



Nevaeh, Jacob and Sebastian

Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives through sponsorship.

Spring 2019



everyone's family

You are helping students to overcome lifelong disadvantage

Thank you for being a sponsor. What you are doing for students in need is truly remarkable.

Living in poverty can have a devastating effect on a child's life. Without books and learning materials at home, many disadvantaged children start school already behind. In worn-out uniforms and without the basic necessities, they stand out at school for all the wrong reasons.

Each year, the poverty they're experiencing widens the gap between them and their classmates. Over time, they fall behind, lose confidence and may leave school early. Without the chance to complete Year 12, securing work is more challenging. Sadly, the cycle of poverty may then continue with their own children.

Sponsors like you help students to overcome the barriers of poverty at every stage of their education. Inside, you'll hear from university student, Zahra and how sponsorship has helped her throughout her schooling to university. Now she is pursuing a career that will be life-changing for others.

I hope you enjoy the stories throughout. As a sponsor, you are helping your sponsored student to break the cycle of poverty – that's a future that benefits all Australians. Thank you!



Dr Lisa O'Brien
Chief Executive Officer



THANK YOU!

Our supporters donated \$5.02 million to our Winter Appeal, which will provide 11,952 children with the vital learning and mentoring program support they need in Term 3 and 4.

Disadvantage at every stage

In Australia, 1.1 million children and young people live in poverty.*



PRIMARY YEARS

The challenge

Children growing up in poverty often need extra help with reading and homework. Without it, they can lose confidence in themselves and are less likely to participate in class.

How you help

Sponsorship provides access to our learning programs that help children catch up on core skills, complete their homework and do their best at school. It also ensures that they start school with a proper school uniform, school shoes and books.



SECONDARY YEARS

The challenge

Financial strain at home and lack of access to positive role models and technology can heavily impact on secondary students.

How you help

With the added support of *Learning for Life* Coordinators, students are able to stay engaged with their education and create goals for their future.



POST-SCHOOL YEARS

The challenge

Without a network for advice, students can find it hard to manage the demands of study and the transition to employment. This is on top of the financial demands associated with higher education.

How you help

Sponsorship gives students financial assistance and access to specialised support, such as a career mentor to help them navigate these challenges.

* Poverty in Australia, 2018, ACOSS/UNSW Report.

Sponsorship gave Kellyanne's children a great start to school

When Kellyanne's husband had to stop working due to disability, everything turned upside down. The couple were juggling three young children, one of whom had autism. With so much happening at home, the children were at risk of starting school already at a disadvantage.

Kellyanne gave up work to care for her family, but the challenges kept coming. Their eldest, Jacob, was in kindergarten when he was diagnosed with autism. Kellyanne wasn't sure if he would be able to go to a mainstream school. But thanks to sponsorship, Jacob received the additional support he needed.

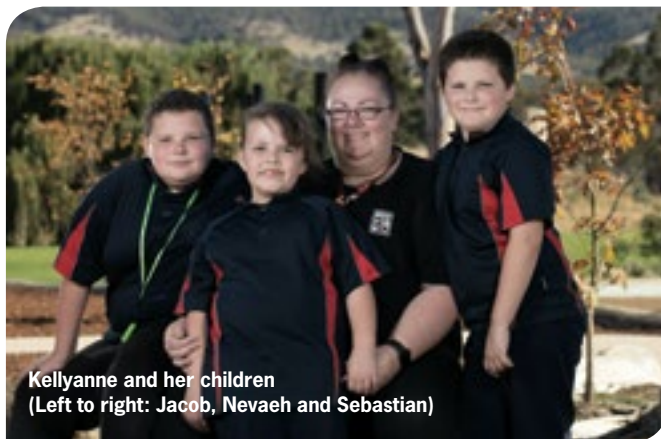
"The sponsorship money really helped. When Jacob was younger we had to do some extra therapies to help him with his learning, such as speech therapy," said Kellyanne.

"Now sponsorship helps my kids ongoing, especially with back to school stuff at the start of the year."

While Kellyanne understood the importance of reading to her children, the many challenges at home meant she struggled to find the time and didn't have money to buy books. So before her other children started school, we connected Kellyanne to our *Let's Read* program. It gives parents tips about reading to their children and free books to enjoy together.

Now Kellyanne's youngest, Nevaeh, is six years old and excels at reading.

"I remember when Nevaeh got the book 'Dear Zoo'. I think we read it 10 times a day for at least a couple of months. She was 12 or 18 months old at that time," said Kellyanne.



Kellyanne and her children
(Left to right: Jacob, Nevaeh and Sebastian)

"Recently I had the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools assessment come back for Nevaeh. She is in the top 96th percentile in Australia for her literacy. She's reading big books!"

