

*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

## West Lakes

### SA

**Mae Johnson is in Year 12 and is planning to become a doctor.**

The brave and inspirational student has cystic fibrosis, a life-threatening disorder that damages the lungs and digestive system. Her wish is to pay forward the care she has received from her doctors.

Mae is a youth ambassador of the Cure4 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and has raised more than \$33,000 for research, most recently by holding Mae's Tea Party, which 325 people attended.

She truly shines when she is sharing her story and encouraging others to adopt her positive approach to managing adversity.

Mae has had a lot to deal with at a young age, including the scars from 30 operations.

Another challenge is that people with cystic fibrosis can infect each other with a dangerous bacterium, which means people with the disease must stay apart.

"I had no connection to any other CF sufferer until very recently. This was very hard as I could not talk to anyone who knew and understood what I was going through," Mae says.

The foundation is looking at research into a vaccine against the bacteria.

But Mae's big hope is a cure. "It would mean we could have the same opportunities as everyone else."

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Cure4 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation will use its grant to fund the creation of an awareness and educational video.

*Mae's nominator says: "Mae is leading the charge to defeat cystic fibrosis. It is because of people like her that we can begin to picture a future free of this disease."*



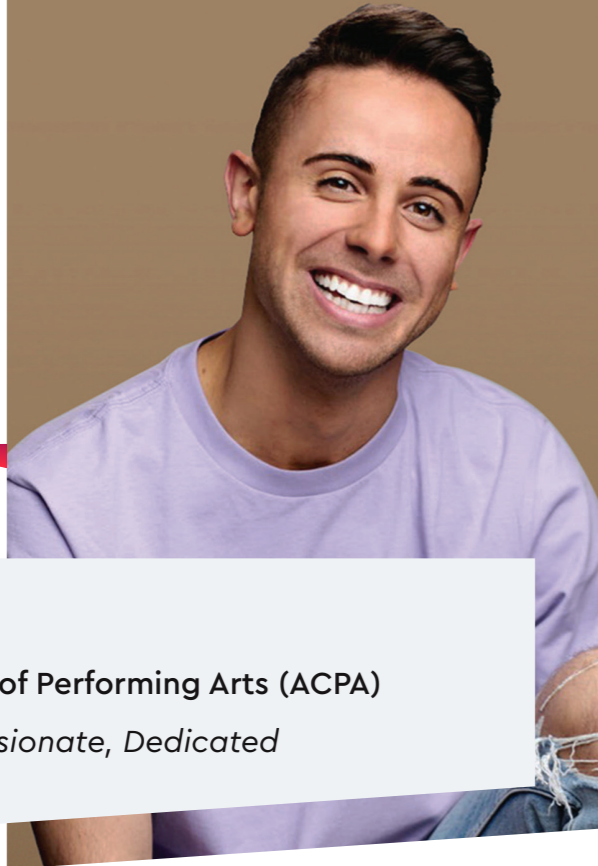
**Mae Johnson**

Cure4 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

*Selfless, Determined, Compassionate*

## Brave young fundraiser

**"I had no connection to any other CF sufferer until very recently. This was very hard as I could not talk to anyone who knew and understood what I was going through."**



## Pep Rigano

Australian Company of Performing Arts (ACPA)

*Passionate, Compassionate, Dedicated*

## Normalising dance for boys

**"Pep takes a personal interest in each student, even learning sign language to communicate with a boy who is hearing impaired."**

**When teacher Pep Rigano was young, he was one of few male dancers in his class.**

"Although I had a great time, I didn't feel the support I needed from the community," he says.

Pep has been a dance teacher at the Australian Company of Performing Arts (ACPA) for 12 years, and he has normalised dance as something boys can and should do.

At the suggestion of a parent, Pep started a boys' dance class several years ago. "It started with five little superstars and has grown to over 150 boys doing dance in our school," he says. "This is enormous and quite a rarity. "

Pep takes a personal interest in each student, even learning sign language to communicate with a boy who is hearing impaired.

Pep says teaching boys is challenging and rewarding. "They have an energy like no other. Sometimes, I have to work hard to keep them motivated. But that's the best part about being a teacher. The kids teach you so much.

"I guess what I have designed has encouraged boys to develop themselves, their personalities. It also allows them to feel comfortable and supported. It's a passion of mine that I adore being a part of," Pep says.

