



Volunteer Anna with student Max at Learning Club

Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives.

Autumn 2022



Creating better
futures together



everyone's family

Together we can help our students change their futures

I am so proud to have joined The Smith Family team as CEO. For many years I have thought of the organisation as a 'national treasure' because of the difference made in helping children to participate fully in their education. This purpose deeply resonates with me, as someone who is the first in their family to receive a tertiary education. A great education is something I'd like every child we support to receive because it has the power to change their life.

From its very beginning in 1922, The Smith Family has been a champion for children in need. Our dedicated volunteers like you have stepped up with compassion and generosity. I want to assure you that you have helped students get practical and tangible support to help them overcome the barriers they face. I want to thank you for this.

Throughout 2022, we'll be celebrating 100 years of having a lasting impact on the lives of young people across this nation. But we have much more work to do, because one in six children and young people is living in poverty in Australia. Sadly, the impacts of their poverty can flow on to affect them at school and stop them from realising their potential. This is why your support matters so much.

In this edition, we have some amazing students for you to meet. They're forging ahead thanks to the unique support you bring as a volunteer. Young people like Tyrell.

Thanks to the support of his family, his teacher and The Smith Family, he was able to stay in school and keep on track towards a professional rugby league career.

And Ahmad, who needed people in his life like you, who could help him believe university was a real possibility.

Thank you to all our volunteers, both those working directly in programs as well as those supporting our operations in events, corporate support, or critical administration. I look forward to being part of the life-changing work of The Smith Family. Together, I know we can help many more students create the better futures they deserve.

Best wishes,



Doug Taylor
Chief Executive Officer



NATIONAL 16-22 MAY 2022
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Better Together **WEEK**

The incredible power of a sponsor's kind words

A letter to a child doing it tough is a powerful thing. Recently, a surprise letter from a *Learning for Life* sponsor to their student had a huge impact.

The letter to Yvonne, 11, arrived by post. It was a lovely surprise! The letter was jam packed with encouragement and kind words. Yvonne was thrilled. She took it to her *Learning Club* to show her friends and tutors. She – and all the other students – decided to write to their sponsors to show their gratitude.

The group wrote and decorated beautiful cards. With the help of their volunteer tutors, they filled out a form to enclose where they'd written their ideal jobs.

“Yvonne has big dreams. She wants to be a policewoman. Or a doctor,” Yvonne’s mum Safi says.

It’s thanks to volunteers like you that Yvonne could get help with reading, writing and spelling at her *Learning Club*. It gives her the chance to share positive experiences with other students and her tutors too, like getting a letter from her sponsor.

Safi explains life today would be very hard without the support she receives from volunteers at her *Learning Club*.

“At *Learning Club*, Yvonne has been doing really well with reading and writing. Her attitude to learning is really changing. She told me she’s enjoying it.” – Safi, Yvonne’s mum



Yvonne, *Learning for Life* student

Thank you for lighting the path for students like Ahmad

Like many children of immigrants, Ahmad has straddled two worlds. His parents settled here from Iraq. They struggled with a new language and culture. When Ahmad was seven, his father died from lung cancer. His mother had to raise five children with little money and few skills to help with his schooling.

Ahmad, former iTrack student



“My family wasn’t the well-off type,” Ahmad says. “Looking back, I’m quite shocked at how my mother managed. It must have been very hard when she didn’t understand the language.”

The stark reality is children like Ahmad can face more hurdles in the school years than many of us in a lifetime. It’s no surprise that, when left to find their way without support, many get trapped in the poverty cycle.

Fortunately, that wasn’t the case for Ahmad and his siblings thanks to incredible volunteers like you.

Because of you, Ahmad could get the learning support he needed through The Smith Family’s learning programs. His mother embraced opportunities for him to get help she could not provide.

“I remember The Smith Family always being by my side when I was a little kid in primary school,” says Ahmad. “It helped mum a lot.”

In senior high school, Ahmad needed help with career planning and higher education. He wanted to be a lawyer. “I liked legal studies,” he says. Ahmad’s network was small and no one he knew could give careers guidance.

That’s why *iTrack* was remarkable. Over 18 weeks, Ahmad got study and career advice from his volunteer mentor, Steven, a lawyer. Through our secure online chat program, Steven gave Ahmad input on his post-school plans. He helped him work towards his goal of university.

“*iTrack* was fun, it was a great experience. It was the first chance I’d had to make career networks.”

Ahmad loved that he could ask Steven any questions about the corporate world. His mentor was so friendly and approachable. “It was a career-based relationship but still very, very supportive,” says Ahmad.

Ahmad is now 20 and in the last year of a Bachelor of Business degree. He didn’t get the HSC marks for law, but Ahmad isn’t letting that stop him from continuing to pursue his dream.

Ahmad recently finished a business development and marketing internship at King & Wood Mallesons law firm. This was through its School of Opportunity partnership with The Smith Family. It gave him real world experience in both business and law – and a valuable chance to see which he wants to pursue as a career. And it helped that his *iTrack* mentor has shared what to expect in a big firm.

Thanks to volunteers like you, Ahmad knows there are good people who can help him stay on the pathway towards his dream.

