

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

westfield.co.nz/local-heroes

Westfield

Kotara

NSW

Aimee Blacker is filling a huge gap in the lives of autistic children and their families.

As an occupational therapist, she knows that many of these kids are excluded from social and recreational activities. This can have a devastating impact on their wellbeing.

Determined to make a change, Aimee co-founded the not-for-profit Surfing the Spectrum, to allow children to experience the joy of surfing and the ocean.

Seven surf schools have jumped on board. With Aimee's help, they learned the skills needed to teach autistic kids how to surf. Other surfing communities are now eager to get involved.

"Surfing the Spectrum addresses the grave inequity faced by the Autism community, who are being deprived of meaningful experiences," Aimee says.

So far, there have been 12 events at seven beaches along the NSW coast, introducing 350 families living with autism to the thrill of conquering the waves.

It's been challenging for Aimee who has made personal sacrifices to develop the program while working full-time.

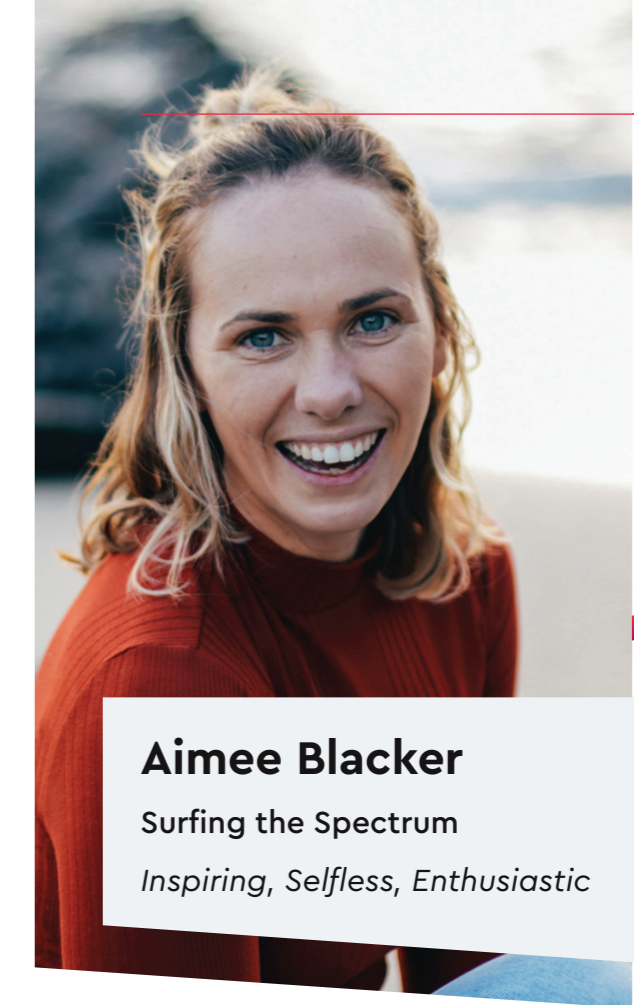
"There were occasions where we faced the challenging decision of whether we could sustain the pace," she says.

"However, the faces of smiling, joyful kids allowed to be themselves and countless letters of gratitude kept driving us in those first hard years."

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Surfing the Spectrum will use its grant to expand the reach to more surf schools of an autism-informed program that Aimee is currently writing.

Aimee's nominator says: "Aimee is inspirational and dedicated to providing children on the autism spectrum an amazing experience that brings joy to all."



Aimee Blacker

Surfing the Spectrum

Inspiring, Selfless, Enthusiastic

Wave of compassion

"Surfing the Spectrum addresses the grave inequity faced by the Autism community, who are being deprived of meaningful experiences."



Lyndsay Walker

Lifeline Direct Ltd

Vivacious, Courageous, Determined

Volunteering for those in need

"My advocacy with Lifeline has touched my passion for a stronger, mentally healthy community," says Lyndsay.

Thanks to Lyndsay Walker, thousands of people know where to turn for help when they are feeling down.

Former professional cricketer Lyndsay is a Lifeline volunteer. Last year, he helped raise \$50,000 for the free counselling service by participating in the Newy100, a 100km run around Newcastle.

In the lead up to the event, Lyndsay gave his time for media interviews, making thousands of people aware of the crisis support and suicide prevention that Lifeline offers.