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Australian Company of Performing Arts (ACPA) will use its grant to fund a boys focussed event, specialised teacher training to have a greater reach and also advance sign language skills to be able to host classes specifically for deaf or hard of hearing people.

*Pep's nominator says: "Pep makes a difference in the lives of the young people he teaches and works tirelessly to make sure that every one of his students enjoys their dance journey."*

**In 2009, Zahra Abrahamzadeh courageously left her abusive marriage and went into hiding with her three children, Arman, Atena and Anita.**

On the 21 March 2010, Zahra was killed by her husband in front of 300 witnesses at the Adelaide Convention Centre. It was her 44th birthday.

Five years later, Arman Abrahamzadeh OAM and his two sisters, Atena and Anita, established the Zahra Foundation Australia in their mother's memory.

Their vision is to instil hope and optimism in the lives of women and children and to provide financial and educational opportunities.

Despite the siblings being robbed of their mother and having endured abuse at the hands of their father, they have all achieved success in life.

Arman is an Adelaide City Councillor and has received several honours and awards for his role in community education about domestic and family violence.

The Zahra Foundation financially empowers women who have summoned up the courage to leave their abusive homes, says Arman.

"We help break the cycle of violence by preventing women and their children from returning to their abusive environments. We provide financial counselling, which helps women stay on track."

The foundation also provides grants for women to empower themselves by pursuing their education at university or TAFE.

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Zahra Foundation Australia will use its grant to help fund its existing empowerment programs.

*Arman's nominator says: "Arman is raising awareness within all sectors of our community that domestic and family violence must not be tolerated; the work Arman continues to do is amazing."*



## Arman Abrahamzadeh OAM

Zahra Foundation Australia

*Influencer, Passionate, Caring*

## In his mother's honour

**"We help break the cycle of violence by preventing women and their children from returning to their abusive environments. We provide financial counselling, which helps women stay on track."**

## Your 2020 Finalists

### Ukash Ali Ahmed

#### Multicultural Communities Council of SA Inc

Former refugee Ukash Ali Ahmed has a life story, empathy and passion that enable him to engage with at-risk young people in Adelaide and help them turn their life around.

In his three years at the Multicultural Communities Council of SA, he has been instrumental in helping people find jobs, remain in education, return to school, resolve conflicts with parents, become mentors, engage in volunteer roles and connect to the broader Australia community.

He is deeply involved in his Somalian community and leads soccer and social activities for young people. He has also completed a degree at Flinders University.

### Louanne Johns OAM

#### Camp Quality

Louanne Johns OAM has been helping children with cancer and their families at Camp Quality for almost three decades.

She lives the Camp Quality ethos by doing as much as she can to create positive memories, often with grubby new adventures at weekend camps.

One of her most important roles is being Camp Leader at Family Camp.

This means Louanne helps to plan the two-night, three-day experience for families going through a child's cancer journey.

"I am honoured to be a volunteer at Camp Quality," says Louanne. "In a terrible time, we give families a chance to be a family."

### Smiler TeAo

#### Employment Options Inc

Retired tradesman Smiler TeAo is the kind of wise and caring grandfather figure you want around when you are helping teenagers overcome learning barriers.

The big-hearted volunteer has worked with Youth Space at Employment Options for several years – five days a week during school term.

He enjoys teaching new skills, and everyone loves having him around.

"Kids who haven't done well at school feel good about themselves when they get a chance to make things and learn skills they see as important, like fixing their bike, working on a motorbike or making a piece of furniture," Smiler says.

## Recognising all of our 2020 nominees

**Carolina Correa Posada**  
Portlife Church

**Catherine Kewley**  
Island Care

**David McGrath**  
Semaphore Surf Life Saving

**Peter Zemitis**  
Flinders Park Football Club Inc

**Dianne Haufe**  
Uniting Care Wesley Bowden

**Smiler Teao**  
Employment Options Inc

**Michael Hocking**  
Uniting Care Wesley Bowden

**Ukash Ali Ahmed**  
Multicultural Communities Council Of SA Inc

**Mae Johnson**  
Cure4 Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

**Pep Rigano**  
Australian Company Of Performing Arts

**Arman Abrahamzadeh**  
Zahra Foundation Australia

**Louanne Johns**  
Camp Quality

**Genevieve Handley**  
The Cf Pipeline In Conjunction With Cystic Fibrosis Community Care

**Lani Kahl**  
Raise Foundation

**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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