

*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

## Hurstville

### NSW

**When Liz Diab was volunteering at a community food pantry about 9 years ago, she was dismayed that people were turned away because they didn't have a welfare card to show proof of need.**

So she started rescuing food to make hampers to ensure nobody falls through the cracks because they don't qualify for government support.

She funded this herself and she began providing generous hampers of fresh, nutritious food, often a treat to anybody in need.

It might be a family who are casual workers, between jobs and suddenly on one income or a person who has fled a domestic abuse; anybody going through hardship.

Not only has Liz supported the community through her hard work, but she has also saved more than 60 tonnes of food from landfill every year.

At first, the group operated as a pay-it-forward Facebook group, but is now a registered charity.

Liz continued the agreements with four supermarkets and two bakeries to collect food daily that has reached its shelf life and nearing the use-by date.

"Households can request a hamper once every three weeks, and all we ask is for a \$3 contribution to help cover our running costs," Liz says.

The volunteers also deliver hampers and bread to a social housing estate in Riverwood and bread and other supplies to community groups and schools in need.

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 Crateful Group will use its grant to rent or buy a refrigerated van, so volunteers don't have to use their own vehicles.

*Liz's nominator says: "Liz helps so many in our community and reduces food waste at the same time."*



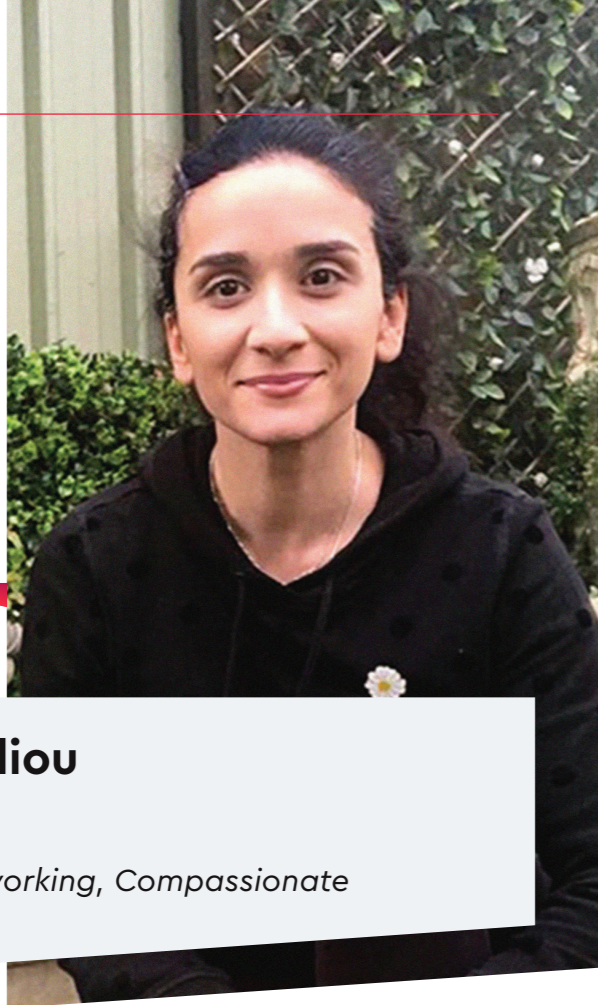
**Liz Diab**

The Crateful Group

*Generous, Non-judgmental, Amazing*

## Food for all

**"Households can request a hamper once every three weeks, and all we ask is for a \$3 contribution to help cover our running costs," Liz says.**



## Sue-Ellan Vasiliou

little legs foundation

*Kind-hearted, Hardworking, Compassionate*

## For the love of Alegra

**"In memory of our beautiful daughter, we raise funds to support research into this disease and also to support patients and their families during the most difficult of times."**

**Every day is a challenge for Sue-Ellan Vasiliou and her family after losing their beautiful daughter Alegra to brain cancer.**

But Sue-Ellan is doing everything she can to help support other families and is raising funds for brain cancer awareness and research.

She does this through the little legs foundation she set up in memory of Alegra, who was diagnosed with brain cancer days before Christmas in 2016 and passed away 10 months later.

"It is knowing that her fight helps others that keeps us going," Sue-Ellan says.

Sue-Ellan engages the community in many charity events, but something that touched people's hearts was when local cafes sold commemorative cups of coffee on Alegra's birthday.

"We aim to raise awareness about childhood brain cancer, a disease that kills more children in Australia than any other disease," Sue-Ellan says.

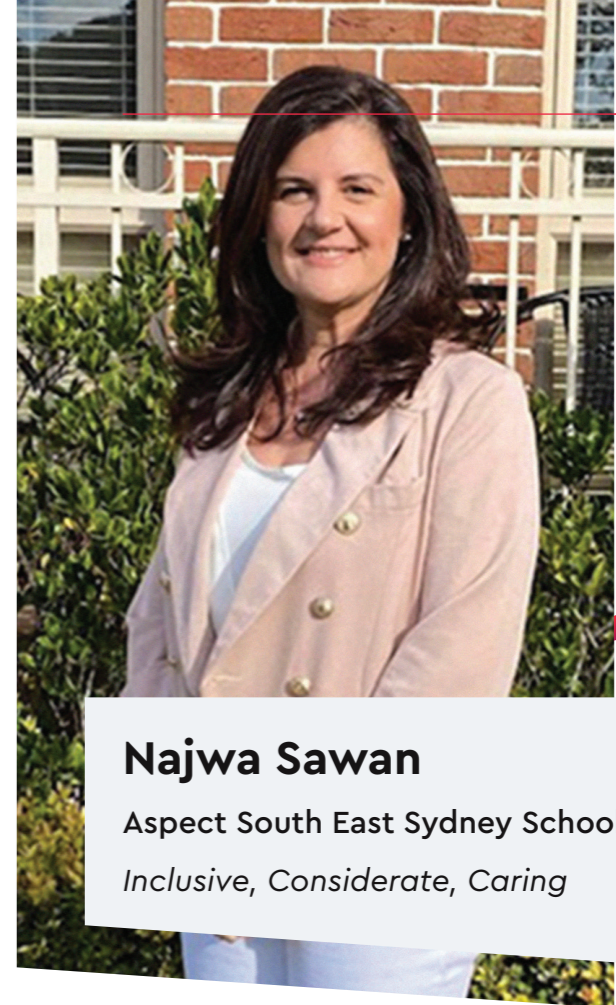
"In memory of our beautiful daughter, we raise funds to support research into this disease and also to support patients and their families during the most difficult of times."

