



*Westfield*

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*Local Heroes*

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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*  

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*Local Heroes*  

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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.

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*Westfield*

**PARRAMATTA**

NSW



**Emina Kovac**  
Immigrant Women's Speakout  
Association NSW Inc

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*Generous, Community-minded,  
Gender equality advocate*

## **Emina teaches women computer skills and reboots their self-confidence**

Life can be tough for refugee and migrant women seeking work.

Many are fleeing domestic violence and don't have the skills to land a job. But with the help of Emina Kovac from Immigrant Women's Speakout Association NSW, they learn to use a computer and reclaim their self-confidence in the process.

"A significant number of the learners are able to get paid employment," says Emina, who arrived in Australia from Bosnia in 1997 on a humanitarian visa.

Most of the refugee women who attend Emina's computer-literacy program are from Afghanistan. Many balance caring for their grandchildren with their computer classes.

The women attend a two-hour lesson once a week for 44 weeks and learn how to use email, create documents and protect their computer from viruses.

Emina also teaches the women how to write resumés and use the internet to search for jobs.

Her calm manner and non-judgmental approach make her ideally suited to teach women from a wide range of cultural backgrounds with varying computer and English ability.

Emina carefully considers the needs of each learner and recognises their achievements to encourage them to feel more positive.

Her teaching approach also encourages the women to interact with each other, which helps them to make friends and feel less isolated.

One of Emina's success stories is Darlena, who finally started to land job interviews after a year of lessons.

"In the following year, Darlena was offered a paid job in a clothing store and she felt she reclaimed her self-esteem and partly recovered from the trauma of domestic and family violence."

Emina says being voted a Westfield Local Hero is a "challenge and an inspiration" for more community engagement.

Speakout will use its Westfield \$10,000 Local Heroes grant to help fund its Multicultural Women's Shelter, which opened in 2017.

"The funds mean the shelter can support 10 women with no income for 12 weeks," Emina says.

"Of the 25 migrant and refugee women that Speakout has provided temporary accommodation and support to, 98 per cent are victims of domestic and family violence."



## **Bilal Hafda** Sydney Story Factory

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*Visionary, Creative, Empathic*

### **Bilal gives young people a safe place in which to find their voice**

Community worker Bilal Hafda doesn't believe there is a need to give marginalised young people a voice. "That's because they already have their own amazing voices," he says. "They simply need a platform to use them."

As chief storyteller at the downtown Parramatta branch of the Sydney Story Factory, Bilal is providing that opportunity to children aged seven to seventeen, many of whom are from culturally diverse and lower socioeconomic backgrounds and struggling academically and socially.

It is impossible not to be moved by the sheer joy and energy he radiates as he and his team give their young charges a safe place in which to open up and tell their stories, either in writing, video or theatre.

Bilal, who is employed by the Story Factory, runs workshops at local schools, where he and volunteers work with a class of students for six to eight weeks, sometimes longer. They also work with young offenders and community organisations.

"Giving young people the ability to tell a story, any story, helps them express themselves. But it also helps them take charge of stories that are told about them. And that's incredibly important

for young people growing up anywhere, but especially in Western Sydney."

He says his brightest moments are when a child switches from someone who doubts their ability to tell a story to someone who sees their ability.

In his own time, Bilal helps to run one of the largest performance poetry events in Australia – Bankstown Poetry Slam, and he has facilitated performances by young slam members at the Sydney Writers' Festival.

Bilal feels extremely humbled to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "I keep wondering if I am deserving of the honour. I am one person who has been placed in the spotlight, but I have a whole organisation of fantastic people who help me do the work that I do."

The Story Factory will use its \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to fund two eight-week creative writing programs for as many as 60 participants. This includes payment of the workshop leader, volunteer tutor training, workshop materials and publishing of the student stories.



## Wilson Giles Black Dog Institute

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*Giving, Motivated, Optimistic*

### Wilson opens up about mental illness to protect teenagers from suffering in silence

Wilson Giles is doing all he can to protect teenagers from going through the anguish he experienced when he was younger. Only a few years out of high school, he regularly tells teenagers about his lived experience with mental illness.

He does this as a volunteer for the Black Dog Institute, visiting several high schools a year where he presents an approved program to students in Year 10 and above.

"A lot of kids will be struggling and might not realise that what they are feeling isn't the norm and it is worth talking about," he says.

"Once they see me speak about it, it makes it real for them and often they can speak about it."

If he has one message, it is this: "It is okay to not be okay. There are people who can help you. If you have a problem, it's best to acknowledge it and ask for help."

Wilson tells the students that his own lack of acceptance delayed his treatment for bipolar disorder.

