



Westfield

Local Heroes

2021

Westfield Local Heroes is a community recognition and awards program, designed to shine the spotlight on those people across Australia and New Zealand who make a positive impact to their local community and environment.

Individuals are nominated by their local communities, with the outcome of a public vote determining the three successful 2021 nominees for every Westfield centre.

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Now in its fourth year, we have awarded \$4.88 million to 489 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 2021 nominees for being recognised by their communities and thank them for the important contribution they all make.



Westfield

Bondi Junction

NSW

Chana Kavka started the Sydney Friendship Circle with one volunteer and a big dream. Today she galvanises hundreds of young people with disabilities to engage with each other and society.

The Friendship Circle was launched 15 years ago and offers regular Sunday activities and other opportunities for children, teenagers and young adults, with and without disabilities. A crucial element is the connection fostered between volunteers and the families they help.

Chana has kept a local, family-focused flavour as the Friendship Circle has grown in numbers and reputation. At present, she supports nearly 100 families.

Chana's latest project is a non-profit bakery to give people with disability an opportunity to bake and sell delicious food at the Mark Moran Vaucluse retirement village, creating a connection between young people and elderly people.

"The best thing about my work is that we connect people who may never have connected," says Chana, a former special education and preschool teacher.

Chana says it feels special to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It demonstrates that you have made a material difference in people's lives. "This will inspire our team to keep going. One day everyone will be counted and will have the opportunity to contribute to our collective future."

Chana's nominator says:

"Chana is a Westfield Local Hero because she has inspired hundreds of young people – with disabilities and without – to step up and contribute to a more inclusive society. By personal example and her insistence that everyone is unique and valuable, Chana has made a big difference and empowered so many to see a better future for themselves."



Creating human connection

Chana Kavka

Sydney Friendship Circle

Dedicated, Committed, Talented

"This will inspire our team to keep going. One day everyone will be counted and will have the opportunity to contribute to our collective future."



Moving together to do good

Renuka Fernando

The Run for Good Project

Driven, Committed, Visionary

"Our volunteers fully furnished the homes, put food in the fridge and toys on the children's beds. Seeing the smile on those children's faces will always stay with me."

Renuka (Ren) Fernando is the founder of The Run for Good Project, mobilising local community to raise funds, donate goods or give their time to help women impacted by domestic violence, people experiencing homelessness and people seeking asylum. Ren has also created a community of 130 runners who meet for free weekly sessions at Centennial Park to keep fit and do social good.

In the past 12 months, Ren and her community have provided furniture to over 100 families, shoes to 300 homeless people and more than 1500 gift cards and Opal cards.

Ren's most memorable project was helping 13 refugees settle into local apartments. "Our volunteers fully furnished the homes, put food in the fridge and toys on the children's beds. Seeing the smile on those children's faces will always stay with me," says Ren.

In response to COVID-19, the group quickly collected used mobile phones and laptops to keep asylum seekers connected. They also asked for food donations and became volunteer food delivery drivers.

Ren has found it humbling to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It reassures me that I am on the right track carrying out valuable community work, and it deepens my commitment to launch future."

*Renuka's nominator says:
"Ren is a Westfield Local Hero because she walks the talk and is committed to action, no matter the hurdles, and shows how we can all make a change."*

Inspirational Lisa and Adrian Saunders have harnessed the power of community to keep 1400 tons of computer equipment, appliances, wire and cables out of landfill.

They co-founded the social enterprise Arnie's Recon last year to make it easy for people to recycle their electronics and appliances. Lisa and her team collect any amount of e-waste that people send their way. "Our service is free to make it easy for people to recycle," says Lisa.

Some of what they collect is rehomed. The rest is used for spare parts or recycled as scrap.

At first, Arnie's Recon consisted only of Lisa and Adrian, with Lisa sometimes resorting to asking passers-by to help her load a 30kg washing machine or a 75kg computer server in their van. They now have a team to help, with a focus on creating opportunities for older people.

Thanks to their efforts, people have become excited about recycling and have organised

neighbourhood programs and set up local collection spots.

"I've always been concerned about the environment and wanted to do something tangible with real results," says Lisa.

She is excited that being nominated as a Westfield Local hero is an opportunity to highlight the benefits of recycling and let people know that there is an alternative to landfill.

Lisa's nominator says: "Lisa is a Westfield Local Hero because she is truly inspirational. She started a social enterprise with the simple intention of making the world a better place and has made a huge impact in a short period."



Saving old computers from landfill

Lisa Saunders

Arnie's Recon

Committed, Focused, Determined

"I've always been concerned about the environment and wanted to do something tangible with real results."

Your 2021 Finalists



Ben Higgs

Rise Foundation

Ben Higgs has touched the lives of more than 30,000 people through the Rise Foundation, which he formed to give people the tools to take care of their mental health. He and his fellow mental health trainers work with people from all walks of life, including lawyers, accountants, first responders, underground miners, airport baggage handlers and teachers.

If you need support, please phone
Lifeline: 13 11 14



Elloise Brake

The Royal Hospital for Women Foundation

Clinical psychologist Elloise Brake has helped more than 150 women struggling emotionally before and after having a baby or with other life events. Many of the women Elloise sees are highly anxious about their capacity to be good enough parents. She supports her clients to find their own path through the intense adjustment to new motherhood.



Liam Buckley

The Pinnacle Foundation

Liam Buckley is giving back as the NSW Chair of the Pinnacle Foundation, which provides mentors and scholarships to help young LGBTIQ+ students complete their tertiary education and become role models. Thanks in part to Liam's fundraising, there are 10 NSW scholars in the program this year, joining dozens of achievers from previous years.

Recognising all of our 2021 nominees

Xi Chen

Merci Health

Glenn Miller

Dreams2Live4

Ren Fernando + Ben Stammer

The Run for Good Project

Anita Kolni

Ocean Lovers Alliance

Jo O'Brien

Platinum Pre School – Randwick

Scott Paul Denton

Vaucluse Amateur 12ft Sailing Club

Anthony Cohen

Project Displaced

Rory Robertson

Yalari Limited

Kit Shepherd

Transition Bondi

Emmanuel Constantinou

**Bondi & Districts Chamber
of Commerce**

Elloise Brake

**The Royal Hospital for Women
Foundation**

Tara Hurster

Sheldon Watts

Gerald Stephenson

Surf Life Saving Australia

Martin Morgan

Bondi Anglican

Josival Bispo

Topazio Association

Shterny Dadon

**Australian Jewish Fertility
Network**

Kerry Gonski

**Australian Jewish Fertility
Network**

Rachel Hibbard

The Bondi Centre, SESLHD

Sarah Launt

Bondi Beach. Babes

Luke Currie-Richardson

Feed A Family

Brittany Bloomer

Pound Paws

Muhammad Ghani (Munna), Syed

Huda, Dean Har-el, Jeff Falzon,

Steven Sangsahachart and

Mohammad Sediqi

Secure Corp

Adam Hegedus

**Educating The Future
Australia Limited**

Amy Lynch

Bondi Beach Babes

Donny Galella

Donny Galella

Tara Hurster

The TARA Clinic

Chana Kavka

Sydney Friendship Circle

Emma Jane Hamilton

REELise Incorporated

Nicolas Brown

batyr

Renuka Fernando

Run For Good

Lisa Saunders

Arnie's Recon

Liam Buckley

The Pinnacle Foundation

Ben Higgs

Rise Foundation

**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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SCENTRE GROUP