

Citizen of the Year Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR SINCE 1990

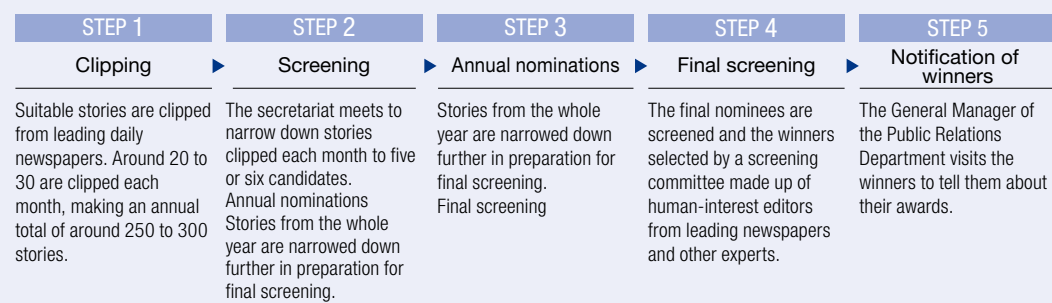
What is Citizen of the Year?

Every year, we select deserving individuals who inspire their communities and honor them for their actions and activities.

Citizen of the Year is an annual award scheme that gives recognition to citizens who inspire local people and contribute to the development, happiness and all-round enhancement of their local communities. Prompted by a lack of wide-ranging recognition for deserving citizens, the scheme was set up in 1990 to mark Citizen's 60th anniversary, tying in perfectly with the spirit of company's name. As well as Japanese citizens, commendations have also been given to foreign citizens who have made a contribution to their local communities in Japan. The scheme has even received coverage in the press and on television.

Selection Procedure

The Citizen of the Year Secretariat nominates candidates based on stories published in leading daily newspapers over the course of the year. A screening committee then discusses the nominees and decides upon the winners.



The fiscal 2009 award ceremony

Continually striving to be good company and support the actions of good citizens

20 years ago, then president Michio Nakajima suggested that we should come up with some sort of scheme to celebrate Citizen's 60th anniversary and put our corporate philosophy into practice as a "corporate group contributing to and striving to be respected by citizens of the world." The Public Relations Department, as it was known back then, responded by proposing the Citizen of the Year scheme. As Japan's bubble economy was at its peak, there was a general trend towards glitzy events under the banner of support for the arts. Here at Citizen however, we wanted to do something that would reflect the company, contribute to society and have a more lasting impact, even if it wasn't quite as glamorous. It was based on these three concepts that we came up with Citizen of the Year, as a scheme that would go down well with the public. It is precisely because the principles behind the awards are so closely linked to our philosophy and culture that they have kept going for 20 years.

Looking back at all the things that previous winners have done, you can't help but feel inspired by their individual heartwarming actions. It really makes you appreciate that a good community is always underpinned by a great many good citizens. Although some values may be rapidly changing these days, that spirit of goodwill and underlying consideration for other people still remains unchanged. As we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Citizen Group, we will continue to strive to be a good company, as a member of the community, and support the actions of the good citizens with whom we share our name.

Mitsuyuki Kanamori
President and CEO
Citizen Holdings Co., Ltd.



Profile of the Fiscal 2009 Winners

Contribution to society

Mikiko Yoshijima

(Born: June 1961,
Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture)
Director, Iwate Hospice Association



Creating and delivering paper patterns for towel hats for people concerned about hair loss due to cancer treatment



Mikiko Yoshijima came up with the idea of making hats from towel material after hearing from a daughter, who was worried about her mother losing her hair as a side effect of cancer treatment. She produced a paper pattern and started sending them out along with sample hats. Yoshijima herself experienced hair loss as a side effect of treatment for leukemia and malignant lymphoma at the age of 30. In addition to working as a cook at a daycare center, she also set up the Iwate Hospice Association and began organizing local training sessions on how to make towel hats in June 2008. Users have told the association that the towel hats, which can be customized in different colors or patterns, are gentle on the skin and easy to wash. With more and more people, including medical professionals, getting involved outside the prefecture, Yoshijima's hat-making scheme is starting to sweep the entire nation.