"My advocacy with Lifeline has touched my passion for a stronger, mentally healthy community," says Lyndsay.

He continues to build on his work with Lifeline and wants to make next year's Newy100 bigger than ever.

In February, Lyndsay took part in a stair challenge, climbing more than 100,400 steps in 24 hours.

Conquering step after step was his way of showing people the challenges others face every day just to keep going through life.

Lyndsay has also taken the time to undertake training with Lifeline and is now a qualified crisis support lifeline volunteer manning the phones for those experiencing sadness, loneliness or crisis.

He is a prolific volunteer and has spent many hours helping Australian Defence Force veterans and the homeless and also coaches school children with disabilities.

"I retired young, and I use my time now to give back to the community," says Lyndsay.

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Lifeline will use its grant to fund more than 141 face-to-face counselling sessions.

Lyndsay's nominator says: "Lyndsay connects with people, advocates for better awareness of mental health and wellbeing and sets an exemplary standard through his actions."

When little Connor Gibson developed brain cancer at age five, Monica Halliday was there for him and his family every step of the way.

She founded Fight for Connor to raise funds for the little boy, whom she knew through her daycare business.

Sadly, Connor passed away when he was nine. But thanks to Monica, his family and friends got to make wonderful memories with a special birthday party and fun day at his school.

His wish of seeing his mum marry also came true.

Determined to help other families with seriously sick children, Monica decided to continue Fight for Connor as his legacy.

The not-for-profit supports families in many ways, including presents for the children, meals, garden maintenance and renovations to make homes wheelchair accessible.

Special keepsakes are also organised for the families, including photos, hand molds and jewellery.

"We make memories matter for families with children diagnosed with a terminal illness," Monica says.

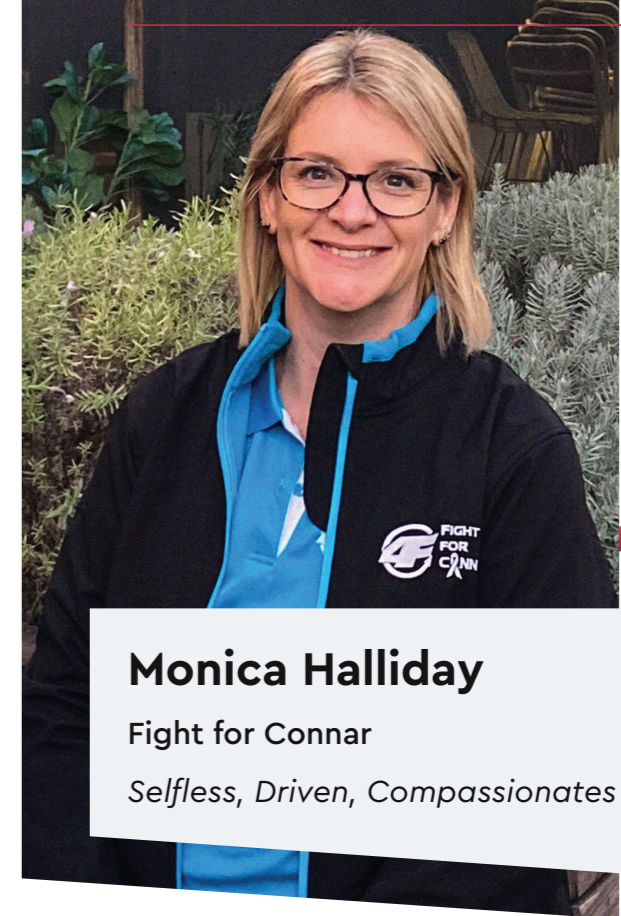
Despite the demands of full-time job, she is always the first person to offer help.

"We knew our journey could not finish with Connor and we would continue to fight in his name to support more families facing the terminal diagnosis of their children," Monica says.

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Fight for Connor will use its grant to buy a mascot and other fund-raising merchandise and fund the cost of registering as a charity.

Monica's nominator says: "Monica took something tragic and used it as motivation to make an amazing difference. She spends weekends and evenings helping families and is always looking for ways to brighten their day."



Monica Halliday

Fight for Connor

Selfless, Driven, Compassionates

A boy's legacy

"Determined to help other families with seriously sick children, Monica decided to continue Fight for Connor as his legacy."

