

Edinburgh volunteer manages cancer by helping others

An Edinburgh man has won a prestigious award from a Scottish charity for his work in ensuring local people, including those with cancer and dementia, don't miss out on regular walks in their local community.

Paths for All presented Tony Lewty with the Health Walk Volunteer of the Year award at the Scottish Parliament on 20 September for his work in improving the health and wellbeing of others, whilst managing his own cancer diagnosis.

Tony joined the Edinburgh Ageing Well project three years ago to manage his circulatory disease and diabetes, and since then trained as a Volunteer Walk Leader to give back to others what he had got out of the walks.

Tony's volunteering role involves leading free, social and short Health Walks, including Dementia and Cancer Friendly walks, across Edinburgh. Tony supports people on these walks to enjoy being active, no matter what their age, ability or condition might be.

Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing Joe FitzPatrick presented Tony with the award, a certificate, £250 towards his project and a £30 gift voucher.

The awards ceremony was hosted by BBC presenter Fiona Stalker and saw a number of the nation's volunteers, from the Highlands to the Borders, win prizes for their efforts in transforming paths and parklands, as well as community walking habits in their local areas.

Beyond his formal volunteering roles with Ageing Well, Tony puts others before himself, offering to drive those who are less mobile, to social events they would often otherwise be

unable to attend.



Tony Lewty with Joe FitzPatrick MSP and Fiona Stalker of the BBC

Tony said: "I feel honoured, surprised and delighted to receive this award. I'm very lucky to have been invited to become a Walk Leader by Ageing Well. They have been most supportive.

I really enjoy my role as a Walk Leader – the fresh air, the participants, the camaraderie, the cuppa and chat at the end of a walk. The thanks and support you get from the walkers is really rewarding."

Through his promotional activities he has encouraged numerous new volunteers to join the project and scores of new participants to enjoy walking.

Brendan Brodie, Volunteer Coordinator at Ageing Well Edinburgh said: "Tony is a truly caring and considerate volunteer who goes out of his way to help all of his walkers and leaders.

"He inspires, organises and mentors his fellow Walk Leaders, to ensure every Health Walk they lead is supportive and welcoming for anyone to join.

"Even this year when Tony received major surgery for bowel cancer he was busy organising his Health Walk groups to enable them to continue while he was in hospital.

"I'm really proud to have such fantastic volunteers playing a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of the people of Edinburgh, and great to see Tony recognised at Paths for All's annual awards."

As well as enjoying giving back to his community, Tony physically benefits from taking part in the walks and enjoys walking to help manage his conditions.

Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing Joe FitzPatrick, said: "It is an honour to be in the company of so many hardworking and selfless people, and in particular to hear the stories of volunteers who have carried out this excellent work.

"Paths for All aims to get Scotland walking – everyone, every day and everywhere – and through the passion and commitment of its army of volunteers, it is making that vision become a reality.

"We know that being physically active is one of the best things you can do for physical and mental health, and programmes like this are a great way to get active in a way that best suits you."

Ian Findlay, Chief Officer at Paths for All, said: "These volunteers' efforts in improving the nation's physical, mental

and social health are invaluable.

“Our Volunteer Awards are a chance to thank the country’s unsung heroes who work tirelessly, out of the goodness of their hearts, just to see their efforts benefitting others around them.

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and we always look forward to this event when we put our amazing volunteers at centre stage.

“Their stories are always inspiring – and this year was certainly no exception.”

Paths for All’s Volunteer Awards 2018 included seven individuals and three groups winning awards in ten categories: Community Path Volunteer of the Year, Community Path Group of the Year, Path Skillz Young Person of the Year, Path Skillz Group of the Year, Health Walk Volunteer of the Year, Health Walk Volunteer Group of the Year, Dementia Friendly Walking Volunteer of the Year, Macmillan Walk Leader Award, Step Count Champion of the Year and Volunteer Manager of the Year.

Paths for All works with the Scottish Government and 30 partners to support and deliver national policies, such as the National Walking Strategy and other ‘active travel’ initiative.

The charity donates thousands of pounds worth of grants to worthwhile projects that improve health, promote walking and improve environments for people to be active in.