



Student Md Mominul Hamid, from Northumbria University, has delivered more than 700 food parcels across the West End of Newcastle.

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Students step up to support communities during the Covid-19 lockdown

Selfless students have been recognised by the city's universities for going above and beyond to support their neighbours during lockdown.

Newcastle and Northumbria University students scooped Best Neighbour on Campus (BNOC) awards for helping make a difference in their communities during the testing period. From preparing and delivering emergency food parcels and walking shielding neighbours' dogs, to helping the community

during Ramadan and setting up a community groups to support elderly and self-isolating neighbours, the winners of the latest round of BNOC winners have shown a true neighbourly spirit and commitment to their communities.

Newcastle University Zoology student, Eleanor Norton, was one of those recognised, for her role in setting up the Burnhope Village Support Group with her mother. This group has grown to 26 members, with volunteers assisting the vulnerable in the village by collecting prescriptions, doing their shopping, posting letters, preparing and delivering food parcels, dog walking and conducting friendly phone calls to make sure everyone is well.

Eleanor said: “It was a bit of a shock being nominated for this month’s Best Neighbour on Campus – it’s quite an honour. I didn’t expect when helping to set up the Burnhope Village Support Group to get any recognition at all for it – all I wanted to do was help out my village in these difficult times.

“This pandemic has brought about a huge sense of community across the country – in such a scary time it has been quite heart-warming to see people from all sorts of different backgrounds come together to help and support each other. The best thing we students can do is to get involved with our communities and help those that are in need.

“A lot of communities across the country have set up [Covid-19 Mutual Aid groups](#). If you feel like you are able to, you could volunteer with a group near you or at your local food bank. If there isn’t a group near you or you don’t feel like joining one, you could just keep an eye on the people in your neighbourhood; you could offer to get shopping for a neighbour who is isolating, walk their dog or you could write your neighbour a letter to let them know you’re thinking of them in these hard times (you might even find a new best friend!). You could even do a book-swap.

“There are so many different ways to help out, so you can find one that suits you and your situation best. I know it can be difficult fitting volunteering in with exams and coursework, but even an hour a week to help those around you will make a huge difference. Be respectful to your neighbours – you may have key workers on your street who need a good night’s sleep after a stressful day, so keep things quiet if you can. Don’t forget that little things can make someone’s day, so even giving someone a wave from across the street may cheer them up.”

Other winners include, Md Mominul Hamid, from Northumbria University, who has delivered more than 700 food parcels to vulnerable asylum seekers, migrants and others across the West End of Newcastle.

Similarly, Northumbria University student, Faheem Malik was recognised for organising community work with the Northumbria University Islamic Society throughout the year. Recently, he has been organising and arranging for Ramadan iftar meals which is the breaking of fast for Muslim students.

Meanwhile, a group of Newcastle University students set up a WhatsApp group for the residents of Meldon Terrace, in Heaton, to help those that are self-isolating with deliveries and to keep up community spirit on the road. They have taken part in the Love Your Neighbour campaign, putting themselves forward as a point of contact for anyone on the street who is self-isolating or needs anything during this uncertain time. The winning household is shared by: Emily West, Maya Wallis, Joe McElvaney, Ruby Hastings and Fergal Byrne.

A household of Northumbria and Newcastle University students was praised by their neighbours for helping elderly residents with shopping and support. The student winners are: Claudia Charwood, Jodie Paffrath, Eleanor Stanfield, Joe Lyons, Carl Graham, Tinisha Osu and Manpreet Loyal.

Nominating his student neighbours, Jesmond resident Mr Reinhold Stockle, said: "Covid-19, all the social distancing measures and disruption to activities we took for granted in our daily lives, has impacted us all as individuals and as a community. As we are all trying to make sense of and adjust to this new reality, it is pleasantly surprising how the little acts of kindness of our neighbours, remind us of the goodness of people at this difficult time."

Marc Lintern, Director of Student Experience, Newcastle University said: "During a very difficult time, it is so good to hear about the positive things which students from our two Universities are doing, to help their neighbours and communities. Young people are often the focus of negative publicity, and these awards really reflect the attitudes and behaviour of the majority of our students, who want to make a positive difference".

Carly Foster, Interim Assistant Director for Student Engagement, Northumbria University added: "These awards recognise some of the wonderful ways that students support our communities in and around Newcastle. We are delighted

that residents took the time to nominate them, particularly at a time when our society needs these positive actions.”

Jeannie Davison, from Jesmond Residents' Association, said: “Residents are often unaware of the fantastic contribution which students at both of our universities make to the wider communities in which they live. As a member of the panel it’s always very heartening to read about the initiative used by these individuals and small groups in order to be good neighbours to other residents. In particular, at this very difficult time it is especially encouraging to see that so many of them have gone well over and above what is expected of them in order to support others in the community.”

Best Neighbour on Campus

BNOC, established in 2018 by Newcastle University and its Students’ Union, celebrates the great work students do within their communities, either through volunteering, supporting local residents or being considerate, responsible neighbours.

Last year, Newcastle joined forces with Northumbria University and its Students’ Union, extending the award city-wide to celebrate the 50,000 students who live in Newcastle and the positive contribution they make to the city.

Awards are made each month in term time, with the aim of finding Newcastle’s BNOC.

The judging panel includes local residents, local councillors and representatives from the Universities.

More information and details of how to nominate and the terms and conditions of the competition can be found on the awards website:

www.ncl.ac.uk/best-neighbour

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