



Hope, Learning for Life student

Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives through sponsorship.

Autumn 2020



everyone's family

Your gift has a greater impact than you realise

Can you imagine what it feels like to always be on the outside?

We often hear from our students that, before sponsorship, they were singled out for being different. Others were teased because they couldn't keep up in class. But sponsors like you help change all of that.

I can't thank you enough. You give disadvantaged students the chance to fit in at school. This builds their self-worth and they grow up feeling that they are part of something. As they go on to achieve great things, it inspires all around them.

There are many stories inside and I hope you enjoy them all. On the opposite page, 12-year-old Hope shares how sponsorship has

helped her. And on page 7, you'll hear why Abdelmasih now believes 'nothing is impossible'.

Thank you for helping students in need to belong and do their best at school. The ripples of your support extend further than you know.



Dr Lisa O'Brien
Chief Executive Officer



Our Commitment to Child Protection

The Smith Family is committed to always acting in the best interests of children, providing safe environments and acting to protect them and other vulnerable people from abuse and neglect. For more information, visit our website at thesmithfamily.com.au/child-protection



THANK YOU!

Our supporters donated **\$4.4 million** to our Christmas Appeal, which will provide **10,476** children with the vital help they need in 2020.

Hope rose above her fears and found her way to shine

“I used to be really afraid to go to school. I faked being sick a lot. I didn’t want to go and be bullied because I didn’t have as much as everyone else,” said Hope, aged 12.

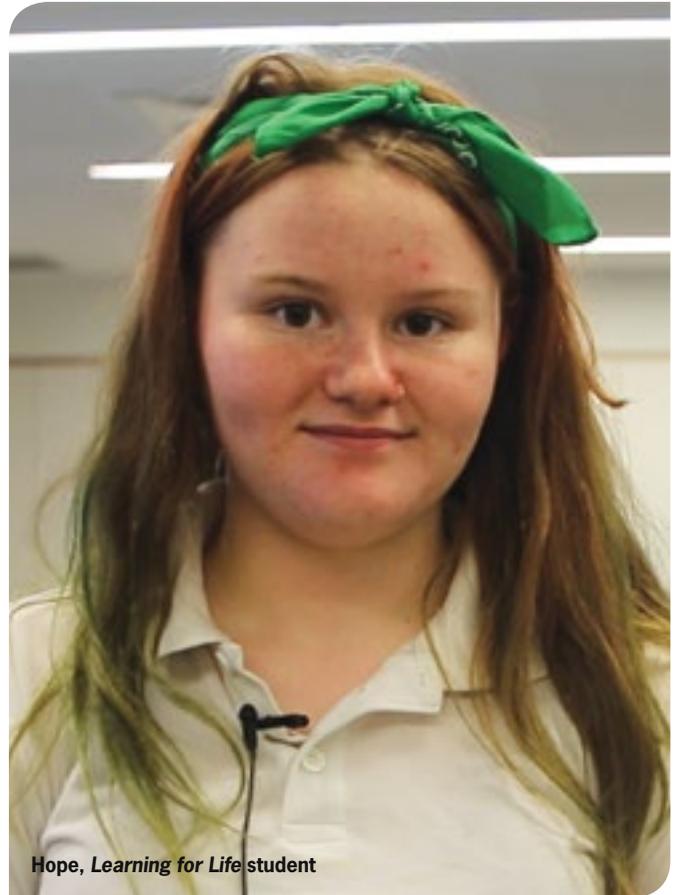
“One time, my mum had to come to school. I was wearing my sister’s old shoes which were already kind of torn up. Both of the bottoms had fallen off and the office ladies put elastic bands around them to keep them together.

“Thanks to my sponsor, I got new shoes for school this year. I love them!”

After years of being left out at school, sponsorship meant Hope could finally fit in. But what matters most to her is knowing that someone she has never met cares about her.

“Not a lot of people give me birthday cards. I was so excited to get one from my sponsor! It shows that someone actually cares enough to remember that my birthday is coming up,” said Hope.

Sponsorship also gives students access to our out-of-school learning programs. Hope attends our *Learning Club* after school with her best friend and our volunteer tutors assist them with homework. It has inspired Hope to become a teacher when she finishes school.



Hope, Learning for Life student

“The tutors have helped me a lot. I didn’t used to be very good at maths. Now I am doing Year 8 maths and I am only in Year 6!” said Hope.

“Having my best friend at Learning Club has been great. It makes me so happy to see that sponsors are not only changing my life, but they are also changing the lives of people that I love.”

4,373 students participated at
314 Learning Clubs in 2018-2019

Nathan's drive takes him from strength to strength

“While I was in Year 8, Dad moved out. Money became tight and put stress on the family. With the sponsorship funds, Mum was able to afford the school supplies that we needed. This had a large impact on my brother and me. It enabled us to focus on our schoolwork,” said Nathan.

Nathan saw sponsorship as a great gift and it became his driving force. He was determined to make the most of the opportunity by doing his best at school and even served as School Captain in Year 10.

“On the academic side of things, I consistently performed at the top of all my classes. I won the Dux award in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12. I attribute much of my success in school to the support of The Smith Family,” he said.

