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Queen's honour for hospice volunteers

THE work of volunteers in the care and treatment of terminally ill people will receive royal approval today (Thursday, 02 June) (Thurs-day) with the announcement that St Clare Hospice has been given a Queen's award.

The Hastingwood hospice is the only organisation in Essex to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which recognises excellence in work provided by volunteers in the community.

The hospice is one of only 92 throughout the country to be honoured.

The Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre, will officially present the hospice with its certificate signed by the Queen at the end of the month.

Hospice chief executive Brian Hilton said: "The award is a wonderful and well deserved tribute to the untiring commitment of our volunteers.

"This is a stunning testimony of the unique support they provide in so many different ways and we are all so proud to have been selected to receive it."

Martin Easteal, chairman of the trustees, said: "St Clare is the jewel in the crown of west Essex.

"It reflects very well on the area and all the people who are willing to give up a lot of their time."

The Queen's Award was started in 2002 as part of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Among those who nominated the hospice was former work experience carer Zabahda Hussain (19), who said: "What was great was it has so many volunteers and was basically being run by them.

"I thought it would be depressing but it is a happy place and after talking to the patients they seemed to agree.

"This will give a real boost to the volunteers there and also help in recruiting more which is needed to keep it running."

The hospice was opened in 2000 following a major fundraising appeal which secured £2.2m. The majority of the money came from the local community.

"Someone once said of hospice care 'The dying know we are not God, all they ask is that we don't desert them'," said Mr Hilton.

"The continued support, enthusiasm and compassion of our volunteers means we will not desert them."

As part of the award, two representatives of the hospice will be invited to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace next month.

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