

*Westfield*

*Local Heroes*

2020

Westfield Local Heroes is a recognition and awards program that discovers and celebrates people across Australia and New Zealand who make a positive impact to their local community and environment.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities and a public vote determines the successful 2020 nominees for every Westfield centre.

The successful heroes are each awarded \$10,000 for their affiliated organisations.

*Westfield*  
*Local Heroes*

Since the program began, we have awarded \$3.62 million to 363 community organisations.

Every year, we recognise more than 120 Westfield Local Heroes and provide more than \$1.2M in community grants to their affiliated organisations.

We congratulate all the 2020 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make.

[westfield.com.au/local-heroes](https://westfield.com.au/local-heroes)

[westfield.co.nz/local-heroes](https://westfield.co.nz/local-heroes)

# Westfield

## Geelong

### VIC

**Volunteer Peter Wheeler has created an op shop that offers much more than second-hand clothes and household goods.**

With his vision and drive, Uniting Barwon's new Norlane Op Shop is also a safe place for disaffected locals to socialise and seek help.

There are comfy sofas where mums can enjoy a cuppa while their children play in the kids' corner, where they host community engagement events, including community movie nights.

A community garden has been established to provide some of the food used to prepare light lunches for those in need.

Thanks to Peter's dynamic and inclusive approach, there has been a surge in volunteers and shoppers as word of mouth spreads.

"We have community members who, by volunteering and participating, have gained an improved level of self-worth," Peter says.

Peter is driving further initiatives before COVID-19 restrictions, including a community arts program and literacy and numeracy programs.

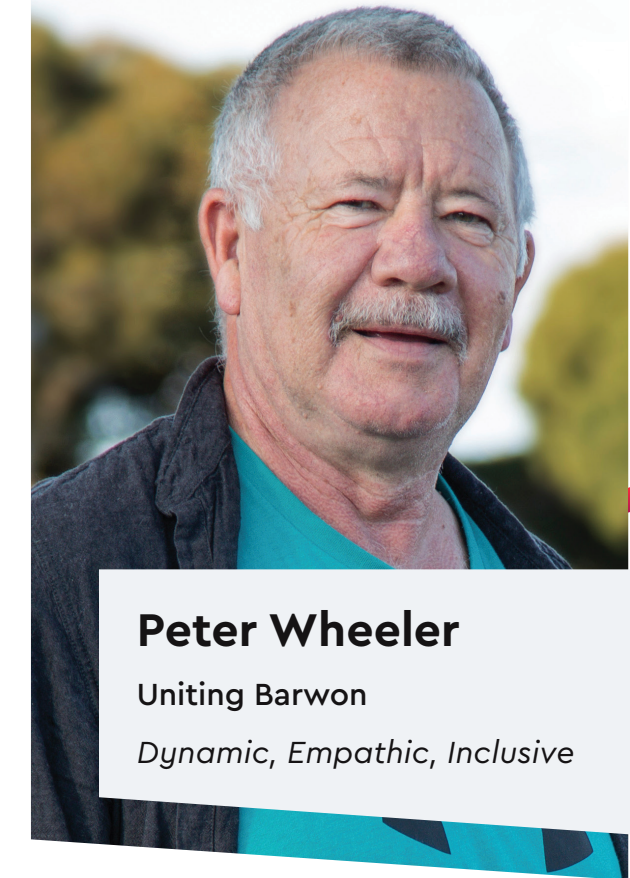
He is proud that the op shop has saved several tons of goods from ending up in landfill each month while helping those in need.

"Any profit made from the shop goes to our Emergency Relief Program for those in greatest need in our community."

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.

Uniting Barwon will use its grant to fund initiatives including a shopfront revamp, a storage shed and laptops for locals to do job searches.

*Peter's nominator says: "Thanks to Peter's efforts, Norlane residents now have a safe space open six days a week where they feel welcome, included and safe."*



**Peter Wheeler**

Uniting Barwon

*Dynamic, Empathic, Inclusive*

## Op shop with a difference

**"We have community members who, by volunteering and participating, have gained an improved level of self-worth."**





## Debi McKinnis

Heartfelt: Giving the Gift of Photographic Memories

*Respectful, Thoughtful, Generous*

## Gifting precious memories

**"Being with families and creating gentle images of their child is a privilege."**

**Debi McKinnis gently steps in to help when grieving families are facing their darkest times.**

A professional photographer, she volunteers her time with Heartfelt, an organisation that gifts families who have experienced a stillbirth or have a child with a terminal illness with beautiful images of their child.

Over the past seven years, she has provided more than 100 free professional photographic sessions to families, who often consider the images their most treasured possessions.

Debi goes wherever it suits the family, whether it's the hospital or their home.

