



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

GEELONG

VIC



Kris Angelovski Barwon Valley Special Developmental School

*Committed, Passionate,
Respectful*

Kris creates a special safe place for disengaged students

There's a special program at Barwon Valley Special Developmental School for year 9 and 10 students who become disengaged or disruptive in class.

It's a good place. A safe place where they don work vests, clock in and learn useful skills such as gardening and woodwork. All under the careful guidance of education support Kris Angelovski.

The program is called Teamworx and it provides opportunities for students to develop positive work attitudes and skills that they can use later in life.

"Without a doubt, the highlight of my work has been seeing some of the students who had previously exhibited extremely challenging behaviours or had become disengaged from their normal school programs now fully re-engaged in meaningful activities," says Kris.

Because of his positive relationships with each student, Kris is able to recognise and respond to potential triggers before any challenging behaviours escalate.

"It's especially gratifying to hear from parents about the positive changes they have noticed in the home life of their children."

The program aligns with the Victoria Department of Education and Training objective of breaking the link – where more students stay in education and the impact of disadvantage is reduced.

Kris and the students enjoy their work and have constructed many interesting items, often made using recycled materials. For example, in 2017 they constructed a range of Christmas trees made from timber they reclaimed from pallets that had been donated to the school.

A further initiative was a pop-up shop through which the students learned basic retail skills by selling timber products they had constructed and pot plants they had decorated.

Kris feels honoured and humbled to be voted a Westfield local hero. "It means the people of Geelong genuinely value inclusion and the provision of meaningful programs that allow for the best possible outcomes for students with disability."

The school will use the \$10,000 Westfield grant to expand the Teamworx program and to buy equipment. It will also be used to pay for transport for group outings.



Lisa Hamling
Treehouse Autism Family
Support Group

Caring, Compassionate, Committed

Busy Lisa always has time to take a call from anxious parents

Lisa Hamling is a busy mother but she spends about four hours on the phone every evening.

As the volunteer director of an autism support group, she is often the first person anxious parents turn to after their child is diagnosed.

"A lot of people don't realise the impact an autism diagnosis has on families," says Lisa, who also works full-time at a disability service.

Treehouse Autism Family Support Group provides a social network for the families of children and young adults with autism spectrum disorder. There are different groups for different age ranges and interests.

Shared experiences such as movie nights, Lego, coffee mornings for mums and a pot and parmi night for the dads helps to reduce isolation and loneliness.

"There's no judgement — if your child has a meltdown no-one is worried," says Lisa.

"Others might even hop over and help."

Lisa started at Treehouse as a volunteer and became the director in 2015 when the founders decided it was time to bow out.

At the same time, the group lost its regular meeting place, so Lisa got on the phone and after many rejections found a home at Access Your Supports, which is now also her employer.

Lisa is known for her compassion and dedication and receives up to four calls a night from parents seeking advice, many referred by local psychologists.

"I tell families it's not a sprint, it's a marathon so you need to pace yourself a bit."

A highlight for Lisa was presenting a submission to a parliamentary inquiry into autism services.

"It was fantastic when just about every recommendation was approved."

Lisa feels honoured to be voted a Westfield Local Hero.

Treehouse will use the \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund tailored outings for each of the support groups.

"The kids all love animals so maybe a zoo trip for the younger kids. The young adults might like a horse-riding day."



Cormach Evans Strong Brother Strong Sister

Passionate, Dedicated, Strong

Cormach bounces back from self-harm to pay it forward

As the only Aboriginal kid in his school, Cormach Evans faced the tyranny of racism every day. The impact was so great he almost lost his life to drugs, alcohol and self-harm.

Thankfully, he had strong role models and they helped him change his life for the better.

Now Cormach is paying it forward, founding Strong Brother Strong Sister to help build self-esteem among Aboriginal youth.

"I want to give all young Aboriginal people a positive mentor, role model and leader in their own life to help them achieve their greatest dreams. And now we are doing that," Cormach says.

Strong Brother Strong Sister aims to keep Aboriginal kids in school or work by instilling pride in their culture while connecting them with the local community.

The program does this through various weekly activities, including group workshops and an art program with AFL football club the Geelong Cats.

In just 12 months Strong Brother Strong Sister has engaged with over 500 Aboriginal people aged 4 to 25 years.

Twenty homeless young people have received help while another 20 in out-of-home-care have returned to their families. Cormach

says the program also addresses the fact that Aboriginal youth are born 10 steps behind due to racism, land loss and the Stolen Generation.