"I didn't want to believe I had anything wrong with me. I was very good at school and was doing well with my grades. Then, all of a sudden, I was struggling to pay attention, I was anxious about going to class."

He says his parents were onto it quickly and encouraged him to speak to someone, but he wouldn't. "The hardest part was for me to acknowledge what was going on." Since then he has received the correct treatment and says he is living a happy and healthy life.

Wilson was named Youth Citizen of the Year by Parramatta council, due to his tireless effort and work as a volunteer, not only for the institute but a variety of community groups.

He says it feels surreal to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "It is very humbling. The presentations are extremely cathartic. I get this amazing opportunity to do something I love, which is public speaking and I get to open up about my struggle. The more I talk the easier it gets. It helps me greatly."

The Black Dog Institute will use its \$10,000 Westfield Local Heroes grant to expand its program to 20 high schools in the Parramatta area, reaching 1,600 more young people and their families.

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

*Lifeline: 13 11 14*

*Lifeline New Zealand: 0800 543 354*

*Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800*

*Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636*

# Your 2018 Finalists

## **Salwa Al Baz** | Cumberland Women's Health Centre

*Committed, Dynamic, Determined*

Salwa works tirelessly to assist women affected by domestic and family violence to receive the help they need to survive, recover and thrive. Salwa is a migrant from a war torn country who has overcome great challenges and adversity to make a life for herself in Australia. It is this personal history that makes her such a determined advocate for the women she works with and ensures that she never gives up the fight for justice and equality.

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## **Candice Graham** | Fitted For Work

*Caring, Joyful, Meaningful*

Candice Graham is the Sydney Operations Coordinator of Fitted for Work in Parramatta. Candice manages a large team of volunteers who deliver Outfitting and Interview Preparation Services, as well as services through Multicultural Women's Job Preparation Hub. Candice was originally referred to the Fitted for Work service as a client to receive assistance in finding work. She took it upon herself to offer her time while she wasn't working as a volunteer to give back to the organisation.



# Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

**Salwa AL BAZ**

Cumberland Women's  
Health Centre

**Julie AMARI**

Australian Youth For Amar

**Richard AYOUB**

Parramatta Mission

**Peta BANKS**

APPI Ghost Hunts

**Jocelyn BREWER**

Digital Nutrition

**Greg BROWN**

Sports 4 All trading as 4titude

**Tracey BRYDON**

Toongabbie District Girl Guides

**John CAFFERATTA**

Darcy Street Project

**Diana CARMODY**

The Children's Hospital at  
Westmead

**Nikole EGAN**

Diamond Womens Support

**Karina EZEKIEL**

Wyatt's Walk for Cystic Fibrosis

**Wilson GILES**

Black Dog Institute

**Emma GILLHAM**

Make-A-Wish Australia

**Patrick GLEESON**

Glenwood High School

**Candice GRAHAM**

Fitted for Work

**Catherine GREGORY**

Hilltop Road Public School

**Bilal HAFDA**

Sydney Story Factory

**Jennifer HARRIS**

The Hills School

**Tristan HORNSTRA**

The Scout Association of Australia  
New South Wales Branch  
Cumberland Gang Show

**Peter HORVATH**

Parramatta District Men's  
Shed Incorporated

**Ben HURA**

Young Life Australia

**Usman IFTIKHAR**

Catalysr Foundation Ltd

**Said JAFARI**

Sadat Welfare and Sports  
Association

**David JEFFREY**

Public Interest Advocacy Centre

**Shaz JONES**

Parramatter

**Emina KOVAC**

Immigrant Women's Speakout  
Association NSW Inc

**Tsvetoslav KRASTEV**

Goodlife Health Clubs

**Neslihan KURTONAL**

United Against Domestic Violence

**Kylie LINDSAY**

Women's Housing Company Ltd

**Mechel PIKOULAS**

The Helmsman Project

**Billel RABABI**

Top Blokes Foundation

**Suzanne ROBINSON**

Legacy NSW Associated Clubs

**Elizabeth ROMBOUGH**

Life Without Barriers

**Aykut SAYAN**

Circa Espresso

**David SEXTON**

Variety the Children's Charity  
NSW/ACT

**Gokhan SINGEC**

Auburn Youth Centre

**Patrick SOOSAY**

Harris Park Community Centre

**Natalie TAHA**

Life Without Barriers

**Christa TATE**

Studio Dance NSW

**Stephanie VELIANIS**

Compeer Friendship Program

**Gabrielle WHITBREAD**

Cumberland Council

**Michelle WONG**

The Children's Hospital at  
Westmead

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:**

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**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