

A decorative red ribbon graphic that starts on the left, loops upwards, then downwards, and finally loops back to the right, framing the central text.

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

FOUNTAIN GATE

VIC



Leanne Petrides Cranbourne Information & Support Service Inc

*Understanding, Trustworthy,
Hardworking*

Nagging Leanne leads by example to help those doing it tough

Leanne Petrides has a crucial job supplying emergency relief and support to people doing it tough. But she has an interesting side-gig — nagging politicians.

As Director of the Cranbourne Information & Support Service (CISS) for 20 years, she has spent countless hours advocating on behalf of her clients, many of whom are poverty stricken or escaping domestic violence.

Thanks to her good relationship with local politicians, she is able to phone them for support or invite them to visit the service to see the pressures people are under. This has helped win increases in funding that have paid for a financial counselling service.

One of the service's role is to negotiate with Centrelink, real estate agents and utility companies on behalf of clients. And Leanne's canvassing has also made money available for emergency relief, which provides people with essentials like food, petrol or baby essentials in a crisis.

"There have also been times when a politician has mentioned the agency and the work we do in Parliament in a bid to raise awareness of local issues," Leanne says.

It's a credit to Leanne that the service has become a major relief provider in her area.

It received over 26,000 inquiries in the last financial year and directly assisted more than 3,200 people.

Much of the success is attributable to Leanne's dedication and excellent management.

She leads by example and often takes on the most difficult clients.

"It is great to see people walking out of our doors looking brighter and happier than when they walked in," she says.

She is constantly coming up with new ways to help. An example is the service's popular Back to School program that helps families with school costs and settling into school.

Leanne says being voted a Westfield Local Hero means a lot to her personally. And the service will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to extend its practical help beyond petrol and food vouchers.

This could involve helping someone buy clothes to take up a job, repair windows to keep a domestic violence survivor safe or pay for a child to go to school camp.

Leanne says the money will help the service look at people's situations in a more holistic way and "make a difference, not just put a band-aid on it."



Sukhwinder Kaur Sikh Volunteers Australia

Dedicated, Passionate, Collaborative

Top cook Sukhwinder helps feed 200 hungry people every week

Sukhwinder Kaur is famous for her tasty cooking, but often it's the quantity of food she makes that's most important.

She spends at least 16 hours a week cooking meals for the hungry and goes out to deliver it every Wednesday and Saturday.

This has been her tireless routine for more than seven years as a member of Sikh Volunteers Australia.

The meals are distributed by the charity's food van, which feeds up to 200 needy people a week.

But sometimes the recipients are in such dire straits that the volunteers buy them items from their own pocket.

One man, in particular, shocked Sukhwinder.

He told the volunteers that the food was good. But he also needed a tent because he was living in the bush, Sukhwinder recalls.

"I felt very sad. We bought him a tent and gave two or three containers of food to him."

People often share their life stories with the volunteers, including one severely physically disabled man who came to collect containers of food to take home.

"One day he broke down and shared that he can't do much for his family but take food for them. Their stories give us strength and motivation to do more."

The ever-smiling Sukhwinder is an effective recruiter and role-model for the charity and has inspired more than 30 other Sikh women to become "very active" volunteers.

She also spends her time teaching children the Punjabi language, heritage and music. She encourages the students to be community-minded and to speak up against bullying.

Sukhwinder is proud and happy to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. Charity work is all part of the Sikh faith, she says.

The Sikh Volunteers will use the \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund the training of new volunteers and to buy new cooking appliances.

"It will pay for musical instruments too for the students," says Sukhwinder.



Sylvia Ryan
Berwick Secondary College

*Inclusive, Inspiring,
Dependable*

How Sylvia found her calling when her mum issued an ultimatum

Sylvia Ryan was just 15 when her mum issued an ultimatum that changed her life.

Worried that Sylvia was spending too much time thinking about herself, she told her to go out and not come home until she found volunteer work.

Sylvia signed up to help at an aged-care facility and soon realised she had a knack for community work.

"I just loved it and started looking at how I could pursue it as a degree," she says.

Sylvia qualified as a social worker and is now part of the student support team at Berwick Secondary College, where around a quarter of students come from homes where there is violence.

She has implemented a number of strategies to help students feel a part of a community, including a breakfast club.

"It's a privilege to journey alongside young people and experience various ups and downs beside them."

