



Hope, Learning Club participant

# Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives.

Autumn 2020



*everyone's family*

# Your efforts have 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 receiving our support, they were teased because they couldn't keep up in class. But volunteers like you help change that.

The theme for National Volunteer Week 2020 is 'Changing Communities. Changing Lives'. We can't thank you enough for doing just that. The contribution of every one of our 8,972 volunteers gives disadvantaged students the chance to catch up and succeed 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 encouragement from our volunteer tutors has inspired her career goal. And on page 9, you'll hear why Abdelmasih now believes 'nothing is impossible'.

Thank you for helping students in need to do their best at school. The ripples of your time and talents 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](https://thesmithfamily.com.au/child-protection)



NATIONAL 18-24 MAY 2020  
**VOLUNTEER**  
CHANGING COMMUNITIES. CHANGING LIVES. WEEK

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## Hope's volunteer tutors helped Hope to 'unbox' her thinking

**"Because of the help from the tutors at Learning Club, I understand things a lot better. Now I always get my homework done on time instead of being late," said Hope, aged 12.**

Being singled out for living in poverty had taken a toll on Hope's confidence at school.

"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.

"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 fell off and the office ladies put elastic bands around them to keep them together."

Since we matched Hope with one of our sponsors, she has been able to fit in at school. And it has given her the chance to attend our Learning Club after school. Hope loves receiving help from our amazing volunteer tutors. They have encouraged her to believe in herself. Now Hope dreams of doing the same for others.

"I enjoy maths. But I didn't used to be very good at it. At Learning Club, the tutors explain maths to me not just using facts, but with theory," said Hope.



Hope, Learning Club participant

**"I don't like to think inside of the box. The tutors help me in a way I can understand. Now I am doing Year 8 maths and I am only in Year 6! When I leave school, I want to be a maths teacher."**

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

# Rosemary knows volunteers help more than just the students

**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 their efforts have real purpose.**



Rosemary, The Smith Family volunteer

Rosemary first connected with The Smith Family in 1981 as a VIEW Club member. Now she has a permanent volunteer role assisting with recruiting other volunteers.

“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.

“I do reference checks for volunteer applicants. I’ve got the skills because I used to be a registered nurse in a managerial position. So that was part of my job.

**“I hear about some really interesting people who are wanting to be volunteers and I think, ‘Wow, what experience they will bring to The Smith Family!’”**

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 talk to some of the students. I met a young woman. She and her sister are both studying law. Their mum has decided 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 60<sup>th</sup> 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](http://view.org.au)**

# Tasnim is ready to tackle the professional world

Tasnim recently graduated university. For a year he has been volunteering in our Volunteer Coordination Unit, building important skills for his future career.

## Q: What drew you to volunteer at The Smith Family?

“I was doing an assignment at university where we had to look into a non-profit. After that I wanted to work with a charity that worked with children. I liked what The Smith Family was doing. I was lucky to have a good education and not have to worry about stuff at school. But I saw people I went to school with struggle. I think the programs that The Smith Family runs are really great.”

## Q: What is your role?

“I volunteer two days a week. I mostly look after recruitment. I go through all the applications we get for volunteers. So that has been really good for my human resources (HR) studies. I want to work in HR at a big company.”



Tasnim, The Smith Family volunteer

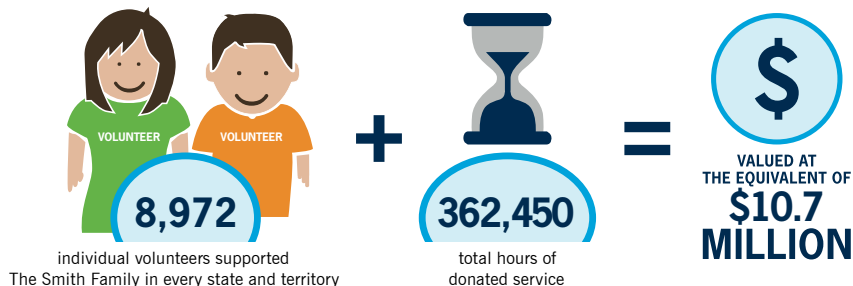
## Q: What have you gained from the experience?

“Everyone is happy and chatty and so nice to work with. I am pretty quiet. But that has been one of the great things about volunteering here. When I started, I didn’t have much experience speaking to people other than my friends. Now I talk to people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, all the time. It has made me a lot more confident and will be good for when I am working.”

**95% of** volunteers would talk positively to friends, family members and colleagues about their volunteering experience at The Smith Family.

## 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 2018-19 financial year:



## Learning Club tutors fill the gaps so students can flourish

**“When I first meet some of the children, they are really shy and not that engaged at school. Many of these students start school already behind. If they don’t have our support, they may just continue to fall behind,” said Learning for Life Coordinator, Trish.**

Our *Learning for Life* Coordinators are based in the communities. They connect students to our learning and mentoring programs, which are made possible by our many volunteers across the country. Trish sees how crucial programs like *Learning Club* are in helping disadvantaged students to reach their potential.

**“I see students after they’ve participated in one of our programs and I see the confidence in them. That’s the exciting thing! These students may become the first in their family to complete Year 12. They may even go to TAFE or university,” said Trish.**

“We know that education will help break the cycle of poverty for these students and enable them to do really good things in the future.

“There’s a family that I work with. Three of the children come along to our *Learning Club* and they’ve recently completed *student2student*.



Trish, Learning for Life coordinator

Their mum told me that *Learning Club* is their favourite time of the week. That's amazing to hear!

"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.

**"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."**



Find out more about Trish  
in her video:  
[thesmithfamily.com.au/trish](https://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.

