



Jemimah, *Learning for Life* student

Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives through sponsorship.

Spring 2023



**The Smith
Family**

Learn today, change tomorrow.

Thank you for sheltering your student from the storm

After COVID, we thought students would get to take a breath to recover. Instead, those in the most disadvantaged communities are once more under intense pressure.

One flow-on from the pandemic is a nationwide teacher shortage. This shortage is creating major staffing disruptions and impacting school capacity.

The cost-of-living crisis and rental pressures are also spiralling further out of control. More than ever, families are having to make difficult choices. They are struggling to pay for excursions, books, and digital devices. We live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world and that simply doesn't add up. Australian children are missing out on the chance to succeed at school because of family poverty.

Thanks to the support of sponsors like you, we are able to help thousands of children catch up and keep up with their education. In these unstable situations, we continue to work closely with our partner schools to provide support to families.

With the right support, poverty doesn't need to stop a young person realising their full potential, as the stories of triumph in this edition show. The dedicated individuals you'll meet in this edition, like Jaye and Jemimah, are proof of how your generosity is helping students achieve their best at school – and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this huge collective effort with The Smith Family. You are ensuring your student has the help they need to unlock a better future for themselves.

Warmest wishes



Doug Taylor
Chief Executive Officer



Bridging the digital divide

At The Smith Family, we have found the increasing need to bridge the digital divide as online learning and digital tools have become a central part of today's classrooms. But 1 in 2 families said they didn't think they'd be able to afford these crucial resources for their children.¹ Find out how you can help today.

1: The Smith Family Pulse Survey (2022)



Budding entrepreneurs dream big, beyond their backyard

We'd love you to meet Josh who organised *Young ICT Explorers* at his school. This high school teacher expected a lot from his Year 8 competition team. They more than delivered!

Q. Tell us about your competition team

A. I had this great Year 8 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) class. I got them to submit a project for the competition. In the classroom, they came up with an idea and planned how we were going to do it. We worked through the STEM process. I was teaching them how to define the problem, identify their constraints... things like that. Then the pandemic hit!

Q. What was their idea?

A. Usually when you return a book to a library, the librarian must put it away. Their idea was to simplify this. Their prototype involved fitting each book with a little tracking tag. Then, when you walk into the library with your book to return it, the tag identifies where it should go.

Q. You mentioned a lockdown soon after you started?

A. Yes. It was stressful for the kids: they had to do the bulk of the work at home. They took their STEM skills and applied them to working together online. They did really well.

Q. Why do students need STEM opportunities?

A. Our society is moving away from low-skilled jobs. Nowadays, students need technology skills. These students also need to know how

to work as a team, manage their time, plan and prototype. These are skills they can take into any profession.

Q. What do you love most about the program?

A. The program teaches my students things they don't usually learn at school. This includes entrepreneurial skills like how to design a product and market it. These are important skills!

Q. How did your students go in the end?

A. *Young ICT Explorers* expanded my Year 8 students' horizons. It let them look out further than their everyday world. They got to see how their little idea could become an entrepreneurial opportunity. It planted a seed.

They also came third in NSW – they were very happy with that!



Josh, *Young ICT Explorers* Co-ordinator

Sponsorship gave Jemimah the power to be bold

All parents want the best for their children. Eva is not any different. She had brought Jemimah and her three other children here from Uganda to give them a brighter future. “Education is important because it opens doors for people,” Eva says.