Your 2020 Finalists

Jennifer (Jenn) O'Sullivan Path 2 Change

Jennifer O'Sullivan offers homeless young people a hand up. She is the CEO of Path 2 Change, an organisation that helps young people access education, training and employment.

Jennifer has developed many innovative programs, including a voucher system with local businesses. This means the young people can access goods and services with dignity.

"Ensuring that young people who are homeless are connected and supported with education, training and employment opportunities builds a better community overall," Jennifer says.

Clarice Hamling Respectus Limited

Clarice Hamling stepped up to the plate to make sure vulnerable women and children have safe accommodation.

Driven to address homelessness in her community, Clarice was one of the people to help establish Respectus Limited, a charity that provides safe housing.

Her energy helped drive a two-year renovation of a large old home into a haven for women and children.

Now Clarice has turned her attention to safe housing and mentoring for teenage mums trying to complete their high school education.

"We are helping them break a cycle that they or their family are at risk of falling into after having a child at such a young age," she says.

Rowan Cox Atwea College

Atwea College Executive Director Rowan Cox is committed to helping people become work-ready despite the barriers or disadvantages they might be facing.

Atwea College is achieving an outstanding success rate for the nationally recognised training courses it offers and works hard to connect students with potential employers.

Rowan is known as an advocate for those who need support and has increased the quality of life of many people.

"We try to put the needs of students and the community at the centre of decision-making," Rowan says.

Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

Rebecca Jackson
Newcastle City Touch Football

Olivia Hughes
Ronald McDonald House
Newcastle and Nobbys
Surf Life Saving Club

Lisa Greissl
The Big Hug Box

Lisa Hamilton
Hunter Melanoma
Foundation Inc

Timothy Jackson
Timber Productions

Chris Horne
Scouts Australia (NSW)

John Giddens
Dog Rescue Newcastle

Catherine Woodbine
Friends with Dignity Limited

Howard Mole
Bikers For Kids Inc

Sandra Elms
Newcastle Parkinson Choir

Ronald Calman
Marine Rescue NSW
Newcastle Unit

Jayden Hollis
NSW RFS

Anne Williams
Hunter Wildlife Rescue

Karen Harmon
The Under Construction Choir

Sonya Manzalini
Dance Of Life Belly Dance
& Drums

Kirralee Hughes
The Mark Hughes Foundation

Darrell Sparke
Amputee Association Of NSW

Tracey Macpherson
Hmri-Sports Concussion Clinic

Chloe Sutton
The Self Care Sisterhood

Wendy Jenkins
Angel Gowns For Australian
Angel Babies Incorporated

Aimee Blacker
Surfing The Spectrum

Lyndsay Walker
Lifeline Direct Ltd

Monica Halliday
Fight For Connor

Peter Alexander Donald
Novatones Harmony Chorus

Clarice Hamling
Respectus Limited

Jonathon Power
Empowered Community
Services

Rowan Cox
Atwea College

Jennifer O'Sullivan
Path 2 Change

Tracy Jean Ellem
Web Tech Plus Pty Ltd trading
as Creative Cooks Kitchen

Kelly Burgess
Children's Tumour Foundation

Laura Johnson
Mark Hughes Foundation

Sara Nichols
Mulletfest

Linda Campbell
VCFS 22Q11 Foundation Inc

Helena Louise Edwards
Girl Guides NSW ACT & NT
Coastal Valleys Region

Chris Jones
Livefree Project

Bronwyn Gaye Meddows
Dressed for Success

Tricia Martin
She Can

Sue Hermens
Same Waves Program,
Cooks Hill Surf Club

Bryna Butlin
Make A Wish Newcastle Branch

Elizabeth Sprott
Friends with Dignity

Karen Stackman
HAPA (Hunter Academy
Of Performing Arts)

Michelle Faithfull
Hunter Homeless Connect

Bronwyn Thoroughgood
Young Parents' Hub

Candece Bergin-Brown
The Marching Koalas

Kathy Morrison
Youth Insearch Foundation
(Aust) Inc

Geraldine Moran
Centre For Hope

Suzy Trindall
CDAH (Community Disability
Alliance Hunter)

Michelle Shetab
We Love Lake Macquarie

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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