

## Merit Award 2022 – presented to Graeme Christey

citation prepared by Craig Brown and presented by Daniel Reese on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 @ NPW

The person we are presenting this award to joined the sport in 1985.

Having completed an Outward Bound course, he was encouraged to come out for a run with the Toc H Harriers. It was not a fast run but he did keep coming back.

After 2 years of running with the club he took on the job of Junior Club Captain. A role he continued to hold for 10 years before taking on the Chairman's role.

During his time as Junior Club Captain he grew the junior section into the biggest group of juniors in just one club, in Canterbury. He used to phone every junior athlete every week to make sure they were ready for the next event and to find out how they were going. Something that he still continues to do, although these days it is mostly by text and Facebook.

Tuesday night training runs, around the streets of Papanui, saw him encouraging the parents to help out which they willingly did and resulted in some becoming competitive athletes themselves.

His 'bag of gear needed for cross country events', that he would go through at the start of each cross-country season, was legendary. It is still commented on by some parents of former runners as having prepared them well for what was required for each Saturday.

He grew his coaching skills, attending coaching courses including an advanced one in Melbourne and the young athletes he looked after benefited from this.

He was a big supporter and driver behind getting a Junior Women's grade in the National Road relays with the Papanui Toc H Junior Women being the first such team to compete at the National Road relays in Nelson in 1996 and winning the first Junior Women's race in the Takahe to Akaroa in 1997. Some of these young women held the course records in Takahe to Akaroa up until just a few years ago.

After two years as Chairman of the Harrier club he stepped back to concentrate on his coaching. He also moved to teaching at Christ's College where he went straight into the role of Master of the Athletics team. Here he took on the role of coaching both the Christ's College teams and the Papanui Toc H juniors, some of whom were continuing into the Senior ranks and he is still coaching them to this day.

He has many athletes who have taken titles at National Secondary Schools and Nationals and has had many who have been given scholarships to American universities. A testament to his good coaching and his concern for the athlete's welfare, not just their performances.

He is always willing to help and regularly encourages his athletes to get out and lend a hand.

He has given a huge amount of his time to the sport through Papanui Toc H, Christ's College and to the young athletes he has helped along the way, not just from these two organisations.

It is my pleasure to present this Athletics Canterbury Merit Award for Exceptional Service to the sport of athletics to Graeme Christey.