There was no question that Nathan was excelling. But like many disadvantaged students, he didn't have access to adult role models who had studied beyond high school. When it came to planning what he wanted to do after graduating, Nathan needed some guidance.

So, when Nathan was in Year 10, he took part in our online mentoring program *iTrack*.

“I saw *iTrack* as a window into the world of academic study. The experience did not disappoint! My mentor patiently answered my questions about life after school. It was fantastic to talk to someone I didn't know, because she didn't have a predetermined pathway in mind for me,” said Nathan.

“My mentor was very skilled at talking me through my own thoughts. It was less a case of her telling me what to do, and more a case of helping me to realise what I wanted to do.”

Your support gives students the confidence and means to pursue their dreams. With ongoing sponsorship, Nathan has been able to continue his education at the tertiary level. And he has big aspirations.

“With the help of sponsorship, I am currently studying a Bachelor of Science. After I graduate, I intend to continue my education by pursuing a Master of Pure Mathematics, followed by a Doctorate,” said Nathan.

“When I envisage my future, it is without struggle and adversity. Not because I am an eternal optimist, but because I know I have the support I need.”

Last year, **85%** of *iTrack* students agreed their mentors helped them understand more about how they could reach their career goals.

Nathan, *Learning for Life* student with his mother (right), and Dr Lisa O'Brien (left)



“Sponsorship provides monetary assistance. But, by extension, it also contributes greatly to a student’s wellbeing and general willingness to achieve,” said Nathan.

These students take action to create change



“In 2017, our tutor group decided to take on a charity that we could give to every year. We liked the idea of sponsoring a student. We thought it would be cool to communicate as the boys and sponsored student all progressed through school,” said high school teacher Mr O’Kane.

At Mr O’Kane’s school, tutor groups bring together boys in Years 7 to 12. Among other things, the groups are encouraged to give for the benefit of others. So the boys came up with a plan to raise the money to sponsor a student in need.

“When we researched disadvantage in Australia, we were all shocked at the reality that some families face. The idea of not having a uniform that fits or books for class was something the boys had never really thought about before,” said Mr O’Kane.

“They raised the money themselves at school. It was easy and the boys enjoyed it. They sold chocolates and held a barbecue in the playground.”

The sponsorship has been a wonderful way to connect students from different backgrounds. And the boys get a real buzz out of exchanging letters with their sponsored student.

“We have written to him a few times, especially on certain events like his birthday and Christmas. We just like to let him know that there are other people that are looking out for him and trying to help him. We just try to be friendly and write about things we are interested in like school and footy,” the students shared.

“As a group, they are definitely more aware of how lucky they are with their own lives and education. It’s good as well for their self-esteem – to know that they are doing a good thing. It’s really rewarding!” said Mr O’Kane.

Abdelmasih grabs every opportunity to help him catch up

“I came to Australia in 2009 as a refugee. I remember it was hard. I didn’t know how to communicate well because I didn’t know the language much,” said Abdelmasih, aged 15.

For eight years Abdelmasih has had the support of his sponsor. It means he always has what he needs for school, including the correct uniform and textbooks. Yet, because of the language barrier, he has had to work harder to keep up in class.

The generosity of sponsors like you gives students access to our out-of-school learning programs. Through *student2student*, Abdelmasih was matched with an older student reading buddy. He improved so much that he participated three years in a row.

“At the start, I couldn’t read great or talk that much. My buddy gave me so much support. He cared about me as well. I felt good, like I could start reading and not be afraid of someone judging me. Once I learned new words, I knew how to write,” said Abdelmasih.

“Because of *student2student*, I do so much better now. I find it easy to keep up in class. I’m now confident to read out loud in front of the whole class.”

When Abdelmasih was in Year 9 he participated in our online mentoring program *iTrack*. His parents were not familiar with post-school options in Australia. So Abdelmasih jumped at the chance to speak to an adult from a professional background. And now he has a plan for his future.

“I didn’t know what uni was like. But my mentor explained it to me,” he said.

“I really want to go to university. Because of *iTrack*, this is now my goal. My advice to younger people would be to try your best at school. Never give up – nothing is impossible!”



Abdelmasih, *Learning for Life* student

97% of *student2student* participants improved their reading.

Your support fills the gaps so students can flourish

“Families are really excited about sponsorship. They see there is somebody out there who wants to help their kids get a good education,” said The Smith Family *Learning for Life* Coordinator, Trish.

“For a lot of these children, life is already hard. Without sponsorship, I think it would be a whole lot harder. Their parents would have to make choices about whether they put food on the table, or their children attend excursions. And we all know what decision they would have to make.

“The reality is that these children miss out on things. They may go to school without the proper uniform, which means they look different to other kids. This impacts their whole experience at

school. In time, they become disengaged and, in all likelihood, won't finish school.

“You can see that parents are stressing about the fact that they need to buy new school jackets for winter. Or that there's an excursion coming up, but they don't know where they're going to find the money. So, for them, it's a huge relief to know that they have the support of the sponsors.

