

Marie receives badge of honour award



A HARD-working Red Cross stalwart has been awarded the organisation's badge of honour.

At a ceremony in Thurso last week, Marie Masson was presented with the badge by Ian Rideout, the Red Cross operations director for northern Scotland.

Praising Marie's dedication to the charity, Mr Rideout stressed the importance of the work that she does with wheelchair users in the county and said the community is privileged to have her – as is the Red Cross.

Mr Rideout explained: "Marie is in charge of the medical loan department and is continually on hand to give out wheelchairs, including having her home telephone number on the office answering machine.

"This service is very necessary in what is a remote and scattered part of the area.

"She arranges a time to meet the person, arrives 15 minutes early to prepare the paperwork, then

spends time explaining how to use the chair. She often listens to some very sad stories and offers important listening support.

"When chairs are returned, a quick call often results in her timely arrival to clean the chair and prepare it for its next use. She also organises someone to service the chairs on a regular basis."

Mr Rideout said that this is not the extent of her dedication to the charity, however.

"Marie is the main fundraiser for the Thurso area, arranging a variety of events throughout the year," he said.

"She heads up the collecting team during Red Cross Week, starting with a phone-round in February to get volunteers organised for door-to-door collections. Again this is a challenge given the geography of the area.

"During Red Cross Week last year over £3800 was raised. Marie herself was out most days and walked a tremendous amount of

miles in some horrendous weather.

"As if this weren't enough, Marie volunteers for retail duties, working two four-hour shifts each week, and is always on hand if she is needed for another.

"Every one of the 31 retail volunteers, young and old, looks up to Marie. She is always there to listen and give advice when needed. She never stands still and is always looking for something to do."

He continued: "Throughout her 38 years with the Red Cross she has seen a lot of change and has always adapted – a rare gift.

"She is a modest lady who volunteers with a passion and has shown outstanding commitment in all her activity. Everyone who comes in contact with her is inspired by her.

"Marie Masson is an outstanding lady who has contributed a lot of her time and energy to the community through her voluntary work with the Red Cross. The community is privileged to have her and so is the Red Cross."

■ Marie Masson receives her award from Ian Rideout, operations director for northern Scotland.
Photo: John Baikie/
Caithness Photographic.