



Learning for Life student, Lee

Real People, Real Stories
Thank you for changing lives through sponsorship.



Autumn 2019

everyone's family

Your sponsorship helps students overcome barriers



Thank you for being a sponsor. You are empowering disadvantaged students to reach their potential!

Yet that's not all your sponsorship does. It also removes barriers. Nothing is more disheartening for students than to be held back by their circumstances,

despite their best efforts at school. Perhaps they don't have the text books they need, money for excursions or anyone to help them with homework.

As a sponsor, you provide wrap-around education support that helps your student to thrive at school. And it really is life-changing. Thanks to sponsors like you, in 2017-18, we were able to support 42,841 young Australians through the *Learning for Life* sponsorship program.

I hope you enjoy all of the stories inside. Thank you for giving disadvantaged students the chance to be their best at school.



Dr Lisa O'Brien
Chief Executive Officer

94

Communities in which *Learning for Life* programs are delivered.

42,841

Learning for Life sponsorship recipients, up 10% on the prior year.



20.6%

of students on sponsorship (8,822) in 2017 – 18 identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, up from 19.6% last year.

THANK YOU!

Our supporters donated **\$3.76 million** to our Christmas Appeal, which will provide **8,952** children with the vital help they need in 2019.

“Now I’m one of the top students” – Shiva, 12

When Shiva was six years old, he and his mum fled to Australia from an Indian refugee camp seeking a better life. Starting school in a new country was challenging.

“I couldn’t speak a word of English. It was just the two of us with no other family support,” said Shiva.

“When we first arrived my grades were Ds and a few Cs. Mum wasn’t able to help with my studies.”

Many disadvantaged children start school already behind. Without access to early learning resources, or the essential items they need for school, they often feel like they don’t fit in and can’t keep up in class. As each year passes, without support the gap can widen between these children and their classmates.

That’s why sponsors like you are so important. You give children in need the chance to make the most of their education. For Shiva, that support changed everything.

“*Learning for Life* not only helps with my school costs (books, uniforms and activities) but also gives me access to programs to improve my studies. So that’s where the *Learning Club* and *student2student* provided the extra education support.

“In two years, my reading age went from eight to 12. I understand my homework now, and can complete it in one day instead of five thanks to the *Learning Club*.”

“Now I’m one of the top students in Year 6, and School Captain.”

Shiva has been inspired to become a teacher. He also wants to be a student buddy and help other children learn to read, the way they helped him. Shiva’s mum is so proud - she’s always smiling now. Families like Shiva’s can now see a better future, thanks to the support of our donors.



Shiva, *student2student* participant

student2student evaluation 2017 – 2018



of students improved their reading ability.



of students reported that they now find reading more enjoyable

Did you know?

The reading gap in primary school between the lowest socio-economic students and the highest socio-economic students is equivalent to almost three years of schooling¹

¹ Department of Education, Science and Training (2005). Teaching Reading National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. Commonwealth of Australia

Sponsorship gave Lachlan a clear goal

Everything shifted for 15-year-old Lachlan when his parents split up. His mum, Lynette, was raising four children on her own and Lachlan's older sister had ongoing health issues. It was a really hard time for the whole family – and that's when Lynette turned to The Smith Family.

“Financially, things were quite tough,” Lynette said. “Especially getting the kids to school, with uniforms, books, and all that goes with it. It wasn't the easiest.

“So I got put in contact with The Smith Family and we got onto the *Learning for Life* sponsorship program. It made a big difference!

“Without sponsorship I would have struggled with school fees and school uniforms. School books are expensive every year for each kid!”

Having school essentials really helped Lachlan keep up at school but the sponsorship support didn't stop there. By Year 10 he had trouble choosing his subjects and was struggling to decide on a career path for his future. He needed more guidance than Lynette was able to give him.

Thanks to sponsorship, Lachlan was able to take part in our online mentoring program *iTrack*. It's where students in Years 9 to 11 receive personalised advice about study and career options from trained volunteer mentors. For Lachlan, the program couldn't have come at a better time.

Lachlan, *iTrack* participant



“The experience I had with *iTrack* was very helpful. We discussed what sort of careers I wanted to pursue and what they would entail,” said Lachlan.

“My mentor helped me to figure out the things I really wanted to do.”

“I am interested in civil or mechanical engineering but since talking to my mentor I think that I would really like to become a carpenter or builder.”

Research shows that completing Year 12 (or equivalent) increases a young person’s likelihood of continuing their studies, and finding employment.

It also leads to higher annual earnings for individuals, greater community involvement and economic benefits for our country as a whole.¹

Having an aspiration for the future can be a key motivator for continuing with school. That’s why learning programs like *iTrack* are so important. And Lynette is so grateful to sponsors like you who are helping her children to get the most out of their education.