She is the primary volunteer covering requests from Geelong Hospital but also travels to Melbourne if there is a family in need.

"The images are gentle and often the families have them on display. They create beautiful memories and help families remember their child and allow them to talk about their child," Debi says.

Widely admired for her grace and generosity, Debi sometimes returns to the family to take more pictures, especially if other family members have travelled to be with them.

She feels humbled when a family reaches out to thank her for being there for them and their child.

"Being with families and creating gentle images of their child is a privilege," Debi says.

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Heartfelt will use its grant to cover the cost of 133 photographic sessions and 11 cameras for hospitals to use when Heartfelt is not available.

*Debi's nominator's says: "Debi has made a difference to the lives of so many grieving families. Her photos can be a family's most treasured possession."*

**Jake Janson left a career in construction to become a youth worker, knowing that the opportunity to make a difference, was an important one.**

He trained with Ocean Mind, which runs free surf therapy programs for young people experiencing mental health challenges, social isolation and disabilities.

Jake is now the program coordinator for the not-for-profit, and his abundant energy and contagious laughter mean the kids have the best day ever while learning to surf.

He puts in many unpaid hours, taking the time to check in with the young people and provide support, encouragement and guidance.

Jake is passionate about supporting people with mental health challenges and is considered an exceptional role model for the young people and Ocean Mind volunteers.

"Ocean Mind has changed my life. I wake up every day and pinch myself about what I get to do for a living," he says.

"Financially, it was initially difficult, but the reward for following my dream job is beyond worth it."

Outside of work, Jake is quickly becoming a pillar of the community. He volunteers with the Country Fire Authority and each Christmas he helps out at local food kitchens providing meals to the homeless.

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Ocean Mind will use its grant to run additional programs, buy equipment and provide transport to the young people who need it.

*Jake's nominator says: "Jake is a natural youth worker. The positive regard he has for all people and his ability to make young people feel listened to and supported is incredible."*

## Jake Janson

Ocean Mind

*Inspiring, Energetic, Altruistic*

## Dedicated to youth

**"Ocean Mind has changed my life. I wake up every day and pinch myself about what I get to do for a living."**



## Your 2020 Finalists

### Collin Peebles

#### Geelong Food Relief Centre

Geelong Food Relief Centre CEO Collin Peebles is passionate about helping people in need. Collin manages about 90 volunteers and works alongside them so that 37,000 people each year have enough to eat. He also spends his own time giving presentations to groups and clubs to boost support for the centre.

### Reno Demicoli

#### EdConnect, Corio

After losing his sons, Reno Demicoli turned his attention to helping at-risk children by volunteering as a school mentor. Thanks to his dedication, the kids now have an encouraging adult to speak to.

Reno says helping members of the community is adding meaning to his golden years.

### Marsha Uppill

#### Arranyinha Pty Ltd

Proud First Nations woman Marsha Uppill is a justice warrior who is striving to close the social and health gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Her strategy is to educate businesses and other organisations, so they understand their potential impact and are inspired to help bring about change.

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

### David Drayton

Birregurra Football And Netball Club

### Shannon Graham

The Empowerment Challenge

### Thomas Dunn

Livin

### Margaret Manning

Bellarine Community Health

### Leann Tremul

Cystic Fibrosis Geelong Inc

### Jacqui Bennett

Humans In Geelong Inc

### Frank Tripolino

The Palais Theatre, Geelong

### Christopher Hall

Wheel 4 MND

### Debi Mckinnis

Heartfelt: Giving The Gift Of Photographic Memories

### Collin Peebles

Geelong Food Relief Centre

### Peter Wheeler

Uniting Barwon

### Reno Demicoli

EdConnect Australia

### Jake Janson

Ocean Mind

### Chris Hall

Wheel 4 MND

### Marsha Uppill

Arranyinha Pty Ltd

### Andy Brittain

Geelong Youth Engagement

### Hilary Holmes

Hilary Holmes Makeup

### Michelle Polidano

Raise Foundation

### Sharon Rooney

Southern Cross Kids' Camps

### Tracey Paech

Hope Bereavement Care

### David Burge

Teesdale CFA

### Fiona McDonald

Tradeswomen Australia Foundation

### Bella Kostadinoff

Bellarine Training And Community Hub

### Justin Irwin

Lifeline Direct – Geelong & South West Victoria Region

### Glenda Cadden

Standing Tall In Hamilton Inc

### Frank De Rosso

Music At The Basilica Incorporated

### Margaret Markovic

Road Trauma Family's Victoria

### Heather Work

Make A Wish

### Ange Liston-McCaughley

The Type 1 Foundation

### Louise Larkin

Friend In Meq

**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  
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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