A note to Alegra on the foundation website sums it up: "It was not our choice to survive without you, so we choose to live and to honour you. – Dad & Mum xx"

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Little legs foundation will use its grant to help fund hospital equipment and to support families.

*Sue-Ellan's nominator says: "Despite the pain carried on her shoulders, Sue-Ellan comes up with innovative ideas and concepts to get the community involved in the foundation."*



## Najwa Sawan

Aspect South East Sydney School

*Inclusive, Considerate, Caring*

## Raising funds and sharing wisdom

**"Your life and the life of your child will be different, but not less."**

**Najwa Sawan spent several years volunteering at the Aspect South East Sydney School, providing support to other families and raising funds when her son was a student.**

After he graduated, the principal offered her a part-time position, and she jumped at the chance to stay on.

"I love the work I do and often say that I don't feel like I'm working, just doing what I love," says Najwa, who has been in the role for five years.

She has continued where she left off as a parent and organises walkathons, trivia nights and comedy nights.

"We have a great school community that gets involved with the fundraising."

As the mother of a young man on the autism spectrum, Najwa also provides advice and support to parents.

Her favourite words of wisdom are: "Your life and the life of your child will be different, but not less."

Najwa says receiving news that your child has a disability can be devastating for many families.

"You are left wondering what your child's future will be like. To have someone guide and advise you in those early days sometimes makes the journey less difficult.

"I love to share my experience with families and provide hope to them."

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Aspect South East Sydney School will use its grant to buy literacy kits to support academic progress.

*Najwa's nominator says: "Najwa has supported so many families with children on the autism spectrum, making them feel heard and included. She has also raised thousands and thousands of dollars to provide better resources and learning opportunities."*

## Your 2020 Finalists

### Carlee Heise

#### Shopfront Arts Co-op Ltd

Carlee Heise gives young people an opportunity to find their voice through the arts.

She is passionate about helping kids find their tribe, especially those who identify as LGBTQI, live with a disability or don't fit in at school.

Carlee is dedicated to bringing the arts to youth from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

My passion is bringing creativity, creative expression and joy into the lives of young people through the arts," says Carlee.

"They need to express emotions, explore feelings and investigate uncertainty in a welcoming, safe space."

### Dragana Bozinovski

#### 3Bridges Community Ltd

Dragana Bozinovski is changing the lives of people with dementia and helping them to keep their passion for life and stay socially engaged.

The aged care team member at charity 3Bridges Community has persevered against financial challenges to introduce a first-in-Australia dementia program.

People with mild to moderate dementia attend 3Bridges up to three times a week, cooking and eating together, making new friends and participating in tai chi.

Dragana says research has shown the program helps delay admission to residential care.

"In addition, it reduces feelings of burden on family caregivers," she says.

### Jennifer (Jenny) Sammut

#### Kogarah RSL Sub-Branch Youth Club

Jenny Sammut's children have long moved on from the Kogarah RSL Youth Club, but she continues to volunteer as superintendent, a role she took on 25 years ago.

Jenny is on hand every weekday afternoon and evening and every Saturday morning to support the 100 members, who range in age from three to 25.

"It is so rewarding to go into the club and be greeted by so many happy children who are having a great time learning and growing," says Jenny.

"I keep on doing my work at the youth club because I find it very fulfilling."

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

### Gabriella Celeste

Bankstown Canterbury Community Transport

### Kurt Cheng

Georges River Council Youth Advisory Committee (Yac)

### Meni Pefkos

Diversity Kids

### Bronwyn-Jo Fallon

St George Community Transport Limited

### Rukaya Medlej

Medfitness

### Dragana Bozinovski

3Bridges Community Ltd

### Sue-Ellan Vasiliou

Little Legs Foundation

### Carlee Heise

Shopfront Arts Co-Op Ltd

### Najwa Sawan

Aspect South East Sydney School

### Jennifer Sammut

Kogarah Rsl Sub-Branch Youth Club

### Liz Diab

The Crateful Group

### Deborah Dworkin

Raise Foundation

### Julian Finch

Connells Point Netball Club

### Sarah Tetstall

Connells Point Physical Culture Club

### Daqi Chen

St George And Sutherland Medical Research Foundation

### Warren Raymond Thompson

Men Of League Foundation And Autism Community Network

### Kristy Pitman

Raise Foundation

### Emma Gilham

Make-A-Wish Australia

### Debbie Armanious

Exodus Youth Worx

### Ziyad Serhan

Educaid Australia Incorporated

**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

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