

## Legacy award for overcoming adversity

By Farida Master

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*Dawn and Del Johnston (back row) with Alan and Delwyn Breslau winners of the Inner Wheel Club of Howick, Dawn Johnston Koru Award.  
Times photo - Farida Master*

They are victors of circumstances and not victims.

That was the message resonated at a well-orchestrated evening hosted by the Inner Wheel Club of Howick at The Lounge in Howick.

The highlight of the evening was a newly established 'Leaving a Legacy, Dawn Johnston Koru Award' presented to an inspirational couple Alan and Delwyn Breslau of the Burns Support Charitable Trust who have dedicated their lives helping burn victims globally.

Being no stranger to adversity herself, Dawn – who instituted the award – was diagnosed with a congenital disorder with led to the spontaneous dislocation of the patellas in both knees. This hindered her walking which later led to bullying at school.

Last year Dawn had a death scare as she was diagnosed with cancer.

Wanting to leave a legacy behind, both Dawn, who has dedicated her life to volunteering, and her husband Del, a Rotarian of 45 years, were motivated to establish an award based on the Inner Wheel theme for 2017/18 year-‘Leave a Legacy’.

“We wanted to provide some means by which the principals that have motivated me through my life, could continue,” says Dawn, a foundation member of Zonta East Auckland and the Inner Wheel Club of Howick.

“My life has been full of challenges and this award pays tribute to a resident of Howick, Pakuranga and Botany who has overcome obstacles and turned a tragedy into a positively inspirational experience,” she says.

Alan and Delwyn were completely taken aback when their names were announced at the Inner Wheel event that also marked the change of presidents for the year.

For a 92-year-old who has been proclaimed dead twice and undergone more than 70 surgeries since surviving a plane crash —Alan is in great spirits.

A former chemical engineer on a business trip, he was horrifically burnt but refused to be a victim. Instead he formed The Phoenix Society at a time when there was no support for burn survivors.



*An inspirational evening at The Lounge hosted by the Inner Wheel Club of Howick.  
Times photo - Farida Master*

The Phoenix Society provides educational as well as peer support and hosts the World Burn Congress is named after the mythological bird that burns up in its nest and rises reborn-more beautiful than before.

His wife Delwyn asked if she could have a copy of the speech as her husband's hearing aid battery had gone flat and they didn't have a spare on them.

"The Koru that signifies new life is very special to me," she said, accepting the award.



*Delwyn said the Koru has always held a very special meaning for her. Photo supplied.*

Delwyn, whose son also suffered serious burns when he was eight, met Alan at the Phoenix World Burn Congress and was inspired by the work he did.

The couple is currently planning a trip to the US for the next Congress in September.

"The Congress started with around 120 survivors but now we have around a 1000 turn up and they all look so happy. It is the largest gathering of burn survivors in the world that look forward to building a new life."

It is their chance to connect with others on the journey of recovery from a burn injury.

"You will see people with no arms, legs and faces but with big smiles on their faces at the Congress," she says.