



Westfield

Local Heroes

2019

Westfield Local Heroes is a community recognition and grants program, designed to shine the spotlight on those people who connect and enrich their local communities across Australia and New Zealand.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities, with the outcome of a public vote determining the three successful 2019 nominees for every Westfield centre. In total, we are recognising 121 Westfield Local Heroes across Australia and New Zealand in 2019.

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Each of the affiliated organisations of the Westfield Local Heroes have received a grant to support their work. Westfield will award 121 grants across Australia and New Zealand – totalling \$1.2 million.

We congratulate all the 2019 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make to improving social wellbeing in their local areas.

westfield.com.au/local-heroes westfield.co.nz/local-heroes

Westfield

Liverpool
NSW



Agnes feels elated and grateful to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "It's a confirmation that what we're doing is benefitting our students. We're so small that any recognition for our work is a big thing for us."

Dream project empowers refugees to become leaders

Maria (Agnes) Barnard — The Dream Project

Cheerful, Motivational, Inspiring

Despite working in a demanding full-time executive role, Agnes Barnard managed to set up the Dream Project four years ago to help school students from refugee backgrounds integrate into the Australian community.

The charity's volunteers are university students and young professionals who provide practical study support as well as motivational support in programs run at several schools.

They promote a supportive education environment, help model positive social behaviours and encourage equal educational and employment opportunities. They also help facilitate a smoother transition into the local community.

"Our refugee students easily relate to our volunteers because of their warmth, empathy and closeness in age. Students become more

engaged in school and are more open-minded about what they can become," says Agnes.

Agnes feels elated and grateful to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "It's a confirmation that what we're doing is benefitting our students. We're so small that any recognition for our work is a big thing for us."

She immigrated to Australia 12 years ago and knows that settling in a new country can be a challenge. However, that challenge can be enormous for refugee children because of the hardship and trauma they have experienced.

"Our goal is to empower them to be future leaders in the Australian community," she says.

The project has three main programs: Academic Coaching, Life Skills and Girls' Club, with a club for boys to be introduced soon.

It's not only the school students who benefit, says Agnes.

"Through volunteering and our leadership program, volunteers learn about mentoring, being professional, responsible, proactive and others-oriented."

Westfield Local Heroes are nominated and voted for by their communities, with the three top finalists per Westfield centre each awarded a \$10,000 grant for their affiliated organisation.

The Dream Project will use its funds to review, standardise and document its systems and procedures for both its mentoring program and its volunteer training program.

"The recognition will also help us get more volunteers or even more people who could support us in different ways, whether financially or otherwise," says Agnes.



"I love creating opportunities for community and then seeing them shine," says Jannike, who worked with South West Multicultural and Community Centre to create Pacific Runway.

Giving a platform to creative people of Pacific heritage

Jannike Seiuli — South West Multicultural and Community Centre
Motivated, Passionate, Committed

Jannike Seiuli helped her community-worker parents from a young age and developed a passion for giving to others.

Her other big passions are her Maori Samoan community and culture, as well as performing arts and event management.

Eight years ago, Jannike pulled it all together and staged her first Pacific Runway fashion show in the heart of Campbelltown to provide a platform for designers, stylists and performers of Pacific heritage.

It started slowly, but the annual non-profit show now attracts international attention and features up to 20 designers and 70 models from around Australia, the Pacific Islands and New Zealand.

"I love creating opportunities for community and then seeing them shine," says Jannike, who worked with South West Multicultural

and Community Centre to create Pacific Runway.

She feels honoured to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "It is a beautiful reminder as to why I love doing what I do and working within my local community," she says.

The fashion show is held at the Carriageworks contemporary arts centre and creates opportunities for designers, make-up artists and stylists to go into business and for the models to gain experience and develop a career.

Models and designers have gone on to perform in Paris, London and around the Pacific.

One of Jannike's obstacles to achieving her vision was that she had lots of experience running events but no qualifications. So, she completed a certificate and diploma, despite working two jobs

and looking after her first baby at the same time.

Despite her success, she holds onto her humble beginnings and says she will never forget her values and where Pacific Runway all started.

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South West Multicultural and Community Centre will use its grant to provide workshops and multimedia support for Pacific Runway participants.

"We are able to assist those in need and those who are looking for ways to break into the industry," says Jannike.

