



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

BURWOOD

NSW



James Collins
St Paul's Anglican Church
Parish Pantry

Selfless, Inspirational, Effective

For James, giving is largely about the dignity of the recipient

When people say James Collins is always there for those in need, they're not exaggerating.

He's available 24 hours a day to provide counselling and support, often working 20 hours across a range of charitable projects run out of St Paul's Anglican Church.

A renowned part of this is Parish Pantry, which provides free food to those who need it.

It began out of an office, but as more people came to the church for help, an expansion was necessary.

"We could no longer fit, so we got a shed," says James.

"We fitted it out like a minimart to give people autonomy. Now it's gone from a little supermarket to more like a café. We're about to branch out to coffee and soups."

The project is not just about providing food but giving people a sense of dignity and belonging.

"People have to swallow their pride coming to this. We treat them with love and respect," says James.

"I've made it very clear with donations of food and clothing: don't give anything you wouldn't eat or wear, or I'll throw it out."

James also helped set up the Lifejacket program to secure donations of winter clothing for those sleeping rough, which has now expanded to source torches, sleeping bags and toiletries.

His other endeavours include visits to residents of aged care homes who may be socially isolated, organising a free toddler-care program with a focus on helping single mothers and running a free musical concert program at the church that is open to all.

James is grateful to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. It is "truly wonderful," he says.

The Parish Pantry will use the \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to increase its stock. By purchasing additional storage, for example a large refrigerator, they can expand the service by offering a greater range of fresh vegetables and dairy products. The number of people requesting help is steadily increasing. Over the last month the total has reached 100 per week. "The need keeps growing and we won't turn people away if there is any way to help them."

"We run on what God and people provide, so I'm very grateful for this gift. It will help us expand in quantity and in style," says James.

"We give away twice our income to help the poor, which is not good economics. This grant is a godsend."



Roman Deguchi Inner West Neighbour Aid

*Compassionate, Persevering,
Visionary*

Roman uses plants and pets to make the world a better place

Roman Deguchi lives by a statement he once heard from a young father living with paraplegia: "Society determines my disability, not my disability."

He tries to soften society's role in the equation by designing, renovating and maintaining gardens for people with disabilities and elderly people.

He leads two staff and over 70 volunteers at Inner West Neighbour Aid (IWNA) and they have transformed 271 gardens in the last year.

"My passions are plants and the community so I couldn't ask for more," says Roman.

Having worked in horticulture all his life, Roman was running his own business when he was offered contract work for Neighbour Aid. This turned into a permanent job as Home Maintenance Coordinator.

Roman was also the driving force behind a successful Neighbour Aid Pets Program through which older people can adopt an older pet from the RSPCA and have access to a volunteer dog walker if needed. This is one of INWA's flagship programs and provides happiness and companionship for many people each year.

Now Roman is spearheading the 5 Senses Garden at Rhodes Park in Concord, which is scheduled to open in 2018. It is a joint project

between Neighbour Aid and the Canada Bay Council, where Roman sits on the Access and Advisory Committee.

"Looking around, I noticed there were parks for specific groups, sports fields for playing footy, playgrounds for kids, golf courses for those who play golf," Roman says.

"But there were not enough community spaces. So, we've got this huge project to make a garden inclusive. Some people can't enjoy all aspects of a garden, if they're vision-impaired for example, so we make ways for everybody to engage with nature, with smelling plants, tactile plants, plants that engage all senses."

The 5 Senses Garden will host interactive sessions with health experts, horticulturists, cooks, art therapists and others whose work can benefit people who are elderly, marginalised or have a disability.

Roman says he's incredibly flattered to be voted a Westfield Local Hero.

"Being recognised by the community is not something I take for granted," he says.

Neighbour Aid will use its \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to fund 50 interactive sessions at the 5 Senses Garden, covering speaker fees and equipment.



Rose Cox Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation

Brave, Tireless, Advocate

Rose gives back to charity that helped her as a child

Rose isn't just a volunteer at the Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation. She's a living testament to its success.

The foundation runs programs for children whose families are affected by mental illness.

When Rose was eight, her mother was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis and spent a year in hospital unable to walk because of the rare neurological condition.

Her father had a breakdown, affected by depression, anxiety and drug addiction.

"We were a dandy inner-westie family and with a click of your fingers everything changed," says Rose.

