



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

Parramatta

NSW

Christine (Chris) Cleary goes out onto the streets almost every night to provide free medical services to homeless and at-risk people in western Sydney.

Chris founded her StreetMed charity in 2014 and leads her fellow volunteers to do blood pressure and other health checks and speak to people about their mental health. They also share smiles and shoulders to cry on, and hand out hot meals, blankets, toiletries and food for pets.

Part of Chris's reward and motivation is that the people she helps trust her enough to let her into their lives. "Every single day, I get to spend time with society's most forgotten, yet most resilient human beings," she says.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when most organisations were winding down their services, relentless Chris was out every night, often with her 14-year-old son, ensuring all their homeless friends were safe, fed and cared for.

Chris has twice been named Hills District Citizen of the Year and is the 2020 Rotary Inspirational Woman of the Year. She feels privileged to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "Not all days are rainbows with the work that I do, but being nominated by my peers will help me on the tough days," she says.

Chris's nominator says: "Chris is a Westfield Local Hero because she fights tirelessly to better the lives of society's most vulnerable and forgotten. Chris is an absolute inspiration to not only those she helps and those that adore her, but to every single person she crosses paths with. I am in awe of this strong, amazing woman."



Checking health and giving friendship

Christine Cleary

StreetMed Inc.

Compassionate, Caring, Generous

"Every single day, I get to spend time with society's most forgotten, yet most resilient human beings."



Taking the hospital to patients

Dr Ruth Parsell

CareFlight

Dedicated, Passionate, Empowering

"It is so rewarding to see people who are so unwell go on to return to their loved ones and their usual activities."

Trauma specialist Dr Ruth Parsell provides the best possible care to critically ill and injured people in Sydney and beyond.

Ruth is deputy medical director at CareFlight, a charity that takes the emergency department to the patient in a state-of-the-art medical helicopter.

Ruth is a former paramedic who was inspired to study medicine because she was so impressed by the work of the CareFlight team, who are based at Westmead.

Ruth provides a rapid diagnosis of the patient's condition and takes quick action, often delivering life-saving care with her team in the air on the way to hospital.

Ruth's incentive is the knowledge that she saves lives and prevents disability. This is especially rewarding when the patient is a child. "It is so rewarding to see people who are so unwell go on to return to their loved ones and their usual activities," she says.

Ruth's colleagues see her as a role model who proves that women can successfully combine raising a family and a challenging career in aeromedical medicine.

She was surprised to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "I hope the nomination raises awareness of what we do. It certainly motivates me to continue to train hard to be better, undertake research projects and train others in our field."

Ruth's nominator says: "Ruth is a Westfield Local Hero because she is a fantastic role model, paving the way for women in aeromedicine. As CareFlight's first female deputy medical director, Ruth shares her passion for medicine, empowering the next generation of CareFlight doctors. Onboard CareFlight's rapid response helicopter, Ruth saves the lives of critically injured people every day."

Seethalakshmi (Seetha) Srinivasan helps migrant parents settle into a new life and education system and is a pillar of support for isolated women.

As community liaison officer at Rydalmere Public School, she coordinates various programs to make parents feel included, empowered and confident to thrive.

Seetha is an immigrant herself and can empathise with how difficult the parents can find it to start a new life in a new country with different laws, a new language and new cultural expectations.

She slowly introduces parents to Australian culture through a variety of programs. These include English classes for migrant women, bubs and books, walking groups and pathways to employment.

"Ten women found jobs through our programs," Seetha says. "I feel proud and thankful that I can help."

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, she has supported mothers with home-schooling and technology. One of the challenges was the cost of masks, so she organised a workshop where 30 mums learned how to make fabric masks for their families.

Seetha is delighted to be nominated as a Westfield Local Hero. "It is an acknowledgement of the importance of my work. With this nomination, I am more encouraged to do my best to enrich the lives of people in the community, especially the ones who are vulnerable."

Seetha's nominator says: "Seetha is a Westfield Local Hero because she changes and improves the lives of the people around her. She genuinely cares for her community and leaves no stone unturned till she can support and help them. She is a strong-willed individual who has a clear vision of what her community needs."