Chef cooks up opportunities for troubled kids

Siarn White — Youth Off The Streets

Passionate, Dedicated, Engaged

When Siarn White was head chef at a busy restaurant, she enjoyed training the apprentices.

She then went to university and became a high school teacher for eight years, developing a passion for helping troubled teens. Next came a move into youth work.

That's how Siarn arrived at Youth Off the Streets, first as a volunteer and now as a teacher at Eden College, where she has introduced creative classes to give young people a second chance at education and fulfilment.

One innovation is a hospitality qualification, which is aimed at increasing her students' chances of finding employment.

Siarn strongly believes in the value of Vocational Education and Training (VET), especially for young people who are at risk.

"The qualification will help them to develop the teamwork, communication and employability skills that employers are seeking."

She is humbled to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "To quote the movie Notting Hill, 'it's surreal but nice'. It's a humbling experience to know that I'm just going about my daily job, and the community thinks it is worthy of a vote. I am making a difference for the kids that I teach."

Not only did Siarn navigate complicated practical and regularity requirements to introduce the hospitality course, but she has also been instrumental in setting up a school café to help her teach practical skills.

The aim is to give students real-life skills in a real-life environment to boost their confidence and empower them.

"Education is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of disadvantage," says Siarn.

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Youth Off the Streets will use its grant to fund fifteen participants in the Eden College Opportunities and Options program, including vocational training in hospitality. It will also supply appropriate attire for work experience.

"We are teaching these kids confidence, teamwork, organisation, being independent and taking initiative," says Siarn.

"These are transferable skills, and it's about giving them better opportunities in life."

Siarn is humbled to be voted a Westfield Local Hero. "To quote the movie Notting Hill, 'it's surreal but nice'. It's a humbling experience to know that I'm just going about my daily job, and the community thinks it is worthy of a vote. I am making a difference for the kids that I teach."

Your 2019 Finalists

Kate Heffernan

Bright Sparks Learning Club

Every week of every term, Kate Heffernan shows up to help newly arrived refugee and asylum-seeker children settle into their school. As a Bright Sparks Learning Club volunteer, she creates a fun and safe learning space where the primary-aged children are helped to build confidence and develop friendships. Kate has completed more than 350 hours at Bright Sparks and improves English skills by engaging the children in conversation. She also helps with homework and social skills. "We aim to make sure these kids and their families have the support and care they need," says Kate.

Christine Rickert

Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative

Playgroup facilitator Christine Rickert knows from experience what it's like to feel isolated after the birth of a child. That's why she is passionate about creating and running socially diverse playgroups at which parents can connect. Christine has been with the Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative (MDSI) since 2009 and has set up groups at Minto, Claymore, Rosemeadow and Narellan, where 200 families from various backgrounds, including new immigrants, support each other and build relationships. "Listening to parents while demonstrating unconditional acceptance and showing genuine interest in their family is vital to the role," she says.

Josiane Reubens

Open Support

When Josiane Reubens became isolated as the sole carer of her mother, the highlight of her days was a visit from an Open Support volunteer. Since her mother passed away, Josiane has joined the charity and has three clients whom she visits and takes to community events. Josiane loves talking to her clients and enjoys hearing their stories. This helps the clients to feel less isolated and improves their wellbeing, potentially enabling them to live independently for longer if they choose to. "The short visit gives them something to look forward to," says Josiane.

Recognising all of our 2019 Nominees

Nedhal AMIR
The Mandaean Women's Union

Agnes BARNARD
Reledev Australia (The Dream Project)

Alycia CANTRILL
Campbelltown Collegians
Cricket Club Inc

Fernando DROGO
The Junction Works

Tony FINNERAN
Stroke Foundation

Kate HEFFERNAN
SPARK – St Vincent de Paul
Society NSW

Russell HODGE
Amputee Association of
New South Wales Inc

Mary HILMI
NSW Police

Robyn McKEOWN
Children's Tumour Foundation

Maryanne MIZZI
Youth Off The Streets

Josiane REUBENS
Open Support

Jemma RICHARDS
The Junction Works

Christine RICKERT
Macarthur Diversity Services
Initiative – MDSI

Josh RYAN
The Junction Works

Jannike SEIULI
South West Multicultural and
Community Centre Inc

Russell SMITH
Make-A-Wish Australia

Adam WASHBOURNE
Fighters Against Child Abuse Australia

Gary WEST
Campbelltown Meals on Wheels

Siarn WHITE
Youth Off The Streets

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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SCENTRE GROUP