



Westfield

Local Heroes

2018

Westfield Local Heroes were nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three successful Westfield Local Heroes per centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant to support their affiliated organisation's work, programs or activities.



Westfield

Local Heroes

In the first year of the Westfield Local Heroes program, we received an overwhelming response and many heart-warming stories after asking the local community to nominate individuals who promote wellbeing and harmony in their communities.

We congratulate every one of our nominees and recognise the important contribution they make to their local community.



Westfield

KOTARA

NSW



Catharina Howman
Firstchance Inc

Committed, Caring, Selfless

Catharina offers a guiding hand when families are at their most vulnerable

When families across Newcastle, NSW, find out their child may be living with a disability, Catharina Howman is there to help.

As a family worker at disability support service Firstchance, she is often the first point of contact for parents who discover the development of their child or baby is not typical.

They may be feeling extremely isolated and struggling with a sense of grief and loss as they attempt to adjust to what is the start of a big change in their lives.

But at the point when many are completely overwhelmed, Catharina steps in to provide comfort and information about the support services they can access for their child.

"At first we just listen to the family and let them know that what they are experiencing is real and that we are there to help them work through some of the issues they are facing," she says.

Catharina sticks with the families all the way as they learn to navigate the system and how to access the support that is available to them.

Through her group for families with young children, she also helps parents in similar situations to develop networks and make friends, which gives both parents and children a sense of connection.

"There is no pressure for them to be at their best and there is no judgment. We have a shared understanding and take the time to get to know individual children, not just their disabilities," she says.

Catharina says she is "overwhelmed but very honoured" to be recognised by her local community and voted a Westfield Local Hero.

Firstchance will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to cover some of the costs of its Little Ones – Resilient Families group for families with a child with a disability such as Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Melissa (Mel) Histon-Browning Got Your Back Sista

Compassionate, Inspiring, Inclusive

How a trip to Nepal inspired Melissa to help women at home

Melissa Histon-Browning is fighting back against domestic violence and empowering women and girls to build confidence and wellbeing.

Inspired to take action after witnessing the horrors of sex trafficking while on a trip to Nepal, Mel founded Got Your Back Sista in 2016 to help local women experiencing domestic violence.

Two years on, the charity assists women and children all the way from Taree to Lake Macquarie and the Upper Hunter to thrive and live independently after escaping abuse.

"I came back from Nepal really wanting to do something positive, and I realised I could do the most good by helping the women who are being abused in our own backyard," Mel says.

Mel and the team work in tandem with service providers from across the region to deliver household items and furniture, counselling and mentoring to help women who have escaped a violent relationship and who are trying to set up a new life for themselves.

As volunteer CEO, Mel is involved with everything from telephone triage, fundraising, liaising with other providers and speaking at public events to raise awareness in the community.

She is also responsible for organising Got Your Back Sista's self-defence classes, which have helped more than 100 women gain self-confidence and new skills.

"The classes are all about giving women a sense of empowerment. When I see someone come out with a smile on her face, walking a little bit taller with her load lightened, that is wonderful."

Mel says she is happy to have been voted a Westfield Local Hero by the Newcastle community, but "it takes a village to make a charity and it wouldn't be possible without all the volunteers who have supported us."

Got Your Back Sista will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund workshops on self-defence and resilience, reaching 200 people across the Hunter region over the next 12 months.



Lianne Dean Respectus

*Indefatigable, Motivated,
Inspiring*

Tireless Lianne helps take women and their families off the street

It's been three years since a community meeting about homelessness and domestic violence prompted the formation of Respectus, a charity that provides safe and affordable housing to women and children when they need it most.

For the Newcastle charity's first project, tradesmen donated their time, businesses gave goods, locals pledged money and materials, and about 200 volunteers worked to transform an unrenovated old convent into a refuge called Trisha House.

That's where Lianne Dean stepped in. "My passion really is for women's issues, domestic violence and homelessness, and helping women get back on their feet when they've hit rock bottom," she says.

Lianne has spent about 10 hours each week over the past 18 months driving the Trisha House renovation in her spare time.

"I had to make sure all the materials and tools we used were there and took care of all the logistics to make it easy for the people who volunteered," she says. "I was on the phone the moment I stepped out of my car on the way to work. When I left work, I was back on the phone."

"It was all worth it," she says. "We could take 13 women with children off the streets and out of living in their cars."

Lianne says one of the main reasons women experience homelessness is gender inequality. "Women tend not to have highly paid jobs or access to large superannuation payouts so when there's a family breakdown, they don't have the same financial fallback as men."

