

REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES Autumn 2022

Ahmad, former *iTrack* student

**THANK YOU
FOR BEING A
CHAMPION.**



*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. In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, regular supporters like you have stepped up with kindness and generosity like never before. I want to assure you that you have helped students in need 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, I hope you enjoy meeting some amazing students forging ahead thanks to you and other Champions. 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

carve out a professional rugby league career. And Ahmad, who needed people in his life who could help him believe university was a real possibility.

I also want to assure you that as we continue to navigate the pandemic, we are doing everything possible to ensure the students we help get extra support if needed. Some will have fallen behind during lockdown. We will keep you posted throughout the year on this important work.

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



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.

Their day job is to play professional rugby league for the St George Illawarra NRL Club. And for almost a decade, they've dedicated hours after school to helping our students living in disadvantage catch up and keep up in class.

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 Champions for making *Learning Clubs* possible. It's only because of you that our students have a safe, secure space to get the homework help they need. You also make it possible for students to participate in inspiring initiatives like this decade-long partnership with the St George Illawarra Dragons.



St George Illawarra Dragons volunteers at *Learning Club*

A CHAMPION 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.



Tyrell, former *Learning for Life* student

“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.”

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 join our learning programs thanks to Champions like you. Tyrell especially enjoyed our *student2student* program, where he’d practice reading over the phone each week with his buddy Ethan.

“I have really good memories of doing *student2student*. Reading out loud to my 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 find 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, that 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 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 of his teachers, generous donors 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,” Tyrell says. “Now I want to break that cycle. I want to 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

“I’VE LEARNT ABOUT CAREERS I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW EXISTED.”

Support from Champions like you helped set Talon, age 14, on a pathway to entering high school with confidence. In Year 8 last year, Talon was really starting to enjoy his learning and even thought about life after school.

“I like exploring stuff in science – from chemistry to biology,” he says. “And I just love maths – I’m good with numbers. I always thought I would love to go to university.”

However, Talon was facing challenges that could have stopped him chasing his dream before he even began. Talon’s parents had limited education. They wanted to help him pursue a university pathway but were not sure where to start. It’s just one way that living with disadvantage can make it much harder for students like Talon to access education opportunities.

But recently, a world of possibility opened up when Talon became part of The Smith Family’s

Growing Careers Project. You can learn more about it on the next page. As part of the project, Talon attended *Future Seekers*, a program which provides students in Year 7 and 8 with early exposure to the world of work. Over seven weeks, Talon attended hour-long sessions with classmates at school that helped fill the gaps in his career network and support systems.

With the encouragement of a trained Smith Family facilitator, Talon got to reflect on his skills, strengths and interests. He heard from inspirational role models who had turned their career hopes into reality. He completed activities that expanded his outlook on working life and the diverse job roles out there.

“I’ve learnt about careers I didn’t even know existed,” says Talon.

Through *Growing Careers*, Talon also has the chance to visit a university, hear about TAFE options and access other career programs over the span of his secondary school journey. It’s helped him understand how he could turn his interest in people and passion for science into a career after school. Talon is broadening his horizons to a wealth of possibilities for his future.

“I didn’t realise how many opportunities were out there that I can take,” he says. “I’m thinking about studying psychology at university. I like talking to people and communicating, and I enjoy science.”



Talon, Learning for Life student

GROWING CAREERS PROJECT: A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

The *Growing Careers Project* aims to support young people living in disadvantage by connecting them to The Smith Family's career support programs. The *Growing Careers Project* is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

The project will run from 2021 until 2024 and will see The Smith Family working in close collaboration with a number of schools across the country. It will offer over 76,000 places for students to participate in multiple career programs across their secondary school journey, which could encompass anything from a short career-focused activity, to several weeks of one-on-one mentoring via an online platform – or spending a few days in a workplace.

We'll be following student participation across the four years of the project, to understand how they're progressing in their education. We'll look at what's resonating with them from a careers' perspective and what more we can do to support their career pathways when they leave school.

WHY IS THIS PROGRAM IMPORTANT?

- Young people's involvement in work, training or study post-school is heavily influenced by what happens to them in school.¹
- Young people living in disadvantage are less likely to complete Year 12 and less likely to be in work, training or post-school study than their more advantaged peers.²
- Employer engagement while still at school has a positive impact on academic results, student motivation and student aspirations.¹



1. It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults by Dr Anthony Mann, Education and Employers Taskforce, 2012
2. OECD (2018) Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators. Paris: OECD Publishing.

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 grandparents. 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 with their learning, so they can gain the skills 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

Dom

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

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 a cycle of poverty.

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

Because of supporters like you, Ahmad could join The Smith Family’s learning programs. His mother embraced opportunities for him to get learning support 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 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* made such a difference. Over 18 weeks, Ahmad got study and career advice from his mentor, Steven, a lawyer. Through our secure online chat program, Steven gave Ahmad input on his post-school plans. He helped Ahmad work towards his goal of university.

“*iTrack* was fun, it was a great experience,” says Ahmad. “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 Champions 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.”

HEAR FROM SOME OF OUR STUDENTS AT **LEARNING CLUB**

Your support of The Smith Family's learning support and mentoring programs can open up opportunities to students living disadvantaged that they may never imagined.

Attending *Learning Club* gives students the chance to improve their reading, writing and spelling. This provides them with a space where they can consider what they'd like to do after school. Below, some of our students from the Northern Territory share with you their dream jobs.

WHEN I GROW UP...

"I want to be a police officer because I want to help people when I am older. Also because my uncle is a police officer and I want to follow in his footsteps. I will need to train, study, stay fit and active." – Georgina

"I want to be a Royal Flying Doctor because I want to help people in the plane. I will need to graduate university." – Teleah

"I want to be a vet because I want to see all the animals. It is good to treat animals how you want to be treated. I will need to study more and learn about it for 5 years." – Zara

"I want to be a police woman or a doctor. Or a hair dresser. I want to be a hair dresser because I like doing people's hair and because my mum is good at making other people's hair. I will need to know what is a beautiful hairstyle and respect my customers." – Yvonne

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