# Students love rolling up their sleeves with our Boyz Biz volunteers

**“I think giving back to the local community is really important. I try to be a positive role model in the boys’ lives,” said Boyz Biz volunteer, Alan.**

Our volunteers help deliver the Boyz Biz program, which teaches boys in Years 5 and 6 through life skills activities. Alan had the perfect mix of experience and he loves seeing how the program inspires the boys’ personal development.

“I had my undergraduate degree in psychology and I wanted to get some practical experience. Plus, I’ve got a trade background, so I have experience working with tools,” said Alan.

“We do woodwork and play games. We try to have a learning focus as well, so it’s fun and they’re learning skills. We also have a martial arts instructor come in. We teach the boys about emotional regulation and behavioural controls, as well as social skills.”

Many of the boys don’t have father figures at home. So they really enjoy trying new activities and bonding with our volunteers.

“We got to make iPad holders. We used hammers and nails and decorated the holders with paint. I love doing all the stuff in Boyz Biz because it is really fun. And most of the things we do are new to me,” said Oliver, aged 13.

One of the main aims of Boyz Biz is to increase the boys’ self-esteem and confidence, which often leads to them being more engaged at school. Alan says the results are clear.



Alan, The Smith Family volunteer with Boyz Biz participants

**“You see the smiles on the boys’ faces. You know they’re having fun, learning new skills and making new friends at the same time,” he said.**

**To find out about our volunteer opportunities near you, visit [thesmithfamily.com.au/volunteer](https://thesmithfamily.com.au/volunteer)**



## 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.**

Without the basics of English, Abdelmasih started school already behind. Through *student2student*, we connected him with an older student reading buddy. Abdelmasih thrived under the guidance and encouragement from his volunteer buddy. After three years on the program, he felt confident at school.

**“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,” said Abdelmasih.**

“At the start, I couldn’t read great or talk that much. Once I learned new words, I knew how to

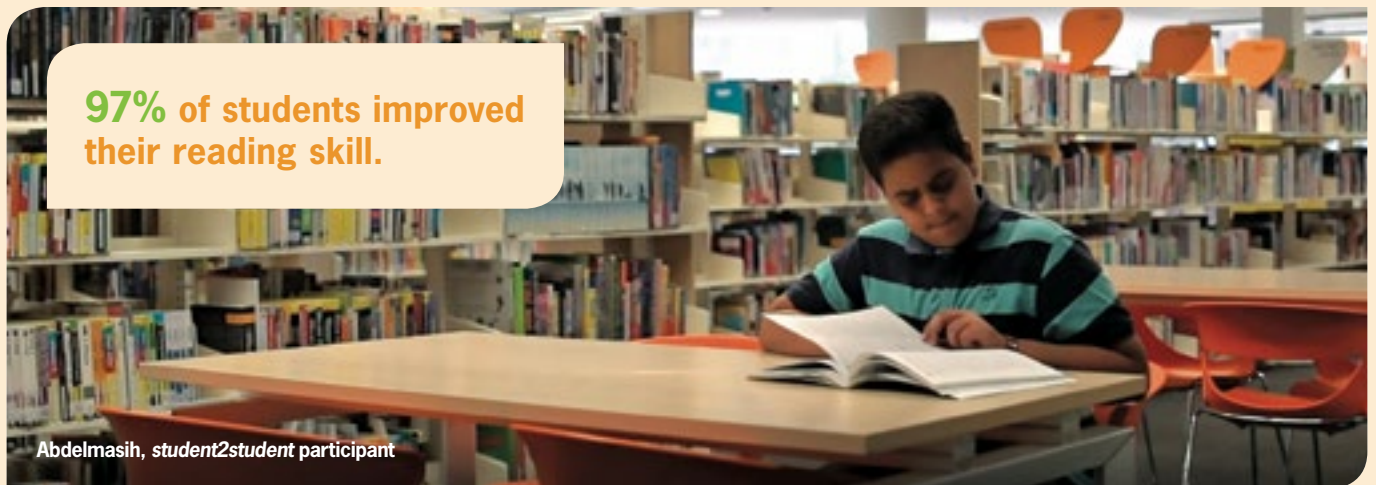
write. Because of *student2student*, I do so much better now. I find it easy to keep up in class. I’m now confident to read out loud in front of the whole class.”

When it came time to start thinking about his post-school options, Abdelmasih’s parents lacked the personal experience to guide him. So Abdelmasih jumped at the chance to speak to an adult from a professional background through our online mentoring program *iTrack*. And it motivated him to aim high for his future.

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

**“When I leave school, 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!”**

**97% of students improved their reading skill.**



Abdelmasih, *student2student* participant

# 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-pop, 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

# Nathan had no one to talk to about his future until iTrack

**“In Year 10, I took every opportunity that was presented to me. I saw the iTrack online mentoring program as a window into the world of academic study. I was not at all disappointed by my mentor and the experience she was able to share with me!” said Nathan.**

“Through iTrack, the mentor volunteers their time to share their life experience and guide the student towards their aspirations. 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.

“In terms of my interests (academics and philanthropy), none of my family or teachers could advise me regarding my future. And due to coming from a low socio-economic background, I knew very little about university.



Nathan, iTrack participant with his mother (right), and Dr Lisa O'Brien (left)

**“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.**

“Through my mentor's guidance, I got involved with philosophy. That was definitely the best experience of Years 11 and 12. It taught me to think more openly about a wide range of issues and even just general life.

“Currently I am in my first year of a Bachelor of Science. I intend to complete a Master of Pure Mathematics, followed by a Doctorate.

**“The support from The Smith Family has enabled me to pursue my goals. When I envisage my future, it is without struggle and adversity.”**

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