“Looking back, I’m grateful my mentor gave me insights into the corporate workplace and what it would be like to work as a lawyer,” says Ahmad. “I can see how valuable it was and I’m so thankful for Smith Family supporters who made it possible.”

Why we volunteer at Learning Club

Two passionate Learning Club volunteers explain how they started – and why they keep coming back.

After devoting her career to early childhood education, Kathy was looking for a way to give back as a volunteer.

She discovered local Smith Family *Learning Clubs* were recruiting volunteer tutors. It was the right fit as Kathy knew she had skills and experience to keep kids interested in learning.

“It was exactly what I was looking for,” she says.

For two years now, Kathy has helped students at a *Learning Club* in Perth. She enjoys helping students expand on what they’re learning at school.

“It astounds me how inspiring these kids are,” she says.

Kathy tries to make *Learning Club* exciting and attractive for the students. She recently had fun putting together a box of bark and leaves in which she also hid small toys for her students. They then used chopsticks to search for the toys in the box. The activity develops their fine motor skills and gets them interested and involved as they search for the hidden treasures.

“I like to think of ways to engage the students,” she says.

Kathy finds it rewarding to see just how eager the students are to learn.

“I like hearing from them and finding out what interests them,” she says. “And I like sharing my passion, enjoyment and excitement for learning.

“The children come in ready and raring to go.”

Kathy is a member of the Rockingham Sound Day VIEW Club where she met Anna, another passionate *Learning Club* volunteer.

A few years after joining VIEW, Anna’s husband passed away. As her grandchildren were grown up, she was looking for a new way to keep busy and make a difference.

Anna’s curiosity was sparked when she heard a local *Learning Club* needed volunteer tutors, but she lacked confidence. Anna is originally from Croatia, so English is not her first language. She had been a paralegal in her career, not a teacher.

“Although I’m an experienced mother and grandmother, I didn’t know if I would have the skills to be a suitable volunteer,” she says.

Despite these doubts, Anna trained to become a *Learning Club* tutor. For two years now, she has tutored students after school one day a week.

“Some children have difficulty learning and concentrating,” she says. “But it’s really rewarding. I can be another person in a child’s life who cares about them and their learning.”

Anna loves helping at *Learning Club* and suggests others who are interested should give it a try.

“The schools are always looking for volunteers,” she says. “If I can make the slightest difference to a child’s life then it’s worth it.”

Volunteers Kathy and Anna with student Max at Learning Club



“If I can make the slightest difference to a child’s life then it’s worth it.” – Anna

Pat reflects on 100 years of kindness

Pat's grandfather lived to help people.

When Pat was just three years old, her mother died. Along with her brother Ray and sister Liz, she went to live with her grandfather. Her grandfather Herbert would encourage them to give away toys and books to those in need. And nearly 100 years ago, he was fundamental in the early days of The Smith Family.

"My grandparents gave us a wonderful childhood," says Pat who is 95. "My grandfather instilled the importance of doing good. He was such a generous and kind man."

Pat's grandfather was aware of the urgent need to do more in his local community to support those struggling with disadvantage. Pat has warm memories of early Smith Family fundraisers with him.

"There were big concerts for the children and all people at Christmas time," she says. "I went to these as a child. They had a magician. I can still remember that!"

And Pat took her grandfather's example to heart. She's given 50 years of volunteering to the Red Cross. Pat's daughter Diana followed the calling too and is part of her local VIEW Club, raising funds for The Smith Family and deeply connected to our work.

"The Smith Family has come a long way," says Pat. "It's had an amazing legacy."

It's this tradition of giving that Pat will continue with her amazing decision to leave a Gift in her Will to The Smith Family. Because of people like



Pat, future generations of children in need will get support at school to build a better future.

"It is a nice way to honour my grandfather and the beginnings of The Smith Family," says Pat. "It's wonderful that it can continue."

"My grandfather instilled the importance of doing good. He was such a generous and kind man." – Pat

THE SMITH



FAMILY

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For 100 years, The Smith Family has been working to improve the lives of children in need.

For the last 30 years, it has supported children living with disadvantage to make the most of their education and create positive lives for themselves.

We asked one of our talented students to create an artwork that captures what The Smith Family's centenary means to them.

Year 11 *Learning for Life* student Dominic created this artwork. Dominic is passionate about art, and has taken part in The Smith Family's *SmArts* program over the last two years, extending his education aspirations and career knowledge of the creative arts.



Creating better futures together

Volunteers like you helped Tyrell Sloan break the cycle

The day Tyrell Sloan, 19, found out he would fulfil his life's dream and debut as a professional rugby league player for the St George Illawarra Dragons, the first person he called was his Nan.

"It was my Nan who brought me up," the proud Wiradjuri man explains. "My dad was only 16 when I was born. My mum and dad were in and out of jail. Nan fought for my custody through DOCS. My Nan is my rock. Everything I do, I do for her and my brother."



Tyrell, former *Learning for Life* student

Nan Colleen desperately wanted to be there for Tyrell and his big brother Ashley. But her selfless decision to take them in pushed her into hardship. They just scraped by.

