

Chance to recognise region's unsung heroes



Courage: Som Tamang has been nominated for a Pride of Australia medal. After overcoming personal hardships, he now helps children in his native Nepal.

Inspiring a nation one step at a time

DENIED an education as a child, Som Tamang left his Nepalese village at 10 to seek schooling in the capital city Kathmandu – only to find himself enslaved as a child labourer.

Now living in Cairns and putting himself through university, the 26-year-old has devoted his life to helping Nepalese children by building classrooms, paying for teachers, housing orphans and trying to prevent them from suffering his fate.

His tale has inspired his wife Susan to nominate him for the Pride of Australia Medal 2011 in the courage category.

"Som has been an inspiration to me and to many in Cairns," Ms

ROZ PULLEY
editorial@tcp.newsltd.com.au

Tamang wrote in her nomination. "Som left his village at 10 to seek out an education in Kathmandu, but was forced into child slavery – a trap many children fall into in Nepal."

He worked on building sites, as a street seller and as a domestic servant to rich families who treated him poorly.

"He would sleep at night under their stairs without adequate blankets to keep him warm and would

lie awake at night, dreaming about a better life. He knew he could make it happen if he worked hard," Ms Tamang wrote.

Working as a street seller, he started speaking English with tourists and eventually got work as a porter and tour guide with a trekking company. This led to an opportunity to come to Australia, where he became an Australian citizen in 2008.

"Rather than walking away and forgetting about his horrific past, Som uses his experiences to help the children in Nepal and to try to prevent them from suffering his fate," Ms Tamang wrote.

He has since founded a charity,

Friends of Himalayan Children, to educate Nepalese children and also helps settle many newly-arrived Bhutanese refugees in Cairns.

The Pride of Australia Medal program, run by News Limited, publisher of *The Cairns Post*, celebrates ordinary Australians who do extraordinary things.

"The Pride of Australia medal has uncovered so many heart-warming, inspiring, stories about people whose remarkable actions make us all proud to be Australian," chairman and chief executive of News Ltd, John Hartigan, said.

Nominations close July 26, and the award ceremony will take place in September/October.

CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

1 | Outstanding Bravery Medal

For an Australian, or group of Australians, who, through their act/s of bravery, helped save or attempted to save a life/lives.

2 | Courage Medal

For an Australian, who through his or her act/s of courage have overcome personal adversity through determination and strength of character.

3 | Heroism Medal

To recognise a member or members (professional or volunteer) of the SES, police, fire, ambulance, coast guard, defence forces, air rescue service who work, or have worked, on the front-line to protect the community.

4 | Community Spirit Medal

To recognise an individual or a group whose selfless, tireless and largely unacknowledged actions have enriched the lives of those around them in their community.

5 | Child of Courage Medal

A child 16 years or under who has helped save, or attempted to save, the life of another or overcome personal adversity through determination and strength of character.

6 | Young Leader Medal

A person under 25 years who has advanced a community, or will advance a community, through academic or personal endeavours.

7 | Care and Compassion Medal

To recognise a professional or volunteer carer or group, or a member of the health professions who has made a significant improvement to the lives of those around them.

8 | Inspiration Medal

To recognise a member of our teaching profession in primary or secondary school, state or independent education community or a role model whose compassion and wisdom while teaching, coaching and mentoring our youth has been truly inspiring.

9 | Environment Medal

For an Australian or group of Australians whose actions prove that by making one degree of difference to their local environment, people can make a difference to the broader community.

10 | Fair Go Medal

For an Australian permanent resident or citizen, born overseas, who has enriched Australia through their community involvement, hard work and willingness to embrace their new home.

FOR NOMINATION APPLICATIONS AND INFORMATION VISIT WWW.PRIDEOFAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

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