

## Mum relishes a challenge

■ Nicola Kalmar

Katie Bidewell has never been one to shy away from a challenge.

Whether it is leading the charge to help rid the town of rubbish, finding permanent homes for abandoned animals or shaving her head for charity, the Broome resident is often found at the front of the queue.

This month, Ms Bidewell's community efforts were recognised when she was presented with a Premier's Australia Day Active Citizenship Award.

The married mother of two said she was blown away by the acknowledgement.

"It was very overwhelming," she said.

"There are so many people who do a lot in this community that also deserve recognition."

The award also demonstrated Ms Bidewell following proudly in her parents' footsteps, as they were also recipients of Active Citizenship Awards in 1993 for their role as volunteer St John Ambulance officers and trainers.

Since moving from Perth to Broome 11 years ago with her husband Aaron, the registered nurse and midwife has not stood still.

As well as raising two children — Jackson, 9, and Charli, 6, who Ms Bidewell cites as her proudest achievements — the resident has also found time to roll up her sleeves and help out in the community.

In 2013, she joined forces with a handful of organisers to clean up the town.

The Keep Broome Clean Team was started by Josh Akerman in response to an image circulating on social media of a large illegal dump site, which generated much community concern.

Together, the voluntary group hosted monthly clean-ups in different parts of the town, working for hours to pick up rubbish in the heat and humidity.

Over time, Ms Bidewell and fellow resident Lance Smith became the driving forces behind creating events and running clean-ups.

In its three years of operation,



Katie Bidewell was recognised for her volunteering efforts on Australia Day. Picture: Shire of Broome

organisers and volunteers have cleared Broome of hundreds of tonnes of rubbish.

KBCT also raised \$2200 for cancer charity event Relay for Life.

Although Ms Bidewell is proud of the tremendous efforts of the group, she said she was disappointed KBCT did not receive more help from relevant agencies and the community.

"More definitely needs to be done," she said.

"It requires money and, unfortunately, stopping illegal dumping is not high on the local priority list."

Two years ago, Ms Bidewell made the decision to baldly go where few others dare when she signed up for the World's Greatest Shave.

Inspired by her nephew, who

was diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of 12 for the third time, Ms Bidewell pledged to lose her locks to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation.

While most of us would feel daunted by the thought of losing our hair, Ms Bidewell took it all in her stride.

"It really wasn't a big deal to actually shave my hair — it's just hair, it will always grow back," she said.

She ended up raising \$5500, thanks to support from family, friends and community members.

After growing her hair back, Ms Bidewell said she would not rule out going under the razor again.

"I loved the whole experience and, if my husband let me, I'd keep it shaved," she said.

"(It was) so easy and cool — I

like to change my hairstyles regularly, so while I love it now, no doubt I'll get bored and chop it or colour it soon."

More recently, Ms Bidewell shifted her focus from clean-up operations to rescue missions after joining Saving Animals From Euthanasia Broome.

Through her role as adoptions co-ordinator, she, along with other SAFE family and foster carers, has helped save the lives of hundreds of dogs by finding them permanent homes.

Ms Bidewell said helping SAFE was something close to her heart.

"I saw SAFE as a very worthwhile cause," she said.

"My own dog is a SAFE dog, even before I started volunteering for them.

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