"Honestly, I don't know how she did it," Tyrell says.

As an older carer, it was also hard for Colleen to give Tyrell all the at-home learning support he needed to achieve his potential.

But when Tyrell was eight, this star-in-the-making was invited to get support through our learning programs that are only possible thanks to volunteers like you. Tyrell especially enjoyed our *student2student* program, where he'd practice reading each week with his student volunteer buddy Ethan on the phone.

"I have really good memories of doing *student2student*. Reading out loud to my volunteer buddy Ethan really helped me learn better."
– Tyrell

“I have really good memories of doing *student2student*. After school, I’d be out playing footy on the oval and at four o’clock, Nan would come out on the front veranda and yell out that Ethan was on the phone for me. Reading out loud to Ethan really helped me learn better,” he remembers.

The teenage years were tough for Tyrell. He moved from school to school trying to get the right fit. Instability affected every part of his life. He was at serious risk of leaving school early and living his life below the poverty line.

In situations like this, all it takes is one caring individual to help a young person turn their life around at a critical point. For Tyrell it was his sports teacher and careers advisor at Dapto High, where he went in Year 10.

“Every day my teacher was helping me at school, helping me with everything,” says Tyrell. “He is definitely one of the reasons I stayed. Support from The Smith Family team was also a massive help, right up until I finished school.”

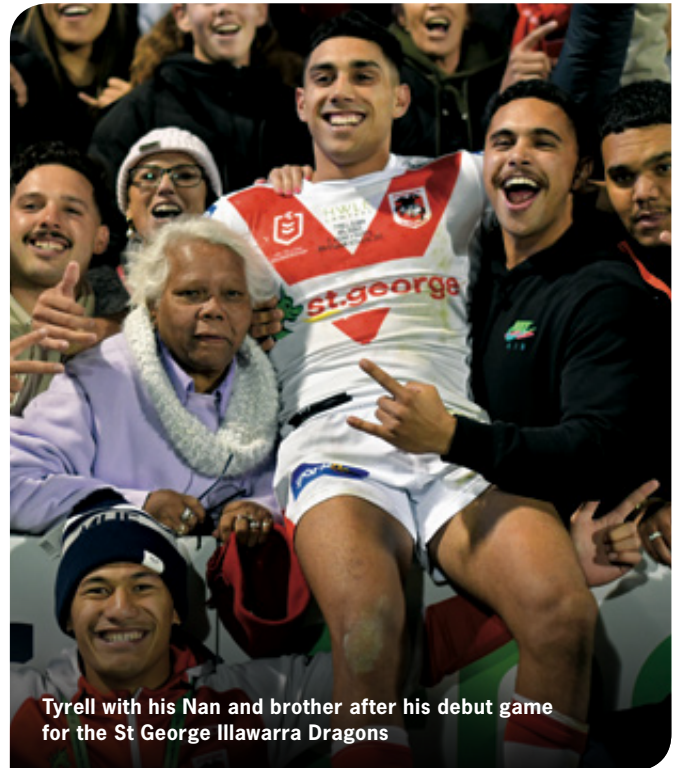
Tyrell gets emotional thinking about his first game with the Dragons in July. That day his Nan Colleen presented him with his first Dragons jersey. Soon after he scored his first try for the team.

“Just to see her face after the game made me so proud, and I knew she was proud of me too,” he says. “It’s an achievement that she’s done as well.”

Tyrell has come so far to achieve his dreams, with the support his teachers, dedicated Smith Family volunteers like you – and of course, his beloved Nan.

Today, he feels playing in the NRL is his chance to inspire other Indigenous kids and honour her.

“Nan has made a lot of sacrifices in her life; it’s crazy what she’s done for me. Now I want to break that cycle and be a role model for the next generation coming up.”



Tyrell with his Nan and brother after his debut game for the St George Illawarra Dragons

Meet some Saints helping kids at Learning Club

If you peeked inside a community hall in Wollongong, you might see a group of athletes patiently helping students with their tough homework questions.

The players are heroes to many of these students in this Illawarra community. As role models they can have a lifelong influence on the students' confidence and aspirations.

Adam Bezzina, Dragons Community Manager, says players do it for many reasons. It could be their own childhood experience of poverty. It might be a simple desire to give back. Or even an interest in working with young people after their NRL careers finish.

The club is also committed to working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in this community.

"We understand and believe that reconciliation is everyone's business, and we will lead through our actions," Adam says.

Ultimately, St George players and staff who volunteer at *Learning Club* are there because it feels good to do good.

"It's an opportunity to assist in the local community and provide a positive experience for children who at times might be having a tough day," Adam says.

"On the flip side helping at *Learning Club*

provides escape from the day-to-day NRL pressures. Helping a student read, encouraging them to eat a healthy snack or passing a ball can help players keep a healthy perspective on their good fortunes as footballers."

Thank you to our volunteers for making *Learning Clubs* possible. It's only because of our sponsors, donors and volunteers, that our students can get the homework help they need in a safe, secure space. They also get the chance to participate in inspiring initiatives like this decade-long partnership with the St George Illawarra Dragons.



St George Illawarra Dragons volunteers at Learning Club

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