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.

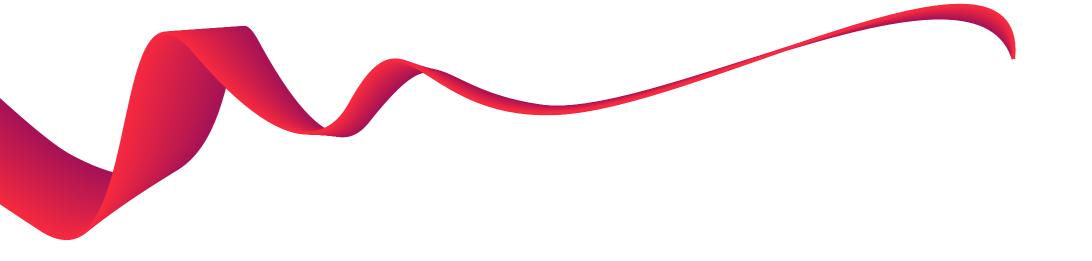
Every year, we recognise more than 120 Westfield Local Heroes and provide more than \$1.2M in community grants to their affiliated organisations.

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

## Southland

VIC



#### Matthew Donovan has founded a local charity that grows and rescues food to feed hungry people.

In the four years since its launch, Food for Change has grown and donated more than 135,000 meals and rescued more than 155,000 from going to waste.

The charity piggybacks on existing infrastructure and food is distributed to locals via organisations including Sacred Heart Mission, Matts Place at Cheltenham, the Kingston City Church, BayCISS and Lions club of Sandringham.

"My work aims to help both community health and address food insecurity, as well as benefit the environment by removing edible food from the food waste stream,' Matthew says.

A differentiator of the charity is that its food collection is local and smallscale, which complements rather than duplicates the work of larger organisations.

Remarkably, Matthew has found time to get the charity off the ground and help it thrive despite being a devoted single dad and needing to earn an income.

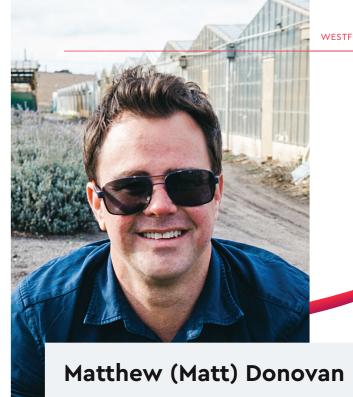
He couldn't have done it with the support of charity colleagues and friends and family.

The charity has a farm site at Clayton South and partners with other organisations to facilitate growing programs on their land. It produces 10 healthy meals for every \$2 donation.

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The Food for Change Foundation will use its grant to buy seed and other necessities to increase its food production significantly.

Matthew's nominator says: "Matthew inspires so many other people and me to make the communities we live in better."



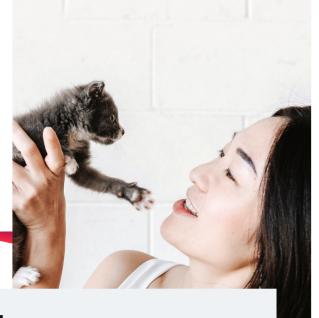
The Food for Change Foundation Role model, Big-hearted, Changemaker

## Growing and rescuing food

WESTFIELD 2020 LOCAL HEROES

"My work aims to help both community health and address food insecurity, as well as benefit the environment by removing edible food from the food waste stream."

SOUTHLAND, VIC PAGE 5 PAGE 4 SOUTHLAND, VIC



### **Yvonne Hong**

Pets Of The Homeless Australia

Passionate, Optimistic, Changemaker

### Force for good

"I believe every human being deserves to experience the unconditional love of a pet, regardless of circumstances." Yvonne Hong started Pets of the Homeless (POTH) as a self-funded passion project in 2015 to look after the much-loved pets of people facing homelessness.

She started out packaging pet food at her kitchen table. But despite having no experience of running a charity, she has grown POTH into a formidable operation. It has dedicated volunteers, 25,000 supporters on social media and has opened Victoria's first pet food bank.

Each month, POTH helps more than 1000 people care for their beloved pets.

This year, Pro Bono Australia's Impact 25 awards named Yvonne one of the most influential people in the social sector.

Yvonne believes everyone is capable of making a difference and lives by her motto: "If not me, then who?"

She grew up in a small apartment in Malaysia and was moved by the stray dogs she saw living on the streets. In Australia, she shares her home with several rescue animals and has fostered more than 40 animals in need.

"I believe every human being deserves to experience the unconditional love of a pet, regardless of circumstances," Yvonne says. "For many people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, their pet is truly their only friend."

