Westfield
Local Heroef
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.

Westfield Local Heroef

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



Penrith

NSW

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"Young people who once had little to talk about to friends and family now have their own proud story to tell," says Brooke, who is not concerned about recognition for herself and finds being voted a Westfield Local Hero a little overwhelming.

Helping people with disability engage in sport

Brooke Wilkie — NADO

Inclusive, Passionate, Selfless

In her personal and professional life, Brooke Wilkie is committed to helping people with disability.

The Penrith resident is General Manager of the Nepean Area Disability Organisation (NADO), which prides itself on being a local organisation that provides tangible interventions to help people with disability find work and enjoy friendships, sport, leisure and independence.

Brooke spent much of her own time setting up the charity's Penrith Touch Football Team after she realised many people who loved football were being relegated to the sidelines because of their disabilities.

Through Brooke's devoted support over the past six years, there are now seventy players across the different touch football teams, all enjoying an opportunity to experience the joy and tears of winning and losing, in addition to gaining ball skills and learning the importance of teamwork.

At first, it was a challenge to get all the players to run in the right direction. But now many are equal to or better than those in the opposing team.

"Young people who once had little to talk about to friends and family now have their own proud story to tell," says Brooke, who is not concerned about recognition for herself and finds being voted a Westfield Local Hero a little overwhelming.

Brooke is proud to be creating opportunities for people to "live a life of fulfilment". Even during her holidays, she is committed to helping people with disabilities.

Before a recent trip to Bali, she collected gifts to give to the local school for children with a disability.

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.

NADO will use its grant to support the team's entry into the State Cup 2020.

"It can be quite challenging to find ongoing sponsorships for our teams each year. This grant will allow myself, the team and their families to focus on preparation and training and cover all costs associated with registrations, jerseys, travel and accommodation," says Brooke.



At court, Nicole and her dogs provide traumatised children and vulnerable adults with emotional support so they can concentrate on their testimony while feeling they are in a safe, supportive environment.

People and dogs reach out to share comfort and care

Nicole Celeban — Nepean Therapy Dogs

Tireless, Selfless, Empathetic

Imagine an anxious child waiting to give evidence in court, a lonely person in a nursing home or an isolated school student.

That's where Nicole Celeban, President of Nepean Therapy Dogs, and her team of well-trained human and canine volunteers step in.

They live the charity's mission statement, "always there to show they care", by comforting people of all ages at hospitals, nursing homes, special needs schools and courts throughout western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

The visits are extremely rewarding, says Nicole, who has worked with the charity since 2000 and regularly takes her four dogs to visit hospital patients and witnesses.

She got goosebumps about being voted a Westfield Local Hero but sees herself as the "figurehead of

an awesome team. The community understands what we are doing and are happy with what we're doing. It's a huge honour."

Nicole says the charity has been flying "under the radar" for years and has benefitted from the extra attention.

One of her roles as president for the past six years has been to lead the way towards becoming a professionally run charity with high standards for volunteers and their dogs.

"A few years ago, we only had a dozen volunteers, and we've grown to 50-plus."

At court, Nicole and her dogs provide traumatised children and vulnerable adults with emotional support so they can concentrate on their testimony while feeling they are in a safe, supportive environment.

At Nepean Hospital, she and the dogs provide emotional comfort to child and adult patients and their families.

Nicole, who also runs her own small business, always responds to calls for help and has taken her dogs as far Wollongong to support vulnerable witnesses.

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Nepean Therapy Dogs will use its grant to cover rent, electricity and insurance for six months.

"It will free up many of our volunteers from time-consuming fundraising to allow us to extend our services to those in need," Nicole says.

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"We provide support to families at a vulnerable time," says Christy.
"The birth of a baby is a joyful occasion, but it is also demanding and sometimes overwhelming."

Providing community support for tired families

Christy Hartlage — Connect Child & Family Services (YAWN Program)

Enthusiastic, Caring, Knowledgeable

When Christy Hartlage moved to the Blue Mountains from New Zealand, she had a 10-month-old son who didn't sleep and no support in the area to offer her respite.

"I would often cry wishing we had a grandmother nearby who wanted to hold the baby so I could have a shower or something to eat," says Christy.