When Kellyanne was able to return to work, she jumped at the chance to train as a *Let's Read* facilitator. And she loves seeing how it impacts on the whole family.

"I tell families about the early reading tips sheets, DVDs, free books and other resources available at the local library. They can put the DVDs on and the kids can read along with the TV, or even just watch them and still be exposed to literature," said Kellyanne.

"In communities with low literacy, the program helps the whole family. When I was a child, my dad learned to read when my mum was teaching me. I think that happens in this community as well."

With sponsorship for her three children, Kellyanne knows they will have the ongoing financial and program support to help them finish their education.

“I don’t know how to thank my children’s sponsors. It’s hard to put into words, but they’ve helped our family a lot!” said Kellyanne.

Nevaeh, Let’s Read participant



Phoenix is benefitting from all aspects of sponsorship

When Phoenix's mother, Stacey, left an unsafe home environment to protect her daughters, she found herself alone with no support. Then an accident put her in hospital. But the wrap-around support of sponsorship meant Phoenix could keep doing her best at school.

"After leaving my ex-husband, I didn't know what support was available because I'm from the United States originally. I didn't ask anyone for help because I didn't want to admit what was going on in our marriage. There was domestic violence and I was very embarrassed," said Stacey.

"Then we were in an accident. My daughters and I were in a dance studio and a driver drove into the building. I got my daughters out of the way, but I got hit badly. I was in the Intensive Care Unit with broken ribs, a head injury and second-degree burns on my back."

For Stacey, it felt like life was handing her family one trauma after another. And she didn't want Phoenix's education to suffer as a result.

When Phoenix was matched with her sponsors, the financial assistance for her school essentials was a

huge help. Yet it was just one part of the life-changing support. Through sponsorship, the family was also connected to one of our *Learning for Life* Coordinators.

"I'm still suffering from the accident and have been told that, at this time, I cannot go back to work full time. It has been hard not having family around," said Stacey.

"I feel like we've received a lot of personal support from our *Learning for Life* Coordinator, Michelle. It feels like we actually do have family here. We're very lucky."

The early years of life play a key role in laying the foundations for children's future learning and lifetime outcomes.¹ So Michelle connected Phoenix to our *Learning Club*. It's a safe and supportive space outside of school where Phoenix gets help with her homework from volunteer tutors.

"Phoenix is very spirited. She wants more homework. She really loves *Learning Club* because there's always more. It's just a lovely program. It's her special time," said Stacey.

"Many of the volunteer tutors are university students. So Phoenix gets to interact with people who are more mature than her. It is a really great group of young people modelling good behavior.

"Because of that extra time she has at *Learning Club*, I can see the difference between Phoenix and some of her peers. She has even been nominated by her teacher for the Student Representative Council.

"I can't thank sponsors enough. They are being the change that they wish to see in the world."



Phoenix, *Learning Club* participant

1. McLachlan R, Giffillan G & Gordon J (2013) *Deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia*, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper: Canberra.

Our students love Learning Club

Read some of their heart-felt messages here.

From parents:

Learning Club has given Chbe more confidence in all aspects of her schooling as well as building on current friendships & it also gives her something to look forward to after school.

Marcus now completes his weekly homework without meltdowns and stress which used to affect the whole family. Completing his homework means rewards at school on Friday.

From students:

Because my parents don't know lots of English so coming here has helped me when I don't understand my homework.

12-year-old Rakulan

I like coming to Learning Club because I can finish my homework quicker than I would at home because there's no one there to help me finish it.

12-year-old Massah

It helps me with reading and writing and I feel really safe and it makes me want to go to school.

11-year-old Matilda



PRIMARY YEARS

The challenge

Students' participation in learning is strongly linked with their academic success in later years. Yet disadvantaged students report lower levels of engagement than their advantaged peers.

How YOU help

Sponsorship begins when students start school, so they can fit in and participate. It also provides access to our learning programs, such as *student2student* and *Learning Club*. These programs help students to catch up on core skills, complete their homework and do their best at school.

Around **40%** of *Learning for Life* students and **50%** of their parents/carers have a health or disability issue

Shontae wants to help rural Indigenous communities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students often face greater barriers to education. Sponsorship is helping Shontae to stay in school and build big aspirations.

Q. How did you come to be sponsored?

“The Smith Family started helping me when I was in Year 7 at school. We had some financial difficulties at home.

“It was rough. I was struggling a bit and three days before Christmas our house burnt down. It was embarrassing coming back to school because I had no school uniform. I had to borrow one.”

