

# You've got a \$20,000 friend

BY JOHN PICKFORD

RUNNING AN organisation called You Have A Friend is usually about giving, begging food from generous local businesses or selling chocolate frogs to keep the charity – which feeds and clothes the Tweed region's homeless on a weekly basis – in existence.

This selfless service is run by Bilambil resident John Lee, who's keenly assisted by a band of active volunteers numbering around 113 if you include 40 school children and 25 teachers.

Imagine the surprise then, when recently, John was contacted by the Sydney-based Mamma Lena-Dino Gustin Foundation and told his 'friends' were going to be helped with a \$20,000 grant.

"I was gobsmacked," said John.

"Earlier this year we bought an 11-seater van to service the Chinderah/Kingscliff area – thanks to chocolate frog sales – and I thought it would be some time before we could afford to buy another to service villages like Uki, in the Tweed Valley," John said.

Addressing a 'friends' breakfast in Budd Park, Murwillumbah last weekend, Rosalba Gustin – the daughter of the foundation's founders – told diners and volunteers she was very humbled by what she has seen during her first visit to the area.

"I was told by a friend of John's plight, and the hard work put in by his volunteers, plus the good work they do.

"After some enquiries I nagged my board for assistance.

"The amount of passion I see in action, and the good being done, is phenomenal.

"The work is daunting ... I couldn't do it," she said, at the same time handing out snag sandwiches.

Rosalba, who was accompanied by her husband Peter, retired to the Gold Coast late last year and, as the foundation's secretary, said she hoped other needy areas could be helped in SE Queensland and northern NSW.

She said her

parents were Italian migrants and spent their lives helping people in need.

John Lee said although he was ecstatic and delirious about the grant, he was very disappointed at the lack of response You Have A Friend – and the Tweed region in general – receives by way financial aid.

They have put in many requests through local MPs and to date, have only received around \$5,000 to defray some of the volunteers' transport costs.

Mr Lee emphasised that, despite Tweed having some of the highest homeless figures in NSW, only one per cent of \$67.3 million spent on them during 2008/10 came here.

"Work that out!" he said.

Contact:  
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**RIGHT** Volunteers out and about and looking after friends at Chinderah last Sunday.



## Starters flag raised for Billy Cart Grand Prix

THE STARTER'S flag has fallen on preparations for this year's Tweed Billy Cart Grand Prix.

Open to all sections of the community, the Billy Cart Grand Prix encourages schools, youth groups, friends and even mums and dads to build a cart, get active and have great fun together at Tweed Valley College on this Sunday, May 30.

Categories range from Grade 2/3&4 to Open, and each has its

own cart regulations – see the website [www.tweedbillycartgp.com.au](http://www.tweedbillycartgp.com.au)

"The Billy Cart Grand Prix has become an anticipated and exciting event in the Tweed calendar," says event organiser Colin Louwen. "We have had great support from many schools, businesses and service clubs in the region and we expect this year to be no different."

There are three events on the day – the Central Engineering

Billy Cart Grand Prix, the One-Lap Sprint and The Weekly Challenge. The GP and the Sprint have teams of seven (one driver and six pushers) pushing billy carts around a 360m track, with pushers changing every 120m. In The Weekly Challenge, billy carts are timed around an obstacle course.

For more information phone (02) 6672 2922 or 0413 334 366.

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