YAWN (You Ask, We Nurture), was born eight years ago out of Christy's experience "and the amazing community support we eventually found".

Christy runs YAWN as part of Connect Child and Family Services and links volunteers with parents who need a helping hand.

She says that being voted a Westfield Local Hero is a "fantastic acknowledgement" of the service that YAWN provides.

"The more validation we have, the more we can show how important it is to support families when a baby is born."

YAWN's approach is all about kindness. The kindness of a volunteer giving time to a parent when they need help; and parents understanding that they can be kind to themselves and that it is okay to need a break sometimes. It is also about creating a community that values families.

"We provide support to families at a vulnerable time," says Christy. "The birth of a baby is a joyful occasion, but it is also demanding and sometimes overwhelming."

Sometimes, however, Christie must also support a volunteer. For example, when a mum may have been crying for the whole of a two-hour visit because her baby has been sick for the first

time. "While it is important to be present in that situation, it is not an easy thing to do," says Christie.

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The YAWN Program will use its grant to train more volunteers and support more families as well as to market its services and develop a social media strategy.

"We want to let the community know how we help families, and getting more volunteers is really important," says Christy.

Your 2019 Finalists

Adam MacKenzie

Platform Youth Services

Adam MacKenzie's mission in life is to be "the best me I can be". One of the ways the Platform Youth Services program coordinator achieves this is by tirelessly helping vulnerable young people strive for a better version of themselves. He and his team provide 24-hour emergency accommodation and ongoing support to help people build healthy relationships and develop the skills they need to live on their own. Adam, a Rural Fire Services leader, is also the best dad he can be and is devoted to his six children, three of whom are foster children.

Cathy Craig

Penrith Community Kitchen

Cathy Craig is synonymous with the Penrith Community Kitchen, where she was a pioneer volunteer 21 years ago and now runs the show. Thanks to her warm personality, she and her team ensure the kitchen has the feel of a big family table. It is a place where homeless people, abuse survivors, lonely folk, the poor and substance abusers find safe refuge, a hearty meal and someone to talk to. All are welcome without judgment, says Cathy, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2012.

Leann Tibbey

PCYC Penrith

When Leann Tibbey was appointed manager of the Penrith PCYC, her priority was to reinvigorate it as a modern, friendly and busy community hub for all age groups. Within no time, she was consulting with stakeholders and putting her plan into action. An upgrade was completed in 2017 and membership and volunteer engagement have soared. Entire families enjoy the atmosphere of inclusion and the vastly increased choice of activities. "Youth who feel like they are a part of something are less likely to engage in risky behaviours," says Leann. "I believe the whole community benefits."

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Recognising all of our 2019 Nominees



Forbes Aboriginal & Community Working Party

Alan BAKER

NSW Police Legacy

Martin BECKETT

Christ Mission Possible

Louise BORG

Make-A-Wish Australia

Nicole CELEBAN

Nepean Therapy Dogs Inc

John CHOMA

Lions Club of Emu Plains Inc.

Catherine COLE

Connect Child and Family Services – The YAWN Project

Cathy CRAIG

Penrith Community

Marzi DESANTI

Thornton Community Group for the Thornton Community Garden Project

Nigel DOECKE

Fusion Western Sydney

Haitham EL MASRI

Australian Resource Centre 4 PTSD (ARC4PTSD)

Cameron ELLIOTT

Children's Tumour Foundation

Ragesh EMPERUMAL

Western Sydney University

Jennifer GURRY

Diamond Women's Support

Christy HARTLAGE

Connect Child and Family Services YAWN Program

Mikielah LEIGH

Our Tribe

Adam MACKENZIE

Platform Youth Services

Cheryl MCDONALD

Southern Prosthetics and Orthotics, Penrith

Jo O'DEA

Little Athletics

Gayl O'GRADY

Minddogs

Eric PETRACCO

Horrie Eley Hall Management Committee

Simone SEELEY

Rainbow Familes

Leann TIBBEY

Police Citizens Youth Club NSW (PCYC Penrith)

Brooke WILKIE

NADO (Nepean Area Disability Organisation)

Colleen YATES

The Community Charity Shop Inc

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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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