innovation winner received a \$10,000 development grant, also courtesy of ME Bank.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$22 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

To learn more about the awards visit hestaawards.com.au

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