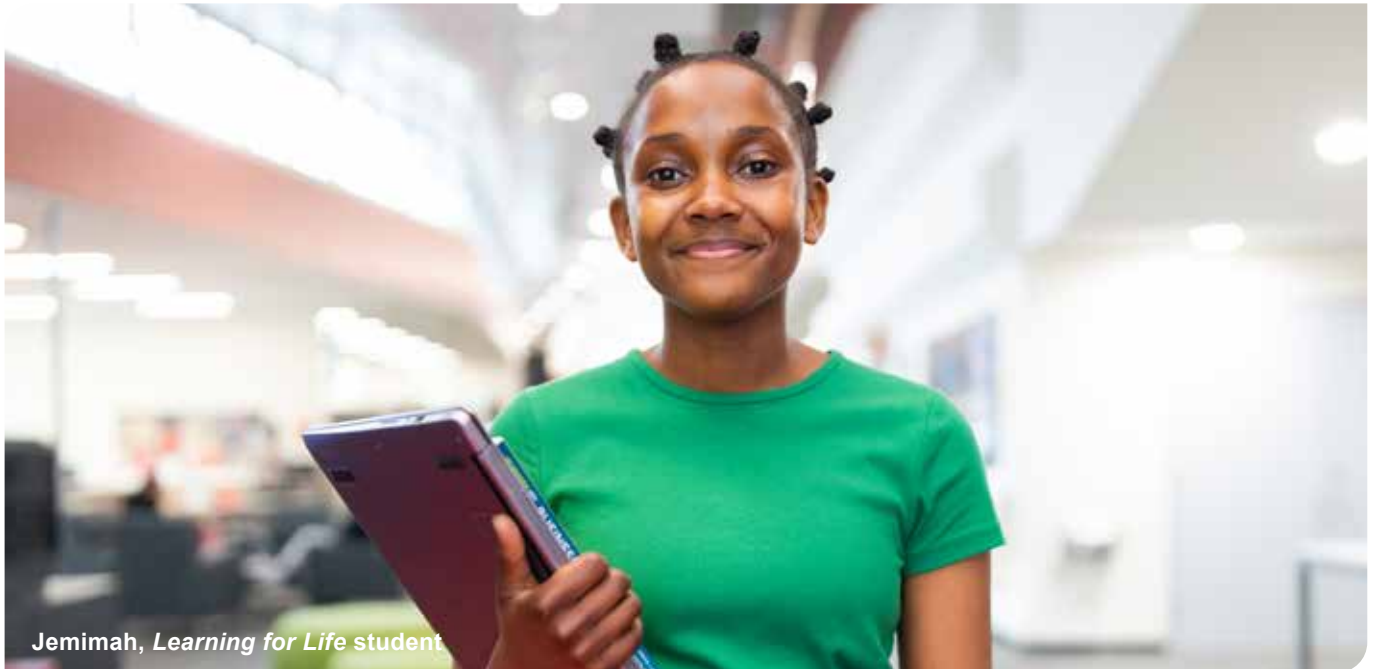
Eva worked so hard, doing night shifts to keep her children fed, but the cost of living kept climbing. She worried that the financial strain of raising her children on a sole income would hold them back from being all that they could be.

So, Eva was very pleased when Jemimah, Year 7, and her siblings got sponsored by someone amazing just like you. “I had braced myself for the hard times, but having this help means everything and it’s such a relief,” she says. “It makes such a

difference, knowing your child has everything they need to study at school.”

Five years since the family arrived, Jemimah is now 18. Having a sponsor and knowing they want her to succeed helps her believe there are many pathways she can take. Now, as she plans her Year 12 subjects, her growing confidence and motivation show.

“I can choose to do physics, I can choose to do Japanese, and I can choose to do subjects that give me hands-on experience,” she says. “That has been exciting – and there’s still much more to explore.”



Jemimah, *Learning for Life* student



Jemimah and her family

Thanks to her sponsor, Jemimah also received personal support from Kanzu, a *Learning for Life* Coordinator who encourages and helps her with any questions about school. Kanzu introduced her to *iTrack* online mentoring, a program that helps students with advice for life after school.

“When I finish school, I want to go to university and be an architect,” Jemimah says. “I’m speaking to people in the industry. I’m getting the skills to push myself more, to think for myself – that’s what I’ve learnt to do. If everyone had a good education, I think the world would definitely be a different place.”

Jemimah also received free internet donated by Optus customers through our *Digital Learning Essentials* program. The internet has helped her stay connected and keep up with digital learning.

“I can access the internet wherever I am, be it at school or home.”

Eva is grateful that a sponsor can see Jemimah’s potential and is investing in her future.

**“When a Smith Family sponsor lends a helping hand, this is the community helping my child become what they deserve to be.”
– Eva, Jemimah’s mother**

Thank you for helping young Australians like Jemimah to get the most out of their education and reach their full potential.

Today Amelia has the world at her feet thanks to her sponsor

Amelia had a happy childhood – but money was always tight. “I grew up in public housing in regional Victoria with my single mum and twin sister,” she says. “I was very aware of the financial situation my family was in.”

As a child, Amelia would remind her mum when bills needed paying. She'd avoid activities that cost money – money they didn't have.

So, in Year 3, it was a relief that Amelia got to join the *Learning for Life* program, thanks to a wonderful sponsor like you. She remembers when her mum told her and her twin they could get more books and better uniforms. “We were very excited,” she says. “We could also go on excursions and school camps.”

Her sponsorship brought along the incredible wrap-around learning support to Amelia. This support means she can access a suite of tailored out-of-school learning and mentoring programs.

Programs like *student2student* were so much fun. Amelia's reading buddy opened her mind to books she'd never heard of before. “*student2student* helped me develop my reading skills,” she says. “I could then advance through the reading levels at school.”