Self-actualization

Mizuki Taira

(Born: March 1975,
Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture)
Baker, Gateau d'Ange Bakery,
Kitakamakura



Serving as a source of inspiration by baking bread as a form of rehabilitation



As a result of an accident during a cycle race in August 2005, Mizuki Taira was left completely paralyzed and unable to speak. After working hard to rehabilitate himself however, together with his recently married wife Fusako however, he made a miraculous recovery and was discharged from hospital by the end of the year. Having been told that it could help with the rehabilitation of his fingertips and brain, Taira began baking bread. He started taking online orders in the summer of 2008 and soon built up a following through word of mouth, with a reputation for producing the "bread of the angels" (Gateau d'Ange). Getting up at 4:00 in the morning, he makes three to five loaves of bread per day, made to order one loaf at a time. Many customers include comments about illness or concerns for their families when they send their orders by email. Taira also receives countless thank you letters from people who say his bread has made them feel better or has given them strength to carry on.

Lifesaving

Yukio Shige

(Born: February 1944,
Sakai, Fukui Prefecture)
Representative, NPO Kokoro ni
Hibiku Bunshu/Henshukyoku
(Editorial Office: Anthology that
Touches The Heart)



Setting up a suicide consultation center, organizing patrols and helping people get a new start



After retiring from Fukui Prefecture Mikuni Police Station, which has jurisdiction over the picturesque Tojinbo rock formation, Yukio Shige began working to prevent suicides in the area in April 2004. He was inspired by an experience during his time with the police force, when a couple in the early stages of old age who had been placed under his protection committed double suicide a few days later, leaving behind a note addressed to Shige. He established a nonprofit organization (NPO) with a group of around 20 friends and opened a consultation center in a rented storefront. Members of the NPO patrol the 1.4-kilometer path along the edge of the cliffs in two-hour shifts, once in the morning and again around sunset. As of the end of January 2010, they had assisted a total of 232 people. They have been seeing a lot of people considering suicide due to financial reasons recently, particularly men in their thirties, possibly due to the current economic downturn. The NPO is also working to provide care for people who have been prevented from committing suicide and is in the process of establishing a suicide prevention network on a national level.

Sincere, worthwhile awards that shine a spotlight on citizens' activities

Comments courtesy of Riyako Godai, who has chaired the screening committee for 20 years

20 years of continual recognition for citizens' activities

Having been set up in 1990, the Citizen of the Year scheme marks its 20th anniversary this year. When I first heard about the awards, I remember thinking that it was a genuinely sincere initiative that epitomized Citizen. I felt drawn to the Citizen of the Year awards because, unlike other companies' showy efforts to support the arts, they shone the spotlight on citizens' everyday activities, including their contribution to society and achievements in terms of self-actualization. Whereas society and our way of life has changed almost unrecognizably over the last 20 years, the basis of the activities carried out by those honored by the Citizen of the Year awards has remained unchanged. The fact that the awards identify and recognize such activities is what makes them so worthwhile.

Shining a light on young citizens' activities too

Having been part of the screening committee on 20 occasions, I have learnt the true power of a welcoming embrace, consideration for other people and the courage to stand up and take action. Even so, there are always lingering doubts after the final decision has been made, making me question which activities are the most deserving. It was an absolute delight to meet amazing people who cast all such doubts aside at every award ceremony.

I hope that the scheme will focus more purposefully on activities undertaken by younger people in the future. I hope that the Citizen of the Year awards will help raise the profile of the young citizens who get involved in a wide range of activities within their communities.

Riyako Godai
Critic
Chairman of the Citizen
of the Year Screening Committee