"We are giving Aboriginal young people the bridge to step well over that gap to achieve excellence. That's what inspires me every day. That's what keeps me going."

Cormach says it is a privilege to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. He says he has been overwhelmed by support from the Wadawurrung and wider communities.

"Strong Brother Strong Sister will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund two leadership camps, one for boys and one for girls," Cormach says.

"The grant means that the right people are being acknowledged for the amazing work they are doing and will continue to do with the community."

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

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

MensLine: 1300 78 99 78

Your 2018 Finalists

Chris Evans | Encompass Community Services

Dedicated, Compassionate, Visionary

Chris Evans started as a casual Program Staff member for Encompass Community Services in 2004 without much experience in the disability field. In his role as Program Staff, he shows an extraordinary commitment to assist staff and clients, as well as a total commitment to increase accessibility. Encompass runs a life skills program, Farming It, where a work crew comprising of clients and support staff complete gardening and maintenance tasks at our property in Leopold.

Phoebe Lovell | Southern Cross Kids' Camps

Dedicated, Caring, Inspiring

Phoebe is a devoted volunteer for SCKC Geelong, working tirelessly to coordinate camp facilities to support children who have suffered abuse, domestic violence and family breakdowns. The camps offer an early-intervention respite service, where 1:1 mentoring helps create a safe space for struggling children and empowers them to build their self-esteem and resilience. Phoebe's commitment to the organisation extends into fundraising and community partnership building, helping to ensure that the camps can continue to run, year after year.

Guy Mitchell | Wombat's Wish

Passionate, Selfless, Hardworking

Guy is a passionate Camp Coordinator at Wombat's Wish, a twice-yearly camp which provides bereaved children with support to deal with the grief of losing parents. A Nurse by trade, Guy has a passion for helping others and as the Camp Coordinator at Wombat's Wish, he is a driving force behind the operational aspects of the camp, along with offering direct support of attendees and other volunteers.

Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

Michelle ABBOTT
Geelong West Giants

Kris ANGELOVSKI
Barwon Valley Special
Developmental School

Nick ANSELL
Disabled Surfers Association
Ocean Grove

James ASCIAK
Wild Rumpus Community Services

James ASHLEY
The Salvation Army South Barwon
Corps

Carolyn BISCHOF
The Winged Horse Equine Welfare

Margaret BURKE
Geelong Mums

Glenn CLIFFORD
Geelong Volunteer Branch of Make
A-Wish Australia

Jan DANIELS
Encompass Community Services

Tessa DAVIS
Anam Cara House Geelong

Frank DE ROSSO
Music at the Basilica Incorporated

Brandon DELLOW
Humans in Geelong auspiced by
Geelong Sustainability

Alex DESSANTI
Gateways Support Services

Chelsea DOLBY
Geelong Community Foundation

Nicki DUNNE
Bellarine Training and Community
Hub Youth Program for
Disadvantaged Young People

Nestor ESTAMPA
CatholicCare

Cormach EVANS
Strong Brother Strong Sister

Chris EVANS
Encompass Community Services

Libby GIBSON
HeartKids

David GREENWOOD
CenterStage Geelong

Lisa HAMLING
Treehouse Autism Family Support
Group

Kharen HARPER
Somebodys Daughter Theatre
Company

Louis HEHIR
Kardinia International College

Joel INEI
OneCare Geelong Ltd

Katherine JOHNSTON
Guide Dogs Victoria

Jenelle JURCIC
Barwon Health Foundation

Peter JURISIC
Inclusive Option
Geelong Kokoda Youth Program

Alicia KENNEDY
Cherished Pets

Bron LAWSON
Bluebird Foundation Inc

Wendy LEIGH
Lazarus Community Centre
Geelong Victoria

Phoebe LOVELL
Southern Cross Kids' Camps

Guy MITCHELL
Wombat's Wish

**Stephanie RICE &
Nathan BROCK**
Bellarine Secondary College

Michael NOLAN
Lazarus Community Centre

Kane NUTTALL
The Power In You Project
(Community Veracity)

Rebecca PICONE
Peace of Mind Foundation

Romeo PURLIJA
Geelong Soccer Club

Sorayya RASOULI SHEMIRANI
Geelong Ethnic Communities
Council trading as Diversitat

Jo RIDGEWAY
Raise

Dr Garry TESTER
Sports Challenge Australia

Geoff THOMPSTONE
Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club

Marsha UPPILL
Arranyinha

Michele WARREN
3216 Connect Inc

Linda WONG
Hands of Change Limited

Des YOUNGHUSBAND
Uniting Barwon



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