It's a "great honour to be voted a Westfield Local Hero," she says, and the support her nomination received in the local community will kick-start another plan to help women in need.

Respectus will use the \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to fund a pilot project for teenage mothers.

"It will be supported transitional accommodation for young mothers who don't have a really good network. Hopefully we can reduce the risk of these women having their children taken away from them and improve the children's future."

Your 2018 Finalists

Akazee Eguevoi | Aboriginal Employment Strategy

Humble, Compassionate, Leader

Akazee is a young Indigenous woman who has put her heart and soul into supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into sustainable employment and young Indigenous people into traineeships and apprenticeships. Akazee meets with local employers to identify their recruitment needs and works with the local Aboriginal community to source Aboriginal candidates for these roles.

Lyn Thurnham | Hunter Life Education

Supportive, Innovative, Creative

Lyn is a volunteer Chairperson for the Board of Directors of Hunter Life Education (HLE), a community-based organisation working in partnership with schools and community organisations to raise funds for Life Education delivery – encouraging children to make safer and healthier choices. Through Lyn's expert guidance, she has overseen more than 900,000 lessons take place in schools across the region.

Lloyd Valentine | Healthy Change Challenge

Courageous, Insightful, Egalitarian

Lloyd is the founder of Healthy Change Challenge, a fun, empowering, social and community-integrating holistic health program for marginalised people including people with a disability and/or mental illness. Also known as Challengers, members learn to direct exercise, shopping, cooking and mindfulness/meditation sessions in collaborative and supportive groups.

Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

Gina ASCOTT-EVANS

Thou Walla Family Centre and
Irrawang Public School P&C
Association

Jarrold BURNS

Hunter Care Group

Lindy CONNETT

Waratah Girls Choir

Boyd CONRICK

Redhead Surf Life Saving Club

Lianne DEAN

Respectus Limited

Kim DOWDING

Super Parents of Unique
Non-neurotypical Kids Support
(SPUNKS) Group

Akazee EGUEVOI

Aboriginal Employment Strategy

Tracy ELLEM

Creative Cooks Kitchen
Cooking School

Gary FALLON

1st New Lambton Scout Group

Tamara GAZZARD

Tantrum Theatre Cooperative
Limited

Jane HARRIS

Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation

Melissa (Mel) HISTON-BROWNING

Got Your Back Sista

Catharina HOWMAN

Firstchance Inc

Dianne JACKSON

Westpac Rescue Helicopter
Service

Wendy JENKINS

Angel Gowns For Australian
Angel Babies Inc

Toby KABLE

All Ability Sports Coaching

Toby KABLE

Community Activities Lake
Macquarie

Terrey MAHONEY

Riding for the Disabled NSW
Raymond Terrace and Lower
Hunter

Kupakwashe MATANGIRA

Save The Children

Danielle MAYER

Job Centre Australia Limited

Howard MOLE

Bikers for Kids Inc

Katy MOONEY

The Nappy Collective Inc

Paula MUDD

Hunter Domestic Violence Support
and Advisory Service – Jodie's
Place Refuge

Adam NICHOLAS

Raymond Terrace RLFC

Kim OAKHILL

Helpful Love

Jennifer O'SULLIVAN

Path 2 Change

Theresa PANTALONE

Alesco Senior College

Theresa PANTALONE

WEA Hunter –
Alesco Senior College

Dana PICHALOFF

Samaritans

Martin RADCLIFFE

Gleam Support Services

Coralie REEVE

Mental Health Carers
ARAFMI Hunter

Carolyn RIMINGTON

Make-A-Wish Australia

Monica SKEHAN

Young People's Theatre
Newcastle Inc

Sue STACKMAN

Friends With Dignity

Margaret STANDEN

Our Community Place Inc

Benita TAIT

Good Frief

Michael THOROUGHGOOD

Cerebral Palsy Alliance

Lyn THURNHAM

Hunter Care Limited
(trading as Hunter Life Education)

Lloyd VALENTINE

Healthy Change Challenge

Karina WOODHOUSE

Charles O'Neill Hostel

Susan YOUNG

Freedom4u Supported Holidays



If you or anyone you know would like more information on what support is available:

AUSTRALIA

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

MensLine: 1300 78 99 78

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

NEW ZEALAND

Lifeline: 0800 543 354

Suicide Crisis Helpline: 0508 828 865

Kidsline: 0800 54 37 54

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450



SCENTRE GROUP

Owner and Operator of **Westfield** in Australia and New Zealand