



New Zealander of the Year finalists named

Sarah Harvey

THE founder of Wellington's World Of WearableArt, a Hutt Hospital-trained plastic surgeon who specialises in helping those with skin cancer, and Weta Workshop's Sir Richard Taylor have all been named as finalists in the annual New Zealander of the Year awards.

The awards, which have been held for three years, recognise extraordinary contributions by New Zealanders to their communities. Fairfax Media is a partner in the awards.

The 2011 winner was scientist Sir Paul Callaghan. This year the finalists have been whittled down to WOW founder Dame Suzie Moncrieff, Sir Richard and Auckland-based plastic surgeon Sharad Paul.

Dame Suzie, who started WOW in Nelson, has dedicated the past 25 years to making the show an international arts competition.

When contacted yesterday, she said she was "overwhelmed and very humbled" to be nominated alongside two New Zealanders of such high standing.

She was made a dame in the most recent New Year honours.

Sir Richard has become a global player with his animations and creations but has chosen to remain in, and staunchly loyal to, New Zealand.

He and his company created all of the props, costumes, prosthetics, miniatures and weaponry for *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. He and his team were rewarded for the work with four Academy Awards. He was made a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in June 2010.

Dr Paul is a plastic surgeon who specialises in skin cancer treatment. From his clinic in West Auckland he does more than 5000 free skin cancer checks a year.

He completed his surgical training between 1990 and 1995 at Hutt Hospital, Middlemore Hospital, in Auckland, and overseas. He also holds a masters in medical law and ethics and writes poetry and short stories.

In 2010 he was hailed for inventing the first new skin graft technique in more than 100 years. The procedure cuts costs, pain and healing time for patients.

He also runs an award-winning bookstore in Auckland and uses its proceeds to fund literacy programmes in low-decile schools.

There are also categories for senior and young New Zealander of the year, as well as a community and local heroes award.

The finalists for Senior New Zealander of the Year are advocate for the blind Don McKenzie, social entrepreneur Malcolm Cameron, and community man Pat Magill.

Young New Zealander of the Year finalists are school pupil Bailey Lovett, Christchurch student volunteer army founder Sam Johnson, and youth advocate Elizabeth Chan.

Community of the year finalists are Christchurch Charity Hospital, Paeroa Community and The Asian Events Trust.

The local heroes awards finalists are John Hartnell, of Christchurch; Henare O'Keefe, of Hastings; and Bernie Monk, of Greymouth. Winners will be announced on February 16 in Auckland.



In the running: WOW founder Dame Suzie Moncrieff, left, skin cancer specialist Dr Sharad Paul, centre, and Weta Workshop's Sir Richard Taylor right, are finalists in the New Zealander of the Year awards