As Amelia studied hard in Year 12, with big plans for university, support from her *Learning Club* tutor – made possible by her sponsor – helped boost her marks. “I was studying biology – having medicine students as tutors was pretty handy!”



Amelia, *Learning for Life* student

Now 22, Amelia can look back and see the challenges of poverty she experienced that her classmates didn't have. This included not having internet in her home for schoolwork until age 13.

Today she's in her third year of a law and global studies degree. Her world has expanded as she now lives away from her family and supports herself financially

Amelia's sponsor still helps her make the most of her education, with support for textbooks, stationery, and transport. "At university, things tend to cost more."

Letters of encouragement from her sponsor were gratefully received as a child. Amelia is just as

excited to receive them now. "Through this contact with my sponsor I feel even more supported, and I want to do really well – even more than I already do on my own."

Amelia's world has grown even wider. Last year she travelled overseas for the first time – on a student exchange to Germany for uni. A little girl from a small town who worried about the bills is now a woman of the world, getting rewarded for her determination.

"There is so much to learn and understand. I'm loving it." – Amelia



Amelia, *Learning for Life* student

Jaye's dad said education would be his escape from poverty



Jaye, *Learning for Life* student

As Jaye was growing up, his dad promised things could be better if he worked hard. “My dad would say: ‘We are confident, we have a plan, and we are not going to continue the poverty cycle.’” But Jaye hadn’t understood what he meant.

Jaye lives in a public housing community in a Perth suburb. In Year 1, he was connected with

a sponsor like you, and some of the barriers to a bright future started to drop away.

Jaye’s family knew sponsorship could help this bright, sensitive boy achieve all he was capable of. They received financial help for uniforms, schoolbooks, and excursions. This gave Jaye and his two younger brothers an equal opportunity to

their peers. It allowed them to try new things – and build confidence too.

In high school, Jaye was fiercely determined. He worked hard to maintain high grades. Then in Year 11, the pandemic struck. Remote learning disrupted normal school routines for over two months. Like most students, at first Jaye struggled to focus. That's when his amazing discipline and time management kicked in. He ultimately did better in tests and assignments than ever! "I probably put too much time into my studies, as I didn't really have anything else to do," he laughs.

Jaye needed digital tools in lockdown – but his family didn't have the internet. Through The Smith Family *Digital Learning Essentials* program, they received a free laptop and internet access, thanks also to our philanthropic partners. They could also access free tech support to make the most of this new technology.

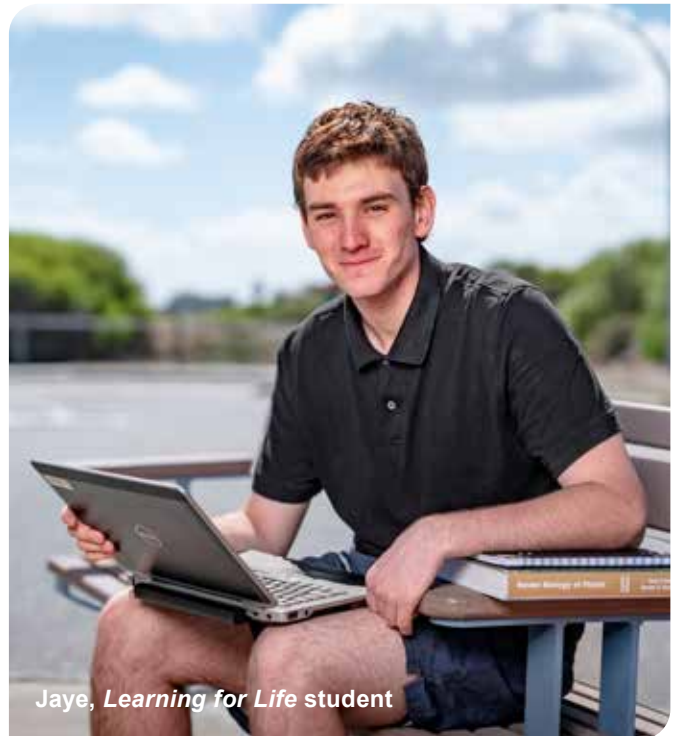
Jaye finished Year 12 as school captain. He had multiple awards for academic achievement and community service. He is in his second year of marine biology, conservation, and wildlife biology studies. Jaye still makes the most of every opportunity, as his father taught him. He wants to be a marine biologist. "Even though I'm seasick, so that doesn't help," he says. "I suppose I'll get used to it."

Today, Jaye thinks of his sponsor every time he buys a textbook, lab coat, or pays for transport to uni with their generous support. "I used to take it for granted when I was young. But after receiving my sponsor's letters of encouragement during COVID, it feels very, very uplifting and significant," he says.