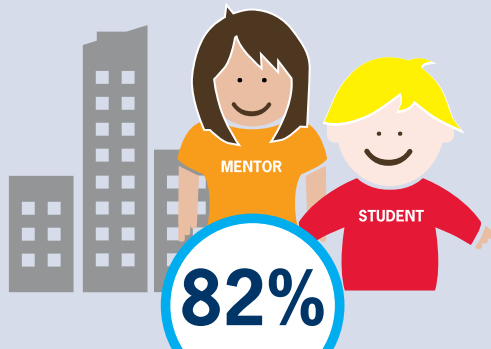
“Education is the foundation that they’re going to build on for the rest of their lives. If my kids get a solid grounding now, then it’s a great platform to move forward as they go into their adult years.”

With your help, students now have other people that they can turn to for support. The learning programs, that your donation has helped fund, assist students to focus on their studies and guide them through some of life’s challenges.

¹ Access Economics 2005, *The economic benefit of increased participation in education and training*. Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Business Council of Australia, Sydney.

***iTrack* evaluation 2017 – 2018**

The *iTrack* program pairs students in Years 9 to 11 with an adult mentor who provides guidance about study and career options.



of students agreed their mentor helped them understand more about how they can reach their career goals.



agreed that their mentor helped them feel more confident about their future job, career and study options.

“The volunteering experience has been absolutely fulfilling” – Beryl

After 21 amazing years as one of our volunteers, Beryl has decided to retire. Over the decades she has helped to transform the lives of countless students. We are so very grateful to Beryl for her generous spirit and selfless work. Here's her story.

“I was a teacher in music and the arts. When I retired, I didn't want to just stop teaching and not have specific things to do. I felt I had energy and I wanted to put it into the community in some way,” said Beryl.

“So I sought out an organisation that I thought was really credible and that led me to make inquiries with The

Smith Family. I started off in reception and helping with the Christmas Toy and Book pack distribution.

“I didn't expect that my role at The Smith Family would increase so much over the years. But I was delighted that it did!

Beryl with *Learning for Life* students at a graduation ceremony



“I became involved with community relations. A lot of that was speaking to community groups. I particularly loved talking to children in schools.

“And through the *student2student* reading program, I partnered with a school for fourteen years as the supervisor. I oversaw 10 to 14 students each year in that program and I loved it.

“I have also really enjoyed meeting people. Speaking with other volunteers at lunchtime and knowing their varied backgrounds was very enriching. I just feel so privileged to have been able to have this experience after I finished working!”

As an ex-teacher, Beryl knows the importance of education in helping students to break the cycle of disadvantage. And she repeatedly saw the tangible impacts of her efforts in students’ lives.

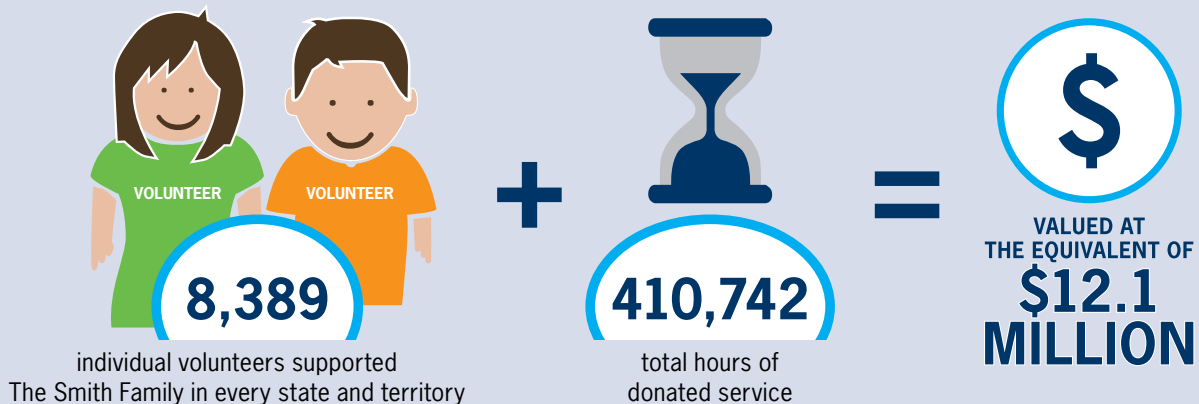
“So many disadvantaged young people drop out of school because they lack personal support or the finances to move forward. It’s unfair that everyone in Australia doesn’t have the same opportunities,” said Beryl.

“Education is the basic thing that students need so they can choose what they would like to do in the future. I’m just amazed when I look at the results some of The Smith Family students have gone on to achieve, such as their Masters at university!

