

Scottish Athletics' Volunteer of the Year

Scottish Athletics' Volunteer of the Year, Craig Stewart of the Harmony Club, has spoken of his delight at achieving the award after being nominated twice previously.

"It was nice to finally pick it up (but) it's really a team prize. We now have over 100 regular volunteers at the club and many more who contribute less regularly. It is a very volunteer intensive sport" he said.

Continuing to stress the collective effort behind his award, Craig added: "It's probably also more reflective of a few years hard work, rather than just 2023. When I started we had around seven coaches and 70 athletes in the junior section and 120 in the senior.

"(Now) we have over 40 coaches and 450 members altogether, all with different and very specific needs – it's like running a small business.

"Having that many people who are happy to help really makes my job easier, as I can concentrate on some of the bigger items that need attention – hosting athletics events at Saughton, recruiting coaches, ensuring the safety and enjoyment of all of the kids, and the biggest challenge is going to be finding a way of keeping the track at Saughton usable for athletics as it is overdue for renewal and the council has no plans to

upgrade.”

Craig was nominated by fellow club member Susan Ross, who said: “His drive and enthusiasm and his long-term commitment and forward-thinking approach has directly led to Harmeny becoming the successful, welcoming club that we are today.

“One of Craig’s aims was to grow the club, both in terms of number of members and also in our outlook as to what an inclusive community club could achieve. He has worked hard at addressing this by expanding the number of leagues we compete at giving a better competition pathway. season.

“His focus on improved coaching has created an environment where athletes can thrive.

“He was the driving force behind getting local clubs together during the pandemic and has made close associations with Edinburgh AC, Corstorphine AC, Team East Lothian and Lasswade.

“ He organised the Lothian Together Apart races and continues to think of novel ways to engage our members including a 3000m time trial for athletes to gain times for the London mini marathon selection.

“Craig has also put tremendous energy into volunteer recruitment and appreciates more than anyone the important role they play in a community club such as ours.

“In 2022 we had over 80 volunteers give their time to help our club grow at everything from coaching to website design.

“Nearly every one of these volunteers were initially approached by Craig with a request for help and it is a show of his character that they all said yes.

“In 2016 Harmeny AC had seven coaches. We now have 41.

“He was instrumental in encouraging our members to become officials and we now have nine qualified (level 1/2) officials, plus six ‘in training’.

“In 2017 Craig devised the Assisted membership scheme which

allows children and adults to confidentially apply for funding covering training fees and annual subscriptions, race entries and travel. His opinion was that no-one should miss out due to lack of funds.

“It is hard to imagine there are many who can match his enthusiasm, versatility and countless hours devoted to all aspects of the club and its development over many years. We are lucky to have him.”

Craig is pictured, left, receiving his award from Ian Beattie, Chair of UK Athletics.



Scottish Athletics Awards 2023
PHOTO Bobby Gavin