



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

MT DRUITT

NSW



Simone Selby AGFAABI

*Creative, Sympathetic,
Compassionate*

Simone shines a ray of light in a time of grief

Simone Selby was looking for a way to help her local community when she came across Angel Gowns for Australian Angel Babies, a charity that provides comfort to parents who have lost a baby.

The Angel Gowns volunteers create funeral gowns from donated wedding dresses and they crochet and knit blankets and other items for the babies' final journey.

"I'm lucky enough to have three children and five grandchildren and I just wanted to give something back to those not as fortunate as me," Simone says.

According to the charity, parents who suffer pregnancy loss through miscarriage and stillbirth are distressed and find it difficult to find suitable outfits for funerals.

Simone assists in handcrafting Angel Packs consisting of a gown, beanie, booties, blanket and a special keepsake for parents.

These are supplied to hospitals and funeral homes and are also available through the organisation's website and Facebook page at no charge.

Simone says that putting together the Angel Packs helps her to keep active. "I need to be constantly doing something. I can sit and watch TV and still knit the beanies, booties and blankets, or just spend quality time with my family."

The organisation has gifted thousands of Angel Packs in the four years it has been in existence, touching many families throughout Australia.

Simone is grateful for the recognition that comes with being voted a Westfield Local Hero.

"It's nice to be thought of because we're not a charity that a lot of people know about."

The charity will use its \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to fund sewing supplies, stationery, printing and freight for the Angel Gowns.



Maria Greenwood Supportive and Palliative Care Unit, Mount Druitt Hospital

Generous, Compassionate, Kind

Dying mum sends Maria on an uplifting path

It was Maria Greenwood's terminally ill mum who suggested she become a palliative care volunteer.

Maria was nursing her through her last days of cancer at a UK hospice when she turned to her and said she should volunteer when she returned to Australia.

A few months later Maria chanced upon a newspaper ad calling for help at Mount Druitt Hospital's palliative care ward. And soon she was one among the first intake of volunteers.

After working for many years as a medical receptionist, communicating with patients and their families is a natural talent for Maria. Her colleagues say she has a gift for connecting with palliative patients and their loved ones and is always ready to lend a sympathetic ear.

Maria's volunteer activities include interacting with patients, sitting at their bedside and assisting with music therapy and gardening activities.

She has completed training to provide hand massage to relieve physical discomfort and to relax patients and has also learned how to help people write a biography to leave as a legacy for their families.

Maria sees it as a privilege to be allowed into someone's life when they are at their most vulnerable and to be able to help them and their family.

She's stunned and "over the moon" to be recognised as a Westfield Local Hero, saying it was an unexpected honour to even be nominated.

Volunteering has been the most uplifting and humbling experience," says Maria, who has participated in every ward activity and event – from selling raffle tickets to giving up her wine for Dry July. She even visits the hospital over the Christmas break to ensure the gardens are cared for.

The hospital will use the \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to help train a much-needed intake of volunteers and to up-skill the existing team.



Jesica Varela Blacktown City Council

*Determined, Creative,
Passionate*

When working with young people, the sky's the limit

The good Jessica does for young people is clear from the number of them who say hello when she's walking down the street.

Her determination and commitment to her job as Children and Youth Development Officer at Blacktown City Council has made her a popular and well-known local in Mount Druitt.

Her fingerprints are on a long list of projects including the council's youth advisory committee, Willmot school holiday programs and Mount Druitt's Youth Week celebrations.

"I find working with children and young people a rewarding experience because it's a wonderful stage of people's lives," she says.

"They're still discovering things about themselves and the sky's the limit. That creative mentality resonates with my personality and I love having these opportunities."

Highlights of Jessica's work include two special programs: a free music festival, The Burbs, and twice-weekly social events of the Collab Movement, which include sport, barbeques and more music.

She says she's grateful for every opportunity to get out among the people that benefit from her work.

"My role means working directly with the community we serve. I'm outside every day in Mount Druitt, working with kids, schools and services."

She says it's humbling to be recognised by the community as a Westfield Local Hero.

"It's ultimately about giving back and I'm very grateful that Westfield's contributing \$10,000 back to the community and to young people through the Westfield Local Hero grant."

Your 2018 Finalists

Robert Bateup | Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA)

Generous, Helpful, Motivated

Robert has worked tirelessly over 17 years as a volunteer and collector, creating awareness and raising funds for Spinal Cord Injuries Australia. Robert showcases a great amount of selflessness despite being visually impaired, choosing to spend most of his week raising funds to provide a society without barriers for people with Spinal Cord Injury and similar conditions.

Lance Chaloner | Police Citizens Youth Club NSW Ltd (PCYC Mt Druitt)

Resilient, Approachable, Committed

Lance is the Club Manager at PCYC Mt Druitt, a community facility which provides no cost/low cost activities and programs to the community. His role is far reaching, contributing essential services to a high need community to improve youth development, family cohesion and community engagement.

Monique Perusco | Jesuit Social Services

Loving, Dedicated, Honorable

Monique is the Manager for Jesuit Social Services in Mount Druitt and plays a lead role in the 'Together in Willmot' collective. Monique is a great role model in the community who has developed strong and meaningful relationships with her peers, colleagues and community members. She supports Family, Children and Youth Programs, Children's Holiday Hubs, Skate-4-Change Program, Parkour Program, Girl's Empowerment Program, Film and Photography Programs, to name a few.

Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

Robert BATEUP

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia
(SCIA)

Lance CHANDELOR

Police Citizens Youth Club
NSW Ltd (PCYC Mt Druitt)

Shane CONLON

New Horizons Community
Church Inc

Ian ESCANDOR

Noffs Foundation

Maria GREENWOOD

Supportive and Palliative
Care Unit, Mount Druitt Hospital

Fiona McCALLUM

Good grief

Gladys PANONCILLO

Luke Priddis Foundation

Krissy PEREIRA

Make-A-Wish Australia

Monique PERUSCO

Jesuit Social Services

Simone SELBY

AGFAABI

Jesica VARELA

Blacktown City Council



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



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