



Awardees rejoice

Local hero Julia Toivonen, young citizen of the year Kevin Lam, citizen of the year Alan Small and volunteer of the year Gary Lee were recognised for their significant community work at the Knox Australia Day awards on Saturday.

SEE pages 4 and 5 for more.

Photos: Rob Curran

Local hero sets her sites on bringing parents together

A DEDICATED and computer-savvy Wantima mother has been honoured at the Knox Australia Day awards for providing support to parents of premature babies.

Julia Toivonen, 29, was chosen as this year's Local Hero at the civic centre on Saturday.

"Winning this award is very exciting and overwhelming. There were many people nominated who have been doing good things in the community for 40 years."

After the premature birth of her son Ronan in March 2006, she was driven to help others in the same situation.

She formed a group called L'il Aussie Prens and joined a Melbourne group

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Julia Toivonen

called Life's Little Treasures. She created LJ's website as a networking tool to inform and assist parents.

Mrs Toivonen worked solely on the National Premmie Foundation website in the lead-up to the inauguration of the organisation last October.

The foundation was formed by six groups, including LJ.

She also created a Queensland charity's website and is in charge of maintaining the sites.

"Doing this work takes a lot of time; I'm often up until 3am just trying to get it done."

She said she preferred working at night so she could spend the day with her son.

Mrs Toivonen knows only too well the difficulties a family faces after Ronan spent 100 days in hospital and had many complications, including chronic lung disease.

Crawling and walking are milestones in a child's life, but for Ronan each one has proved a challenge.

Mrs Toivonen has made a website dedicated to her son with pictures and updates on his progress.



Proud mother: Julia Toivonen has worked hard to make the lives of parents of premature babies easier.