Sylvia also volunteers as a mentor at a local church-affiliated youth group, Epic Youth, which a number of students attend. Her involvement means she is around to be a positive role model for the students out-of-school.

She says volunteering makes it easier for students to believe people like Sylvia.

"Seeing there is genuine care has probably made some of the biggest impact on the highest-risk kids.

"I love seeing kids come alive at the youth group and start getting in touch with passions and interests they didn't know they had."

Sylvia feels "a little embarrassed" to be voted a Westfield Local Hero but is delighted the community recognises the value of her and her team's work.

Berwick Secondary College will use its \$10,000 Westfield grant to fund a coffee-cart business for students at risk of leaving school.

The process of setting up the business is expected to be an engaging way for them to tackle the school curriculum.

Profits from selling coffee to teachers will be used to buy school resources or to help another local community group.

"We want to tap into their leadership skills and help them understand they can have an impact on their school community," says Sylvia.

Your 2018 Finalists

Dean Cowan | Pakenham Pony Rescue Organisation

Dedicated, Tenacious, Creative

Dean is the Founder of Pakenham Pony Rescue Organisation (PPRO), a not-for-profit organisation that rescues, rehabilitates and rehomes abandoned, abused and neglected miniature horses and ponies. Its volunteer program promotes positive action and behaviours and increases social inclusion. Volunteers, often young people, stay-at-home-mums and older members of the community, spend time interacting with the horses and ponies, cleaning paddocks, grooming, rugging and feeding the animals.

Kathryn Sharp | Tulliallan Primary School

Proactive, Committed, Determined

Kathryn has been an advocate for public education for over thirty years. As Community Engagement Leader at Tulliallan Primary, Kathryn works tirelessly to improve academic and social achievements of the students, promoting high expectations of social harmony between children, their families and the teaching team. This is achieved through lunch time activities, culture programs and celebrating diversity as well as through information sessions to encourage writing, reading, ICT and mathematical learning.

Tori Norris | Victorian YMCA Community Programming Pty Ltd

Kind, Considerate, Inspirational

For the past five years, Tori has been part of the Community Engagement Team within the YMCA. Whilst thousands of Victorians access YMCA programs or services on a weekly basis, some people don't have the same access, due to their economic or social situation. Tori's role is to improve the lives of those doing it tough within the community, to enable people to live healthier, happier and more connected lives.

Recognising all of our 2018 Nominees

Chalanka ATHALAGE

Sri Lankan Dance Academy of
Victoria Inc

Kerry BARNARD

Berwick Flames Basketball Club

Belinda BOLGER

Orchestral Futures Inc/
Casey Philharmonic Orchestra

Julie CIN

Spinal Muscular Atrophy
Australia Inc

Dean COWAN

Pakenham Pony Rescue
Organisation

Leon EGAN

Bundy Gilang Pty Ltd

Pamela GOODE

Windermere Child & Family
Services Inc

Margaret HARRISON

Lions Club of Cranbourne

Nurten Kim HASAN

Hampton Park Turkish Senior
Citizens Club

Kristy-Lee JONES

Cardinia Casey Volunteer Branch
of Make-A-Wish Australia

Sukhwinder KAUR

Sikh Volunteers Australia

Troy KENWARD

1st Cranbourne Scout Group

Joanne LEMIERE

Dandenong Baton Twirlers

Julie McKNIGHT

Casey Relay for Life

Kumaradevdrar NARAYANASWAMI

Tamil Refugee Council Inc

Tori NORRIS

Victorian Ymca Community
Programming Pty Ltd

Leanne PETRIDES

Cranbourne Information &
Support Service Inc

Bassir QADIRI

Bakhtar Cultural Association
Rotary Club of Narre Warren

Sylvia RYAN

Berwick Secondary College

Natalie SCANLON

The WritComm Foundation and
Written Communications

Ashley SCOTT

Operation Newstart Casey
(Operation Newstart Victoria)

James SEEARY

Operation Newstart Casey
(Operation Newstart Victoria)

Kathryn SHARP

Tulliallan Primary School

Matt STONE

Anthony TONEN
Fountain Gate Cricket Club

Tom TUFUGA

Melbourne Kangaroos Rugby Inc

Alexandra VASSILOPOULOS

The Women's Bootcamp Co

Westfield
Local Heroes



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

Kidslines: 0800 54 37 54

Depression Helpline: 0800 111 757

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

Family Violence Information Line: 0800 456 450



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