Q. How does sponsorship help you with your education?

“My sponsors help me with buying school things. We have also been given a laptop and internet access by The Smith Family, which has really helped with homework.

“I am now in Year 10 and I really love going to school. I haven’t missed a day for two years now.”

Q. What are your goals for the future?

“I’m hoping to study medicine at university and work in rural communities. I think I would like to be a paediatrician.

“My mum passed away when I was five years old and my dad suffered brain damage in a car crash, so health and medicine are really important to me.



Learning for Life student, Shontae

“When I leave school, I want to help close the medical health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I volunteered in a rural community during the school holidays helping children, and I really fell in love with the people. I want to give something back to the community.”

Sam provides career guidance as a volunteer mentor

Many disadvantaged students in Years 9 to 11 lack access to a range of positive role models and networks. Without guidance, they find it hard to explore career options and make plans. That's why Sam became a volunteer mentor through our online *iTrack* program.



Sam, *iTrack* mentor

“When you're 15 years old, everyone has an opinion for you. ‘You should do this. You should think about that.’ How many people are asking, ‘What do you want to do?’” said Sam.

“One of the students I mentored wanted to play AFL. He told me, ‘Everyone says I need to have a Plan B.’ He wasn't responding well to that, as it was already telling him his goal was unrealistic. And that's true – you should be allowed to be passionate about something!

“We looked at the recruitment process and he saw that it actually might take a while. He realised he might not get drafted until his early- or mid-20s. And he knew the career span was around 10 to 15 years. Looking at the draft process and career span, we understood that he needed to have an idea of what he wanted to do, both before he was drafted and after he retired as a player.”

“So I asked him, ‘What would you want to do after you retire?’

“He replied, ‘I'd want to still be around the club, I've thought about being a physio’. From there we built the plan, to study physiotherapy whilst chasing the dream of playing AFL.

“What we essentially created was his Plan B. But this way it wasn't a Plan B, it was part of the journey.

“What I really want for my mentees is to see them define their goals, then go out and achieve them. By the end of *iTrack*, this student had a really solid plan for where he wanted to go.”



SECONDARY YEARS

The challenge

Many factors can limit the achievement of secondary school students, including lack of access to technology and a support network. Financial strain at home can also lead students to opt out of excursions and choose low-cost elective subjects regardless of their academic ability.

How YOU help

We help secondary school students to stay engaged, create aspirations and plan future study and career pathways. Many students lack supportive networks, so we provide opportunities for them to talk to adults from a range of professions. We do this through our *iTrack* online mentoring program, university campus visits and career exposure days.

Now Zahra has her foot in the door for her career

Zahra was 11 years old when she and her family arrived in Australia after fleeing Afghanistan due to the war. With the support of sponsorship since primary school, Zahra put her best efforts into her education. But pursuing her career was always going to be more difficult without any networks here. Then she was accepted into our *Cadetship to Career* program.

“My parents fought hard for us to have a better future than they did overseas. Mum had no chance to finish her education and women weren’t able to work. My family is so proud and happy I have the opportunity of a better life to look forward to,” said Zahra.

When Zahra was accepted to university, it was a huge milestone. She really appreciates the opportunities sponsorship gave her throughout her schooling, including taking part in our learning programs. And ongoing support from her sponsors means she can now afford the extra cost of university textbooks and materials.

“Ten years ago it would have been impossible for me to imagine what I’ve achieved,” said Zahra.

“I dreamt big because I knew I had support and motivation from The Smith Family to help me achieve my dreams. I was inspired. Now I’m in my third year of university and studying a Bachelor of Biomedical Engineering.”

Yet without networks and role models from professional backgrounds, many disadvantaged students lack the guidance and opportunities to help them break into their career. That’s why participating in our *Cadetship to Career* program has been life-changing for Zahra.

“*Cadetship to Career* offers networking events. That’s where I made the connection with my employer, which is a biomedical company. The program gives young adults like me a head start in the workplace before we finish university,” she said.

What is *Cadetship to Career*?

***Cadetship to Career* is a youth employment program developed by The Smith Family and the Business Council of Australia. It links our tertiary students with employers for paid cadetship opportunities. This helps students to develop practical experience and skills for future employment.**

Employers provide the cadets with:

- eight weeks’ full-time paid employment per year for the duration of their sponsorship (typically between two to four years)

- training in skills that are important to succeed in the workforce
- the prospect of a graduate role when cadets complete their studies
- the opportunity to explore career options and build valuable networks.

Cadets also receive:

- the continued support of tertiary sponsorship to assist with education-related expenses
- participation in workshops to develop further workforce skills.



POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Zahra, Cadetship to Career participant

Around 41% of 24 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not fully engaged in work or study, compared to 17% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds.¹ Acquiring such tangible experience and making inspiring connections is a powerful springboard for Zahra's long-term success.