Helping migrant parents settle in

Seethalakshmi Srinivasan

Rydalmere Public School Community Hub

Committed, Focused, Approachable

"Ten women found jobs through our programs, I feel proud and thankful that I can help."

Your 2021 Finalists



Natty Osorio Diaz

The Smith Family

Natty Osorio Diaz is a passionate supporter of over 300 families and 600 students. She's in her dream job at The Smith Family, where she helps families access holistic educational support, including literacy, numeracy and technology programs, mentors and financial assistance for educational items. After hours, Natty takes her community spirit to the next level and volunteers as a refugee and asylum seeker support worker.



Marnel LaGarde

Parramatta/Holroyd Family Support Inc.

Marnel LaGarde knows no bounds when it comes to her community and has spent 35 years doing whatever she can to make a positive difference for local families. Since 1985, Marnel has been a devoted member of the Parramatta/Holroyd Family Support team and is now CEO. In addition, she delivers home-cooked meals to elderly neighbours, refurbishes bicycles for disadvantaged children and arranges donations of second-hand furniture for struggling families.



Helen Williams

Hope Connect Inc

Support worker Helen Williams is tenacious in her efforts to improve the lives of families in the most deprived suburbs of Parramatta. For the past 16 years, Helen has devoted herself to the Non-government organisation Hope Connect. She creates a safe space for families to share the most private and painful parts of their life and is known for her caring approach to helping people survive and thrive.

Recognising all of our 2021 nominees

Safa Majidi
batyr

Patrick Soosay
Harris Park Community Centre

Cassie Ma
Commonwealth Bank of Australia

Khiara Renae Lizzio
Soaring Eagles Youth LTD

Avijit Sarkar
Natraj Academy

Kalanjay Dhir
Pari

Justine Hanna
YOUFIT

Georgina
Australian Support Resources

Mitchell Woellner
UTS Gators Gridiron

Mrs Cheryl Webber
Endeavour Industries Goulburn Inc.

Georgina (George) Perry
Specific Learning Difficulties Association of NSW

Sayed G Karimi
Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association

Ashwina Beeharry
Westmead Hospital

Marian Casey
St John Ambulance NSW

Steve Shah
MPN-Mate Research Foundation

Carmen Platt
The Generous and the Grateful

Sujan Selventhiran
Tamil Resource Centre

Priyanka Bromhead
we are the mainstream

Narelle Barker
SchoolAid

Andre Kleiberg
Eastwood Thornleigh District Tennis Association Inc.

Jasmine Issa
Project Generosity Inc.

John Brumby
TAD (Technical Aid to the Disabled)

Varun Bapat
AUSCAP Australian Civil Air Patrol

Nicole Stacy King
Riding for the Disabled Association NSW Tall Timbers Centre

Umar Khiyam
Australian Afghan Hassanian Youth Association

Michael Cauchi
RuffTRACK Limited

David Johnston
AUSCAP Australian Civil Air Patrol

Takyu Leong
Toongabbie Legal Centre Inc

Safa Alkhulaifawi
Marvel

Saira Mohammad
Accessible Diversity Services Initiative Limited (ADSI)

Nazila Nosratieh
Green dental

Duy Quang Nguyen
Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA)

Gina Atlas
Help for Hirschsprung's Disease

Patrick Uy
Bar Lionz

Nitin Fernandez
Maslow

Seethalakshmi Srinivasan
Rydalmere Public School Community Hub

Natty Osorio Diaz
The Smith Family

Dr Ruth Parsell
CareFlight

Helen Williams
Hope Connect Inc

Marnel LaGarde
Parramatta/Holroyd Family Support Inc.

Ela Pinar
Story Factory

Ziyad serhan & Tareq Ahmed
Educaid

Jason Sotiris
Supertee

Afaf Al-Shammari
Think+Do Tank Foundation

James Younan
The Banksia Project

Christine Cleary
StreetMed Inc.

**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

The background features a large, abstract graphic composed of overlapping, rounded shapes in various shades of red and white. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

westfield.com.au/local-heroes

westfield.co.nz/local-heroes

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SCENTRE GROUP