

WESTFIELD 2021 LOCAL HEROES

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 Jocal 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 West Lakes

Grandmother Katerina Iliopoulos is giving back as a passionate and generous fundraiser for families affected by congenital heart disease.

Over the last three years, she has raised nearly \$20,000 for the charity HeartKids by baking and selling mountains of Greek shortbread.

HeartKids aims to give every child diagnosed with congenital heart disease a fighting chance of leading a long and fulfilling life. The charity funds research, advocates for people with the disease and offers guidance, information and support throughout their journey.

Katerina was inspired to support the charity after her granddaughter benefited from their support to travel to Melbourne for surgery.

Thankfully, Zoe made a quick recovery and is now a healthy and active little girl. But some children require multiple surgeries and trips to Melbourne. HeartKids also provides the families with peer support once they return home, which is often the hardest period.

"Being able to support others, while in turn receiving support, has created a strong sense of community and reduced the feeling of being alone when it comes to caring for a heart kid," Katerina says.

She is surprised to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "I am delighted to do my part, alongside many other supporters and volunteers," she says.

Katerina's nominator says: "Katerina is a Westfield Local Hero because her passion for supporting families during their child's heart surgery ensures they receive information packs as well as the practical, financial and emotional support they need to navigate their heart journey."

# Showing love through baking

## Katerina Iliopoulos

HeartKids Limited – South Australia Division Inspiring, Passionate, Giving

"Being able to support others, while in turn receiving support, has created a strong sense of community and reduced the feeling of being alone when it comes to caring for a heart kid."

## Supporting hospital families

## **Colleen Billows**

Ronald McDonald House South Australia Dedicated, Committed, Caring

"I am always amazed to observe the strength of parents in overcoming their children's health problems and the capabilities of children in accepting their situation and surviving." Inspirational 85-year-old Colleen Billow has been supporting families with seriously ill children for more than two decades.

Colleen is a dedicated volunteer at Ronald McDonald House (RMH) South Australia. The house looks after out-of-town families while their children receive treatment at the nearby Adelaide Women's and Children's Hospital. She treats all visitors like family and is known as Nana Colleen.

"I am always amazed to observe the strength of parents in overcoming their children's health problems and the capabilities of children in accepting their situation and surviving," she says.

Colleen runs the dinner program twice a week, where she leads the volunteers who cook a meal for the families. She also visits on weekends, cheering up families with her famous cupcakes and slices.

In 2019, at 83 years of age, Colleen abseiled down the 33-storey Westpac building to raise money for RMH. "Everyone said you're crazy, but I had decided it was nothing compared with the turmoil some of our families face," she says.

Colleen feels humbled to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "As a volunteer at RMH for 21 years, I am sure that I have learnt much more from our families than I have ever given. The families we support are my inspiration and motivation to continue as a volunteer."

Colleen's nominator says: "Colleen is a Westfield Local Hero because despite being 83-years-old, she always puts the families she supports first, no matter how tired or busy she may be. She makes a huge difference to families going through great hardship and brightens up their day."

### Alana Giaccio uses dance and cheerleading to give people with disabilities an opportunity to enjoy exercise.

She started her All Abilities Cheer and Dance studio so people in Adelaide have an opportunity to enjoy inclusive and accessible sports. Her 92 students are aged three to fifty-five.

"I'm proud to offer a unique sport to people who might not have had the chance before," says Alana.

"It's amazing to see parents and carers watch their loved ones participating, making friends, developing new skills and, most importantly, having fun."

The confidence-boosting classes help her students build their communication skills, balance and spatial awareness and learn how to work in a team in a safe and supportive environment. They can progress to competition classes and participate in the disability section of mainstream dance and cheerleading competitions. Alana's studio is inspired by her two younger brothers, who have Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disability.

She was a generous sister and supported them when they grew up, but she knew they were missing out on opportunities for fun and exercise.

Alana is delighted to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It means my dream is recognised as valuable in the community. It means my lifetime of disability experience is benefiting the community. It has confirmed my career purpose and has motivated me to expand."

Alana's nominator says: "Alana is a Westfield Local Hero because she has always shown compassion and kindness towards her brothers and the wider community. She has a strong sense of inclusion and fairness and is a passionate disability advocate. Alana is a wonderful role model through her selfless personality and love in her heart for all." Dancing with her stars

## Alana Giaccio

All Abilities Cheer and Dance Inclusive, Selfless, Genuine

"It's amazing to see parents and carers watch their loved ones participating, making friends, developing new skills and, most importantly, having fun."

# Your 2021 Finalists



Ella Stratton HAS Foundation

Ella Stratton makes the most difficult times a little gentler for families of children with serious illnesses. She is the founder of the HAS Foundation, which she created in memory of her son Hunter, who passed away when he was 12. Her mission is to raise awareness about paediatric palliative care and give practical support and memorable gifts to families across South Australia.



## Marigold White Uniity

Marigold White is dedicated to building intergenerational connections in her community and helping people to feel a sense of belonging. As a migrant to Australia, Marigold knows first-hand how important family-like connections are. This inspired her to co-found Uniity, a not-for-profit that runs events and activities where people can make lifelong friends.



## Amy Rowe Project Potential Adelaide

Altruistic therapeutic educator Amy Rowe provides a well-rounded education to people with intellectual disabilities so they can live an independent and fulfilling life. Amy founded Project Potential Adelaide in 2019 to provide one-on-one lessons to help people navigate their world. She teaches students of all abilities general life skills that are not always covered in school education, like catching a bus, cooking or borrowing a library book.

# Recognising all of our 2021 nominees

Stephanie Breden
Semaphore Surf Lifesaving Club

Keith Ridgway Falie Volunteers

Genevieve Handley Cystic Fibrosis Community Care

Behzad Pourdarab Henley Surf Life Saving Club

Wilson Kelly Seaton High School

Dinah Thomasset Villagehood Australia

Christine Robertson Lost Pets of South Australia

Amy Rowe Project Potential Adelaide

Nasir Hussain Muslim Australian Connections of SA (MACSA)

June Isabel Duthie Osborne Over 50's

Eman Rahim Heart & Soul Group

Tricia Flowers Enlighten Education Colleen Billows Ronald McDonald House South Australia

Liza Jankowski SIDS and Kids South Australia

Colin Williams Rotary / RYDA - Road Safety Education

Kerry Machado Wildlife Nurse SA

Ella Stratton HAS Foundatioon

Alana Giaccio All Abilities Cheer and Dance

Claire Foord

Still Aware

Marigold White **Uniity** 

Katerina Iliopoulos HeartKids Limited – South Australia Division 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

westfield.com.au/local-heroes westfield.co.nz/local-heroes



SCENTRE GROUP