“The volunteering experience has been absolutely fulfilling. There’s such respect between staff and volunteers and I’ve learned many new skills. I can hardly believe where the 21 years have gone.”

Thank you to our volunteers

Every year, we are grateful that so many compassionate people choose to help The Smith Family by volunteering their time and skills. Over the 2017-18 financial year:



Lee almost gave up on her education

When she started Year 10, *Learning for Life* student Lee was at high risk of cutting her education short. Health challenges in primary school meant she missed many days while she was in hospital. By high school, she was so far behind it was hard for Lee to catch up, and this affected her motivation.

“I’ve struggled with maths since primary school. And then in high school I failed English because I was slacking off,” said Lee.

“By Year 10, I had lots of stress. My grandpa was battling cancer. Later that year my dad and brother had a car crash and a close friend died. It was a lot to deal with.

“I was thinking about leaving school early.”

The feeling that graduating high school is an impossible goal is all too common for disadvantaged students. Last year, we released the first Australian study *Attendance lifts achievement: Building the evidence base to improve student outcomes*, which demonstrates the relationship between school attendance, achievement in English or maths, school completion and post-school work or study.

It showed that 75 per cent of students with high attendance in Year 7 completed Year 12. This compared to only 48 per cent of those with very low attendance.

Our research also demonstrated that it is essential to provide targeted and timely support to improve students’ low school attendance and below-satisfactory achievement in English and maths.

For Lee, receiving support was the deciding factor that kept her at school.

“Mum called The Smith Family and that’s how I was



Lee with mum Karen and dad Craig

connected with a sponsor and I joined *Learning Club*,” said Lee.

Learning Clubs provide safe and supportive out-of-school learning environments where students get help with their homework from trained volunteer tutors like Lee’s tutor, Anne (pictured).

Read the full research report on our website:

thesmithfamily.com.au/research



“Since *Learning Club*, I feel more confident with maths and I know how to do homework,” said Lee.

“Now I am on track to graduate Year 12. My goal is to become a qualified hairdresser and own a salon.”

Lee’s parents, Karen and Craig both left school before graduating. So they hadn’t felt equipped to help Lee succeed at school. But our learning programs that your donations go towards have really opened doors for Lee. And Karen and Craig couldn’t be more grateful.

“As parents our hearts were breaking because we couldn’t give our children the support they needed. We just wanted to see our kids go above and beyond with their education and happiness,” said Karen.



Hear from Lee’s mum, Karen, in this video:
thesmithfamily.com.au/karen

Your support really means so much for students like Lee and her family. Thank you!

Jon's gift will keep helping students in years to come

Having grown up on a farm, Jon knows what it is like to weather tough times. He's never forgotten that there are many people out there struggling. So ten years ago, Jon started helping disadvantaged students through The Smith Family. Now he is making sure students can keep overcoming barriers well into the future.

Jon, Smith Family supporter



“I tend to give to local charities because there are lots of people who need help in Australia. I got involved with the *Learning for Life* program because it was easy to understand and I could see it worked,” said Jon.

“I must be heading towards ten years supporting the sponsorship program now. I started with one student and it grew from there to six now, including a university student.”

Over the years, Jon’s sponsored students have achieved many milestones. Jon wanted to be certain that even the youngest ones would have every chance to finish their education. So he decided to include a gift to The Smith Family in his Will.

“The bequest was really simple to organise. Actually, the young lawyer who helped me update my Will happened to be a former *Learning for Life* student!” said Jon.

Jon knew his gift would create more possibilities for disadvantaged students. Nothing demonstrated this more than attending a graduation ceremony for 30 *Learning for Life* students last year.

“Most of the students were the first in their family to reach that level of education. Among the Year 12 graduates there were students going on to study medical science, law, social work, teaching, event management and more. It was pretty impressive,” said Jon.

“It’s an unfortunate reality that if you don’t at least have Year 12 under your belt, it’s much harder to get a job. I want my gift to keep sponsoring my students until they complete their education.”

How to leave a gift in your will

If you would like your legacy to change the lives of Australian children in need, please think about leaving a gift in your will to The Smith Family. Your gift will give future generations of disadvantaged young Australians the support they need to get the most out of their education and change their lives.

As Jon found out, leaving a gift in your will is as simple as 1,2,3.

1. Decide what kind of gift you wish to leave,
2. Seek professional advice from a solicitor or Trustee Company to write your will,
3. Speak to your family and loved ones to let them know of your intentions.

For more information about leaving such a generous legacy please visit www.thesmithfamily.com.au/bequests or contact Jakki Travers, Gifts in Wills Manager, on 02 9085 7118.

Thanks to you, students are thriving

Each year, students are invited to take part in our Art & Writing competition, giving them the chance to express their creativity. We'd like to share with you this beautiful entry by 12-year-old Richez.



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