

Dig deep for those affected

Southern Highlands residents are encouraged to dig deep and support efforts to provide aid relief to the thousands of people affected by the tsunami disaster in Asia this week.

The Southern Highlands branch of World Vision, led by Ron and Jeanette Schofield, will be in Springetts Arcade today collecting money to help with their emergency relief efforts in a number of countries.

World Vision is currently working in India and Sri Lanka, which have requested \$US2.8 million in urgent aid.

However, this will only assist with providing emergency relief for families in the affected areas and is only a fraction of what is required for longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction.

World Vision is helping to provide families with food, blankets, shelter and utensils in India and Sri Lanka, and is also looking to assist with operations in other countries such as Thailand and Indonesia.

World Vision has so far received \$600,000 in donations since the hotline opened on Wednesday, though additional funds are urgently required.

The Schofields will set up their World Vision stand in Springetts Arcade from 9am until 5pm tomorrow. Residents can make donations by cash or cheque.

If you can't make it to Springetts Arcade, you can still donate to World Vision by calling 13 32 40 or donating online at www.worldvision.com.au.

Fire bug arrested

A man faced court on Wednesday charged over a fire which burned three hectares of grassland and threatened property in southern NSW, police said.

The grassfire started on Monday near the Edmondson VC rest area at Collector, near Goulburn, and threatened a nearby house.

Several Rural Fire Service units extinguished the blaze but a police search at the time failed to find anyone who might have been involved in the fire.

On Tuesday, after an extensive police search along the Federal Highway at Lake George, police arrested a 50-year-old man.

He was charged with maliciously damaging property by fire and was refused bail and ordered to appear in Goulburn Local Court.



Making waves

2004 Building Design Award winner

JANE SEHLMIEIER

A Bowral-based architect is making waves on the South Coast architecture scene after winning an award in the 2004 Shoalhaven Building Design Awards.

Martin O'Toole won the Commercial Building category at the awards - hosted by Shoalhaven City Council - for a series of shops he designed in Berry.

The Martin O'Toole team impressed the judges with a contemporary and stylish building design that compliments and respects the heritage architecture surrounding the location.

Using bright, complimentary colours, a wide variety of building materials and a barn-style building design, the trio of shops has become a stand-out feature at its location in Albert Street.

With the buildings located at one of Berry's prime retail spots - facing on to Berry's central shopping plaza - Mr O'Toole said he was pleased the building had been so well received by council and the community.

"When you build, it's always a good opportunity to make it unique, something different," he said.

"When we did this building we did something quite different and challenging. This award confirms we're doing the right thing."

Mr O'Toole believes his award is indicative of the Southern Highlands' growing reputation for innovative architecture, saying the Wingecarribee Shire had an abundance of talented architectural firms.

"I was really pleased an architect from Bowral could win such an award in the Shoalhaven," he said.

"Bowral is gaining a reputation as a place to come to for people looking for good design."

"It's a good sign for local builders that we cannot only provide good services, but that we win awards for it."

As for the secret to his design success, Mr O'Toole believes a willingness to experiment with building design while respecting the dimensions of historical architecture was his winning formula.

"We encourage our clients to have fun with their building design, and seize opportunities," he said.

"The customers who do the crazy stuff often love their buildings the best. The Berry shops are proof of this."



AWARD WINNER: Bowral architect Martin O'Toole with his award.

FINE DESIGN: These shops in Berry, designed by Bowral architect Martin O'Toole, took out the top prize in the 2004 Shoalhaven Building Design Awards in the Commercial Building category.

Be warned!

New Year's revellers are warned they could face stiff fines for using illegal fireworks.

NSW Commerce Minister John Della Bosca said anyone buying fireworks or using fireworks without a WorkCover permit was risking on-the-spot fines from police or WorkCover inspectors, as well as substantial court penalties.

"Anyone buying or using fireworks illegally can receive on-the-spot fines of up to \$1,100," he said.

"Courts can impose penalties ranging from \$5,500 to \$11,000 or even a jail sentence."

Fatal crash

A man died after two cars collided in Wollongong on Wednesday.

NSW Police said one car crashed into the side of the other near the corner of West and Auburn streets about 3.45am (AEDT). A 55-year-old man died from his injuries while the driver of the second car was being treated for shock.

Crash investigation officers were at the scene.

Further details were not released as relatives of the victim had not yet been informed, police said.

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