The young girl was thrust into a parental role. She was only in Year 4 and took on responsibility for looking after her little sister and her father. "I had to motivate my dad to shower, shave and clean his teeth, which he wouldn't want to do for weeks on end."

At Kookaburra Kids programs, children learn about mental illness, resilience and looking after their own wellbeing.

There are also fun activities, which the kids may not have time for in their home lives.

"You aren't alone, but as a small child you don't know that," says Rose.

"Knowing other kids took a weight off my shoulders. I learned so much about dad's mental illness. I learned it wasn't my fault or my mum's."

Fast-forward 10 years and Rose is now a volunteer and youth ambassador for the foundation, supporting the programs she attended as a child.

"I realised I could dwell on my life, whinge and maybe repeat the cycle, or I could turn a negative into a positive."

In 2014, she became a youth ambassador, doing lunch talks. She also became an advocate and sits on a government advisory council for carers, where she has an influence on legislation and policy.

Rose says it's nice to be voted a Westfield Local Hero, but her priority is ensuring more children receive support. "I do this regardless of any pats on the back."

The charity will use the \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund 15 more children to attend the Kookaburra Kids programs.

Your 2018 Finalists

Wendi Etherington | School as Community Centre, Lakemba

Committed, Energetic, Welcoming

Wendi coordinates the Lakemba School as Community Centre (SaCC), where she has worked for more than 15 years. Through her countless hours of dedication, she has helped support many families with young children, creating a welcoming space where they feel connected to the local community. Many of the families are new migrants to Australia, and the SaCC provides programs such as playgroups, English lessons, multicultural cooking classes and work readiness courses.

Dianne King | The Exodus Foundation

Inspirational, Kind-hearted, Invaluable

Dianne has dedicated over 60 years and 2,000 hours volunteering her time to those less fortunate. She is described as the backbone of The Exodus Foundation volunteer base, where she assists at the Loaves & Fishes Restaurant in Ashfield to prepare free meals that nourish the poor and homeless. Dianne also volunteers her time at the foundation's music and art workshops, providing much-appreciated social connection and recreation.

Jacque Weaver | Communities for Communities

Dedicated, Passionate, Committed

Jacque is a volunteer with Communities for Communities, where she improves the lives of high support needs students, their families and teachers at Lucas Gardens School. Lucas Gardens provides educational programs for students with a range of conditions, including intellectual and physical disabilities, sensory impairments and complex medical conditions. Since 2007, Jacque has organised numerous fundraising events, such as an annual Ladies Lunch, an annual ball and other community events that raise funds and support the school.

Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

Patricia ABRAHAM

Eurella

Ann BARNETT

Integricare Preschool Strathfield

Bernadette BRIDLE

St Anne's Catholic Primary School
Strathfield South

Donna BURLAND

Dorothy Cowie School of Dancing

Cathryn CARBOON

The Carevan Foundation Limited

James COLLINS

St Paul's Anglican Church
Parish Pantry

Rose COX

Australian Kookaburra Kids
Foundation

Roman DEGUCHI

Inner West Neighbour Aid

Wendi ETHERINGTON

Lakemba School as
Community Centre

Sage GODREI

On the Cusp Productions

Sam HELOU

Rotary Club of Burwood

Maree KARADAGHIAN

Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre

Dianne KING

The Exodus Foundation

Fiona LAMBROU

The Infants' Home Child & Family
Services

Bev LANGE

Stepping Out Program

Judy LOVE

Concord Community Food
Services Inc (Concord-Drummoyne
Meals on Wheels)

Damien MORAN

Ashfield Public School Parents and
Citizens Association

Hala RAMADAN

Belmore Boys High School

Wendy SCHMID

The Embroiderers' Guild NSW Inc

Shelley SHA

Pei Lei Wushu Association

Vivian STAVIS

Lillians Howell Project
Incorporated

Kristine STEPHENSON

Women's Housing Company Ltd

Katie THOMPSON

Good Shepherd Anglican Church,
Greenacre

Jackie WALTERS

Inner West Neighbour Aid

Jacque WEAVER

Communities for Communities

Morgan WILSON

St Anthony's Family Care

A decorative red ribbon graphic that starts as a thick, straight line on the left and then curves and loops into a thinner, wavy line on the right.

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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