



Harold Jochs is the captain of the Swan Hill Fire Brigade and has been volunteering for more than 40 years. Picture: Supplied



Julie Jochs has been a volunteer with the Swan Hill SES for more than 25 years. Picture: Louis Harrison

Community spirit shines

Louis Harrison

EACH day, members of the community give up their time to volunteer with emergency services like the SES and CFA to keep the community safe.

Julie Jochs has been a volunteer with the Swan Hill SES Unit for more than 25 years.

An advertisement in the paper calling for people who wanted to help their community was all it took for her to give it a go.

"I saw an ad in the newspaper that said, 'Would you like to help your community?' I came to a meeting and they signed me up on the night that I came," she said.

"When I first joined, I said I would try anything once, and if I didn't like it, I wouldn't do

it again."

In her time with the unit, Mrs Jochs said she's tried most things and has been involved in many different experiences and opportunities.

"I drive the truck with lights and sirens, I do road crash, I get on roofs," she said.

"I have done pretty much everything as well as doing all sorts of incident management roles as well, so I can go into the Incident Control Centre and do things there as well."

More than 100,000 emergency management volunteers across Victoria return day after day because giving back to the community is one of the many rewards of helping keep communities, homes, businesses and the environment safe.

Mrs Jochs said the reason she first joined was also one of the reasons she has stayed, alongside the opportunity to mentor younger volunteers.

"I like to help the community, but that's why we join in the first place," she said.

"Right now I guess taking on the role of controller of the unit, I really want to see us grow and bring younger people into the organisation to progress through."

Aside from her work with the Swan Hill SES Unit, Mrs Jochs has also held positions with the CFA headquarters brigade and was involved in the Greater Midlands Fire Brigades Competition Association as a secretary-treasurer for a decade.

Mrs Jochs attributes her involvement in the

association to her husband, Harold Jochs.

"I guess it's his fault, Harold was the president 10 years ago, and he was looking for a secretary treasurer and nobody was putting their hand up and so I said that I would give it a go for a little while and ended up doing it for 10 years or so," she said.

In February this year, Mrs Jochs was elected as a life member of the Greater Midlands Fire Brigades Competition Association following her resignation from the association last year.

"They normally give you a certificate of appreciation, and then maybe some years down the track you get the life membership, but they didn't do that, they just did the live membership straight up front, so it was very, very humbling," she said.

A family of volunteers

THE Jochs' family has a passion for giving back to the community and many of them have gone on to volunteer with Victoria's emergency services.

Julie Jochs' husband Harold Jochs has been volunteering with the CFA in Swan Hill

for around 40 years.

He said when he moved to Swan Hill he was looking for something to do to give back to the community.

"I'd had a bit of experience with a local bushfire brigade since I was 14, been involved in that space, and I thought, well, I enjoyed that, so why not do that?"

"It's just been a big journey along the way, and a very rewarding journey," he said.

Two emergency services volunteers being married to each other comes with its own perks and challenges Mrs Jochs said.

"It's just something that we share a

passion for, and we also understand the demands, so I guess it's a bond that we have together, and we can be on the same job, you know, with two different hats on," she said.

"It's quite funny at the moment that we've got two captains in the house, as well as me being the controller here."

It's not just the two of them who give up their time; many of their children are also involved in various volunteering capacities.

"My oldest son's also heavily involved with CFA, he's a paramedic in Morong, and he's first lieutenant, so he's been very

passionate since he was 11, and even before that, so he's continued his passion through, and he's taken his journey," Mr Jochs said.

Mrs Jochs said some of the other children have taken slightly different journeys within the volunteering and service space.

"One of my sons is a police officer, and the other son's a security guard," she said.

Mrs Jochs said her children were inspired to get involved after seeing them volunteer and witnessing their passion for helping the community.

"I think it's monkey see, monkey do, in a way, you know?" she said.

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