“There's a family that I work with. Three of the children come along to our *Learning Club* and they've recently completed *student2student*. Their mum told me that *Learning Club* is their favourite time of the week. That's amazing to hear!



Trish, *Learning for Life* coordinator

“More than that, the mum said that she and her husband didn’t finish high school. As their kids are getting older, it’s really hard for them to help their kids with their homework.

“But with the support of the *Learning Club* tutors, the children are flourishing at school. They are building confidence and know that when they go to school, they can succeed. And that is an example of how the support helps to break the cycle of disadvantage.

“For children on our program, there’s something really special about having a sponsor. It’s the emotional support they offer. Children quickly realise that there’s somebody in their corner who really wants them to do well.”



Find out more about Trish
in her video:
thesmithfamily.com.au/trish

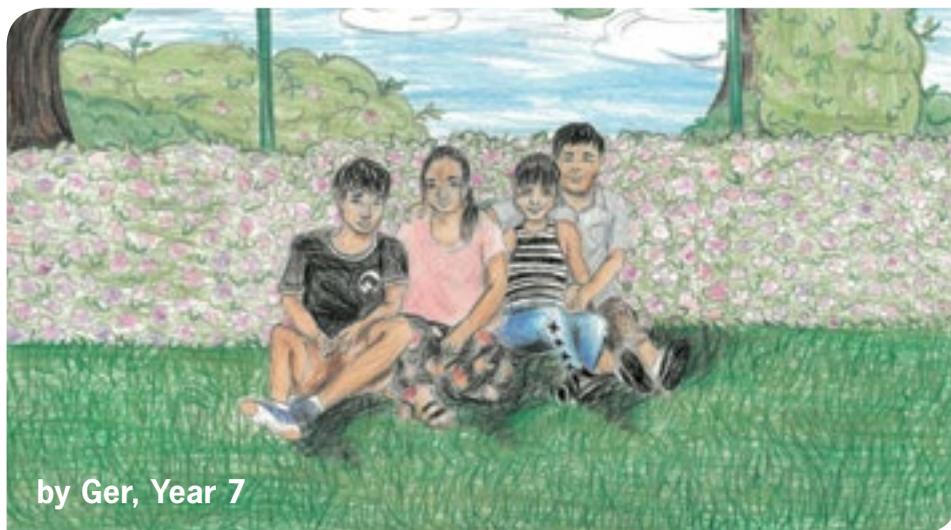


What do *Learning for Life* Coordinators do?

Our *Learning for Life* Coordinators are based in the communities where we work. They work with schools who identify students in need of extra support. They build a long-term partnership with families to support students throughout their education. This includes connecting them with learning and mentoring programs and other local supports.

CREATIVE SHOWCASE

Creative Showcase, previously known as the Art and Writing Competition, gives students the opportunity to express their creativity. Last year we received more than 10,000 entries from our students and we'd love to share some with you.



"A person I would most like to meet and talk too... and why..."

Someone I would love to meet and talk to would be my pet rat called Atlas. He is very fluffy, so I would like to know if his fur keeps him warm when it is cold and if he likes the little blanket that we gave him. I would ask him if he is happy with his cage and if he likes being by himself. I would also like to know if he likes the name we gave him or if he likes the name that his mum gave him better. My favourite foods are coco-pops, chocolate brownies and honey chicken with rice so I would want to know if his favourite foods are the same as mine or different. One last thing that I would ask Atlas is why doesn't he like having baths?

by Aniela, Kindy

Volunteers like Rosemary make your donations go further

Thousands of dedicated volunteers make our work possible. Last year, their time added up to 362,450 hours of donated service, equivalent to almost \$10.7 million! And volunteers like Rosemary love knowing that their volunteering has 'real purpose'.

Rosemary first connected with The Smith Family in 1981 as a VIEW Club member. Now she has a permanent volunteer role. She assists with recruiting other volunteers and enjoys speaking to people with such diverse experience.

"This is a fabulous place. The Smith Family cares for the volunteers. And the reason we are here is tangible. I think education for children is just so important," said Rosemary.

VIEW Club events provide the opportunity to hear from sponsored students first hand. "It really brings to life the impact of your support," said Rosemary. "It's quite emotional to hear how it has even inspired members of their families to pursue education. I met a young woman. She and her sister are both studying law. Their mum has decided



Rosemary, The Smith Family volunteer

to further her own education too, so she's doing a course at TAFE," said Rosemary.

We are so grateful for every one of our volunteers who make our work possible.



VIEW stands for the Voice, Interests and Education of Women.

They are The Smith Family's largest community sponsor of *Learning for Life* students, supporting the educational outcomes of 1,400 disadvantaged children and young people. Through this powerful longstanding connection, VIEW is proud to help change the lives of young Australians.

This year VIEW celebrates its 60th Anniversary. Congratulations on 60 years of strength and support!

There are more than 300 VIEW Clubs around Australia, open to women of all ages. To find out more or enquire about joining your local VIEW Club, go to **view.org.au**

thesmithfamily.com.au

Email: **sponsorship@thesmithfamily.com.au**

Phone: **1800 633 622**

Mail: **The Smith Family**
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