And he finally understands what his father was saying: that a strong education would take him toward a better life.

"I've worked hard with the help of my sponsor and my brothers and my family. Although we don't get along sometimes because of how crammed in [we are], we are proud of each other. I'm succeeding."

"I used to take it for granted when I was young. But after receiving my sponsor's letters of encouragement during COVID, it feels very, very uplifting and significant." – Jaye



Jaye, *Learning for Life* student

Marine biologist or Olympian? Charlize is thrilled by the options unfolding with her sponsor's help!



Charlize, *Learning for Life* student

Thanks to support from her sponsor, life is now full of options for Charlize. But that hasn't always been the case. Malina, Charlize's mum left Sydney for the Gold Coast "escaping a bad situation" and crippling cost of living. She left everything she knew, and took her four children, including the youngest Charlize to Queensland. "My kids had been through trauma – now we were on our own."

Things were bleak. Malina was studying teaching and money was tight. She couldn't afford Christmas presents, let alone schoolbooks, shoes, and excursions. Charlize was very athletic. She needed quality sports shoes, but they cost too much. "We just got by," she says.

At the toughest time, Malina seized the opportunity for Charlize, Year 2, to access *Learning for Life* sponsorship from someone wonderful like you. It was a powerful choice.

Not only could Charlize now get opportunities she deserved, her sponsorship also reduced the financial strain, so Malina could focus on her studies and get a teaching job.

Through her sponsorship, Charlize could choose from The Smith Family's learning programs like *student2student*. She loved to read with her student buddy. "At the time, homework time was chaotic – I was studying, cooking and cleaning on my own after school, while trying to help four kids with their schooling. I think doing her reading with another young person kept it more interesting for Charlize too," Malina says.

The results were remarkable. “With *student2student*, Charlize got comfortable speaking in front of someone else. Then she felt confident to do it at school,” Malina explains. Charlize eventually won an award for her public speaking.

In addition to financial assistance, sponsorship also provided Charlize with emotional support. She truly felt surrounded by her sponsor’s compassion and care. Knowing her sponsor was cheering her on – wanting her to be her best – gave Charlize a sense of belonging and pride. Living so far from family and friends in Sydney, she especially loved getting letters from her sponsor. “It felt like someone still cared – and that made a difference,” Malina says

Today Charlize is 16, in Year 10, and a world-class athlete. She was recently selected to represent Australia at an international rugby tournament in Japan and is being courted by elite sports clubs and even eyeing the Olympics!

But Charlize continues to prioritise her education. With her sponsor’s help, she went on an excursion to the Great Barrier Reef that her family could not otherwise afford. “After looking at the ecosystems, she came back motivated to solve the problems of the reef!” Malina says.

Malina says she is forever grateful for sponsors like you.

“Someone like you helped my daughter Charlize when things were at their lowest,” Malina says. “Thank you for being there for my children. You’re an absolute champion.”



Charlize and Malina, Charlize’s Mum

“With *student2student*, Charlize got comfortable speaking in front of someone else. Then she felt confident to do it at school.”
– Malina, Charlize’s mum

Letter to my sponsor

This was written by one of our *Learning for Life* students.
We are sharing it with you just as he wrote it.

Dear Karen,

Hello, sorry I haven't written for a while, but been pretty busy at our new house getting everything in order we had all sorts of things happen, but finally we are back on track now. First I would like to Thank You for the generous gift card you gave me, I really am glad you are able to help me, I'm able to get things Nan is unable to get me due to being on a budget to survive. Nan does do a lot, other than paying for things for me. I hope you and your family had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year. My hobbies lately are origami, like paper airplanes and chatterboxes, I like playing Mario games as well, I also love reading Captain Underpants series by Dav Pilkey. It's about a mean Principal who gets hypnotised by his most hated students George and Harold who make him think he is the most amazing Captain Underpants. I have gotten good at reading, I'm reading at level 30, and I'm now helping my younger peers read, so they can get a better education for the future, so they can get a job or further their education for a better career. I'm not sure what I want to do at the moment, maybe if I'm not sure I'll work at a fast food restaurant until I'm sure of the track I wanna take. I went to a Park for the first time ever and I liked it. There wasn't many animals there but it was fun. It was expensive to get in. My favourite food to eat these days is Nan's homemade spaghetti bolognaise it's out of this world it is so good, me and my cousins even argue who is going to have leftovers, I really can't contain myself I go crazy for Nan's spaghetti bog. Thank You for writing to me Karen I really Love hearing from you, I hope I'm not too boring, I hardly know what to talk about. How's your job going? You still love working there? How long have you worked there? How's your family going? Hope they're all well.

Bye for now my wonderful pen pal. Terrance :)

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