



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.

Westfield Local Heroes

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

Fountain Gate

VIC

Young Ashvina De Zoysa defied the odds when she launched COOK4CALD to give people in need home-cooked meals.

Ashvina is determined to do something to help the thousands of people in her area of Melbourne who live in poverty. So, she started her youth-run non-profit to gift struggling families a nutritious and tasty meal during summer, traditionally a time for celebration and lots of eating.

The 22-year-old persevered with sourcing donations to make her novel project work, despite the naysayers telling her she was too young and inexperienced to succeed.

Ashvina proudly proved the doubters wrong, delivering red Thai curry, chicken biriyani, butter chicken and other delicious meals in sustainable packaging to 80 people every Sunday throughout last summer.

She was helped by over 50 enthusiastic volunteers, with social media the key to raising the non-profit's profile.

COOK4CALD will run its program again this summer. Ashvina's greatest hope is that her efforts will inspire and empower other young people to tackle disadvantage.

She says it is incredible to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It makes my passion for my cause so much stronger. I will always strive for equality of status for marginalised communities."

Ashvina's nominator says: "Ashvina is a Westfield Local Hero because she dedicates her time to selflessly support others. Her work has significantly impacted families in the south-east."



**Meals made
with young love**

Ashvina De Zoysa

COOK4CALD

Passionate, Inspiring, Selfless

"It makes my passion for my cause so much stronger. I will always strive for equality of status for marginalised communities."



Helping children open up

Matt Runnalls

Mindfull Aus

Empathetic, Authentic, Determined

"It is incredibly meaningful and a great opportunity to further reach and inspire more young champions to recognise the strength of who they are, no matter their challenges or situations."

Matt Runnalls has spent the past seven years equipping thousands of school children with skills to deal with life's challenges through Mindfull Aus.

Matt was motivated to set up his charity after conquering mental health challenges and homelessness and to honour 10 friends he lost to suicide.

Driven by the knowledge that 55 per cent of mental health challenges begin before 14, he created a groundbreaking early intervention program called Healthier Hearts and Lighter Minds for kindergarten and primary school children.

The children are taught the importance of talking about their feelings with their parents, teachers and friends, with eight out of ten describing this as their favourite part of the workshop. In addition, four out of five reported they were encouraged to speak to a professional if they needed help.

The children also learn how to positively control their emotions through gratitude, exercise and mindfulness.

One of Matt's favourite parts is witnessing children as young as four openly describing their emotions.

He feels blessed to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It is incredibly meaningful and a great opportunity to further reach and inspire more young champions to recognise the strength of who they are, no matter their challenges or situations," Matt says.

Matt's nominator says: "Matt is a Westfield Local Hero because he gives absolutely everything personally and professionally to create a healthier and happier future for everyone he meets."

Julia Battams scaled down her successful equestrian business to help more than 50 people with disabilities reach their potential through Equine Pathways Australia (EPA).

Julia established the non-profit so more people with a disability or recovering from an injury could enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of being around horses.

She runs weekend workshops for children and adults, with high-level coaches donating their time to teach them the art of dressage.

The weekends also include sessions with a psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, doctor and nutritionist to help them work towards their physical and riding goals.

Julia and her volunteers continued to support the riders during the COVID-19 pandemic through Zoom clinics.

She can't think of anything more rewarding than watching the riders' skills and physical abilities

improve as they progress through the program.

EPA also supports athletes to compete on the national and world stage at events, including the Paralympics or to find employment in the equine industry.

Julia is proud to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It is certainly not me alone who deserves this; we have so many heroes in our team. We are opening up the equestrian world, which has so many benefits, to people who simply would not have had this opportunity otherwise," she says.

Julia's nominator says: "Julia is a Westfield Local Hero because she has unflagging patience and infectious enthusiasm that leaves the program participants on a natural high. She treats everyone with respect and dignity."



Therapy on horseback

Julia Battams

Equine Pathways

Caring, Inspirational, Wonderful

"We are opening up the equestrian world, which has so many benefits, to people who simply would not have had this opportunity otherwise."

Your 2021 Finalists



Margaret Caffyn

City of Casey TAC L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program

Margaret Caffyn has spent over 1000 hours teaching disadvantaged young people to drive through the TAC Casey L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program. Without her help, many would not get their driver's licence. The program improves the learners' employment prospects and helps them build confidence and social skills.



Kerry Alexander

Melbourne Youth Chorale

Kerry Alexander raised funds and improved communication to save the Melbourne Youth Chorale when it was on the brink of collapse. The 35-year-old organisation doesn't charge tuition fees because it believes every child deserves the gift of music. Thanks to Kerry's efforts, the choristers can continue training and have a chance of a brighter future through a musical career.



Simon Bloomer OAM

Carry On (Victoria)

Simon Bloomer OAM is a 72-year-old Vietnam veteran and has volunteered with Carry On (Victoria) for more than a quarter of a century to help other Australian Defence Force veterans who have been physically or mentally impacted by combat. The charity helps struggling veterans and their families into low-cost and safe housing and on to a brighter future. It also provides financial assistance for household and medical bills.

Recognising all of our 2021 nominees

Gavin Staindl

Pakenham Floorball Club

Jodie Hollis

Cancer Support Angels

Rebecca Little

Share the Dignity Australia

Anne-Marie Pascoe

Baw Baw Food Relief

Beata Stednik

ADRA

Tracey Elizabeth Ryan

Young Pink Sisters

Leah Humphries

Premiers16

Rebecca Nancarrow

Arena Jetz

Anne Atkin OAM

Parkinson's Victoria

Jasbir Singh Suropada

**Sikh Australian Support for
Family Violence**

Judy Martin

The Andrews Centre

Ian Mathewson

**Pakenham Pony Rescue (Not for
Profit) Organisation**

Praveen Raminda Sumanasekera

Gunarath Adikari Mudiyansele
Lysterfield District Trail Riders

Jen Blanch

Minerat college

Marian Antonia Bare

Heathgrove Study Centre

Meghan Porteous

**Casey Asperger Syndrome
Support**

Jemma Dunstan

Barton Primary School

Christopher Poulton

Country Fire Authority

Jennifer D'Costa

ADRA

Kelly Warren

Bk 2 Basics Melbourne

Eve Brkljac

Clean Up Australia Day

Lynn Richards

**Shepherd's Table; Our Lady help
of Christians Narre Warren; St
Vincent de Paul**

Gill Gilbert

Wigsisters

Siva kanteti

Mk business

Franca Heins

**We Care Community
Services Inc**

Daman Srivastava

DDs Kitchen

John McGreal

John Mc Foundation Inc

Jenny Rooney

Backpacks 4 Vic Kids

Kerry Alexander

Melbourne Youth Chorale

Margaret Caffyn

**City of Casey TAC L2P Learner
Driver Mentor Program**

Kay Taranto

Wild Days Wildlife Shelter

Ashvina De Zoysa

Cook4CALD

Simon Bloomer

Carry On (Victoria)

Matt Runnalls

Mindfull Aus

Julia Battams

Equine Pathways Australia

**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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