“My cadetship is amazing. It has given me opportunities I could never have anticipated. I now have a better understanding about my future career, which helps me perform better at university,” said Zahra.

“It expands on my university learnings in a workplace environment while allowing me to network and see what types of jobs there are in the industry.

“I’m so grateful! I’m always learning from my workplace mentors who are there to help me reach my potential. My dream career is to work with medical technology design or fixing prosthetics, like artificial limbs.”

¹ Lamb, S, Jackson, J, Walstab A, and Huo, S (2015), *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

The challenge

Many sponsored students are the first in their family to study at tertiary level. Without a network that can provide study and career advice, students can find it hard to manage the demands of study and the transition to employment. And often they can't afford the cost of travel, textbooks and course resources.

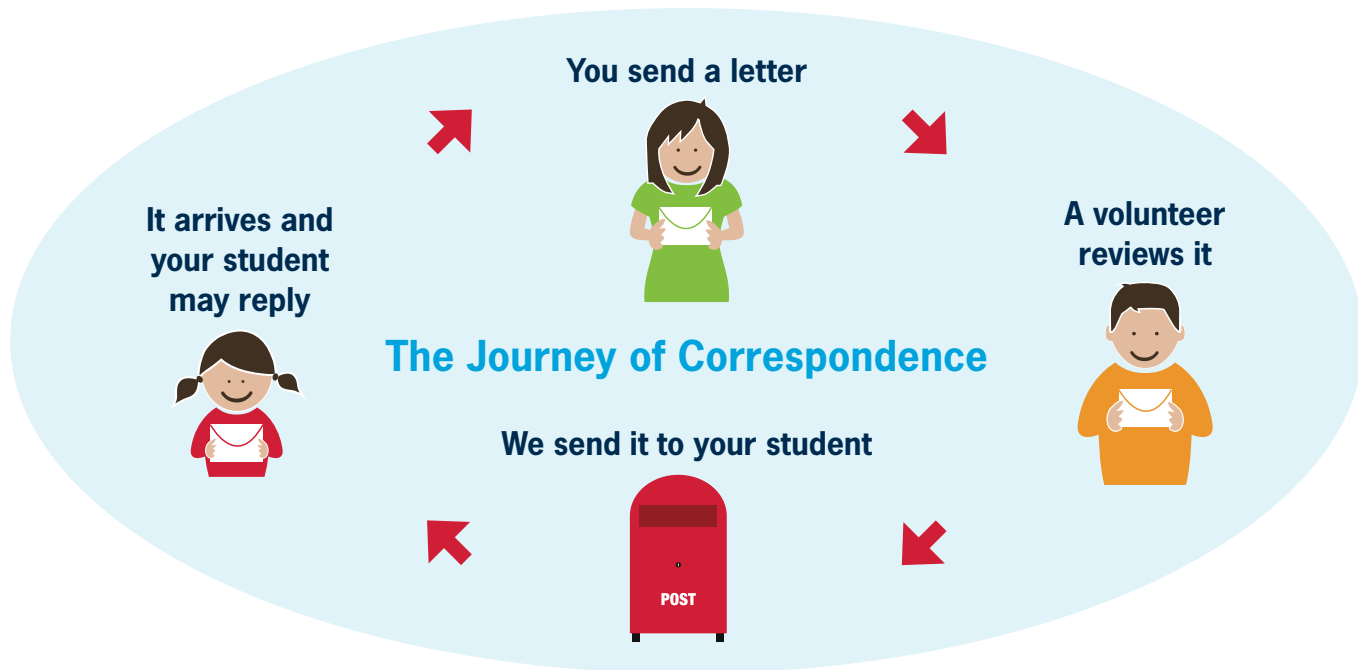
How YOU help

Our *Learning for Life* program enables disadvantaged young people to study at university or TAFE. Sponsorship gives students financial assistance and access to specialised support, such as a career mentor. Through our partnership with the Business Council of Australia (BCA), last year 78 sponsored students received cadetships with BCA member companies.

Communicating with your sponsored student

Writing to your student can be a very rewarding part of your sponsorship journey. However, we do understand and respect that not all sponsors wish to write. Choosing to correspond with your student is entirely optional.

If you do choose to write, all correspondence between students and sponsors is reviewed by a Smith Family volunteer before we forward it on. This is to ensure that yours and your student's privacy and safety is maintained at all times.



You can send your student a letter, an email or you can write to them via our online portal *My Smith Family*. Simply create your own account at thesmithfamily.com.au/register

Visit our website for more information including our guidelines and conversation starters.

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