



WELL DONE: Upper Hunter Youth Development Officer Esther Mines (centre) with fellow RYSA nominees Kaylene Holman and Reina Stalker (right).

Youth leaders

Betina Hughes

MANY people throughout the Upper Hunter are making a valuable contribution to their local community.

The Regional Youth Development Officers Network (RYDON) recently hosted the Regional Youth Services Awards (RYSA) in Muswellbrook to recognise the achievements of youth and those that work with them.

Local government areas under the RYDON umbrella include Cessnock, Dungog, Gloucester, Gosford, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Upper Hunter and Wyong.

Flying the flag for the Upper Hunter, three local women, Muswellbrook's Esther Mines, Kaylene Holman and Reina Stalker, were nominated in the Youth Sector of the Year category.

Ms Stalker from Singleton took out first prize for her outstanding rapport with young people and consistently professional attitude.

The women said the various youth services complemented each other and aimed to network – another result of the awards.

"It's about making people aware that such services exist in the community and then equipping the professionals," Upper Hunter youth development officer Ms Mines said.

Fellow nominee Ms Holman also believes networking to be an important part of youth work.

"Because we're so far apart and isolated, sometimes when you're unlinked it's hard to know what the rest are doing," she told the *Chronicle*.

Ms Holman said working with young people required attentiveness and a consideration of the difference between individuals.

"I love working with the youth and listening to them and their views," she said.

"Everyone has different circumstances and they're doing the best they can with the skills in their life."

It wasn't just those working with youth who were recognised; young achievers were also acknowledged.

Locals nominated for Young Person of the Year were Emily Rayner, Justin Hourn and Annalise Kaye, with Miss Kaye receiving the top prize.