

Hawke's Bay Justices of the Peace honoured for service

By Christine McKay

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Eva Wright (left) was awarded a certificate of appreciation at a ceremony last Friday by immediate past president of the Central Districts Justices of the Peace Association, Jean Corbin Thomas.

Between them, four district Justices of the Peace have given a combined 116 years of service, something we all need to appreciate, said Jean Corbin Thomas, the immediate past president of the Central Districts JPs Association.

"This is quite an occasion," she said at a function in Dannevirke last Friday night.

"I get the feeling these are all people who are generous with their time and shoulder responsibility, not just as Justices, but by serving their communities. In small communities like this you are very important, but contributing to your community pays you back, too."

Three JPs, Ralph Mountford of Woodville, Alf Knight of Maharahara and Arthur Poole of Dannevirke, were honoured on their retirement, and Dannevirke JP Eva Wright was given a special award for outstanding service on the eve of 25 years as a JP.

"Eva has done a tremendous amount for this branch," said Tom Castles, chairman of the Dannevirke sub-branch of JPs.

"She has been part of this community for a very long time and as well as her role as a JP, she's served as a training officer and been very active in the Catholic Church and St Vincent de Paul. Eva's involvement in our community means she's a very busy lady."

Mr Knight became a JP in May 1979 and was sworn in at the old Dannevirke Hospital in the days when there were 300 staff and 12 gardeners.

"I'm not sad to bow out," Mr Knight said. "So many things have changed."

Mr Mountford was appointed a JP in 1989.

"Then-MP John Falloon got on to me as mayor of Woodville to become a JP," he said.

Mr Mountford has served the Woodville district very well over the years, Mr Castles said. "On one particular day he signed 15 affidavits."

Mr Mountford said, although he enjoyed his time as a JP he was pleased to be retiring.

"I've had enough of people coming and knocking on my door," he said.

"These days I don't know who is at the door, unlike the earlier years when I knew everyone in Woodville."

Dannevirke's Mr Poole, who became a JP in 1991, farmed at Motea for many years and his expertise in farming has been used by many over the years, Mr Castles said.

"I can remember the great wool debate which pitted father against son and soon we realised the importance of signed documents," he said.

Mr Poole said for him becoming a JP was a long, slow process.

"In the Muldoon days farmers had to sign a declaration of the number of sheep they had. It was a very interesting time," he said.

"When I moved to town, I lived close to the high school and was called upon to verify a lot of documents."

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