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Pets of The Homeless Australia will use its grant to fund starter packs of food and supplies and an essential healthcare check for 20 pets.

Yvonne's nominator says: "Yvonne has a passion for her community and the welfare of others. She is the face and the driving force of POTH."

Robbie Hendry might start his day by helping a young person find accommodation after a family breakdown. Next, he might be helping someone with their resume and coaching them on job interview skills. After that, he might travel to the city to support a TAFE student.

In-between appointments, Robbie will send all his clients their daily SMS to check that they are OK. If they aren't, he might provide grocery vouchers, myki cards and clothes for the workplace.

Robbie runs a TaskForce Community Agency pilot project to support young people into employment after they have left school early or disengaged from the community.

The project offers a 12-month traineeship as well as multiple layers of support to help with mental health, substance misuse, housing, antisocial behaviour and study.

"The people I work with have faced a lot of struggles in life, which can be quite heartbreaking," Robbie says. "It's really about working to help them help themselves to build resilience and independence."

The reward for Robbie is seeing the young people engaging with their studies and improving their lives.

"When I see what a difference I can make to a young person in need, how could I do any other job?" he asks.

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TaskForce Community Agency will use its grant to support young people in various ways, including through crisis support, peer support and possibly a graffiti program.

Robbie's nominator says: "Robbie works tirelessly and selflessly every day, going above and beyond to ensure a bright future for all young people, no matter their needs."

WESTFIELD 2020 LOCAL HEROES

### **Robbie Hendry**

TaskForce Community Agency

Driven, Encouraging, Compassionate

## Making a tangible difference

"The people I work with have faced a lot of struggles in life, which can be quite heartbreaking."

PAGE 6 SOUTHLAND, VIC PAGE 7

## **Your 2020 Finalists**

#### **Kerrie Curtis**

#### Starfish Nippers Hampton Life Saving Club

Kerrie Curtis has created something precious for parents who have children with disabilities - the chance to participate in a fun sport as a family.

Kerrie created the Starfish Nippers program at the Hampton Life Saving Club to include children and young adults with disabilities in lifesaving.

The program quickly grew from 10 to 38 Starfish Nippers, who each have a volunteer mentor by their side.

It runs alongside the traditional Nippers event, enabling families to have fun at the beach together.

"It's the highlight of their week," Kerrie says.

#### Sam Elkin

#### Joy 94.9

Lawyer Sam Elkin takes time out from his day job to record weekly podcasts that promote inclusion for the trans and gender-diverse community.

Each professionally produced podcast profiles the life and work of an inspiring transgender person.

"By sharing these stories, we feel we can help to improve the mental health and other health outcomes for transgender Victorians. We provide positive role models and demonstrate that trans people can find meaningful work and integrate and thrive in our broader community," says Sam.

"Doing this radio show has also helped my mental and emotional health immensely."

#### **Simone Anderson**

#### **Helping Hands**

Behaviour therapist Simone Anderson co-founded Helping Hands to help families bring out the best in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

There are 100 children enrolled at the centre, all being nurtured by an extensive team of health professionals and educators.

Simone has made a significant difference in many lives over the years. For example, coaching children to do things that others take for granted, like using public transport with confidence.

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

Hayley Cranehill

Freedom For Farmed Rabbits

Madeleine Buchner

Little Dreamers Australia

Dean Cohen

Flying Fox

Louise Neave

Sandringham Primary School

Sarah Morrissey

Little Rockers Radio

Tracey Harris

Dogs For Kids (With Disabilities)

**Gladys Amarnath** 

Black Rock Pre-School

**Michelle Harrison** 

Love To Live

Jeff Shaw

The Give A Care Foundation

**Maddison Lee Carroll** 

Molly The Zine

Alexandra Cole
Ace Dance Studio

Robbie Hendry

Taskforce Community Agency

Yvonne Hong

Pets Of The Homeless Australia

Simone Anderson

Helping Hands

Matthew Donovan

The Food For Change Foundation

**Kerrie Curtis** 

Starfish Nippers Hampton Life
Saving Club

Sam Elkin

Joy 94.9

**Bridie Roberts** 

Cleftpals Victoria

Lisa Foran

Sandringham Primary School

Cheryl Macleod

Make-A-Wish Bayside Branch

**Mandy Dawes** 

Cheltenham Youth Club Inc

Simone Hardham

Mindful Makings Inc

Karen Janssen

Raise Foundation

PAGE 8 SOUTHLAND, VIC PAGE 9

WESTFIELD 2020 LOCAL HEROES

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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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