

Helen honoured for service to community —

2018 Queens Birthday Honours List



Helen L'Huillier of Mt Beauty has been awarded an OAM – a Medal of the Order of Australia – for her services to cross-country skiing and to the community.

HELEN L'Huillier has been working to develop the wellbeing of the Upper Kiewa Valley community since she and her husband Paul arrived here as teachers at what was then called the Bogong School Camp in 1973. Now called the Outdoor School – Bogong.

She had been involved in athletics since her late teens, and on marrying and qualifying as an Physical Education and Mathematics teacher she moved to Bogong Village and was introduced to the pleasures of cross-country skiing.

In 1977 she became a founding member of the Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club in Mount Beauty, becoming over time secretary, president, junior squad coach, founder of the Ski de Femme event and race secretary for the Kangaroo Hoppet International Cross-country Ski Marathon, a position she has held for the past 27 years.

She continues to enjoy cross-country skiing and tries to compete in one of the distances of the Hoppet every year.

For 20 years she was involved in the Mt Beauty Swim Club as coach and co-ordinator, and for nine years ran a girls' gym club to cater for young women of the district who could not join the existing boys' club.

Mrs L'Huillier said that along with her love of sport she found she had a talent for and an enjoyment of administration.

“I've always led an active, healthy lifestyle, and tried to instil these values in my children and in the students I have taught,” she said.

Apart from her involvement in local sports, Mrs L'Huillier has contributed to the running of the Alpine University of the Third Age (U3A), and along with others, was instrumental in saving the Tawonga branch of the Red Cross from extinction.

“I was invited along to a meeting and found that because many of the members were getting on in years they were considering folding and becoming a ‘friends of’ organisation.

“I felt that would be very sad considering the history behind the organisation.

“It was begun during the Second World War, and then revived after the 1978 bushfires, so we looked for new members to give it a new lease of life.”

In 2014 Paul and Helen L’Huillier were given a Lifetime Achievement Award in the Alpine Shire Australia Day awards.

Mrs L’Huillier said that she considered it a great honour to be recognised for her community activities.

“However I don’t do it for the recognition,” she said.

“I do these things because I enjoy doing them, because I see a need and because I can help others.”

(Article & photograph by journalist Alex Craig & published in the Alpine Observer –Thursday 14th June 2018)