



Celebrating Student Achievements!

We are delighted to be able to report that in the 2016 academic year, our students once again showed us they have the **ability**, and with the help of supporters, *A Start in Life* was able to add the **stability** and offer the **continuity** these students needed to thrive; and thrive they most certainly did in this latest academic year.

On Sunday 19th March, we celebrated the significant achievements of these students at the *A Start in Life* Annual Prize Giving Ceremony. Certificates and prizes were awarded to 20 students for outstanding academic excellence, as well as achievements in Sports, the Arts, Community Involvement and Good Citizenship.

As everyone took their seats at the event, there was an overwhelming feeling of pride in the room, particularly amongst the families and the students, who despite their circumstances, gave their very best in the 2016 academic year.

The youngest award recipient was sprightly 6 year old Jett-Laila, who confidently made her way to the front of the room and accepted the Lodge St John Encouragement prize for being a caring class citizen. Jett-Laila's school report comments that she *"enjoys helping her teachers and peers, and has made significant progress in the last school semester, gaining confidence in both Reading and Spelling."*

Most impressive for her achievements in Sports, was Angie who received The Harry Ctercteko Prize for a Year 6 High Achiever and All Rounder. Angie not only maintained good marks across the majority of her subjects in Year 6, she was the Sports House Leader, represented her school in Swimming (at Zone level) and Cross Country, and won the state title in her Representative Touch Football team.

Achieving an ATAR of 95.65, Yotam took out the Olly Bergstrom Prize for HSC Best Results. Yotam was also -

the recipient of academic awards in Physics, Maths and Chemistry. However, his most significant award was coming first in NSW in Modern Hebrew (continuers). Yotam now plans to take a gap year before continuing his studies at University.

Satya accepted the Prize for Artistic Achievement with a beaming smile that lit up the crowded room. She achieved brilliant results, scoring the highest possible grade across her three High School Art subjects - Art, Art Adventure and Digital Art. In her school reports, Satya's teachers praised her passion and desire for perfection in the Arts.

We were pleased to be able to present the Peter and Edna Wilson Prize. This long standing prize for sporting and academic excellence was awarded to Chloe for her consistent performance, achieving outstanding grades in 6 out of 8 of her subjects. Chloe was also a high performer in co and extra-curricular sporting activities, including the Premier's Sporting challenge. (...continues)



Yotam (winner of the Olly Bergstrom Prize for HSC Best Results) with his family

Top photo: Prize winners and presenters from the Prize-Giving Ceremony

(...continues) After a long battle with cancer, it was with great sadness that we recently farewelled Peter Wilson. Through the provision of this prize and his continued long-term support of *A Start in Life*, Peter and his wife, Edna, have left a wonderful legacy to help students in need to access educational opportunities.

In the tertiary prize category, Claire won the Hodgson Memorial Prize for the Top Graduate. Claire first sought help from *A Start in Life* when she was in her second year of University. Living in a rural area, meant she needed to move away from home to attend University. She was also trying to juggle work commitments and find the time required to study successfully. With the assistance she received, Claire successfully completed her Arts Degree in 2016, consistently obtaining Distinctions and High Distinctions. She commences her Honours study this year and is determined to then obtain a PhD.

There were many emotional moments throughout the event that deeply moved all who attended, one of these was hearing from a former recipient of support through *A Start in Life*, Natalia Raspopova. Nothing could however, hide the delight of the parents and carers as their children received prizes and recognition for their efforts. Similarly, nothing could disguise the joy felt by the prize sponsors, major donors, and *A Start in Life* team as the benefits of the assistance given was so evident.

After all the prizes were awarded, families and students had the chance to meet and guests took the opportunity to congratulate the students. Many personally thanked Natalia for taking time out of her busy schedule to share her story and inspire the next generation of students.

We wish to thank the sponsors of the prizes, and our student volunteers that assisted at the event. Thank you to the Shangri-La Hotel Sydney for the continuing support of our charitable service, and for providing the

elegant facilities and services to host this important celebratory event.

While *A Start in Life* happily provided assistance where needed throughout the 2016 academic year, we know the most significant factor in these wide ranging and wonderful achievements, is the students themselves. Congratulations to all our students, who despite the challenges they face, apply themselves determinedly to ensuring the very best of outcomes are obtained from what is made available to them.

With help from supporters, we are delighted to continue to provide the **stability** and **continuity** these students so crucially need, to achieve their personal best.



Jett-Laila receiving her award from Dale Berrier, A Start in Life - Vice President

Thank you

Thank you to the Student Development Fundraising Team at University of New South Wales (pictured), who sold Krispy Kreme ice-cream doughnuts and drinks, and held an outdoor cinema night to raise funds that will support students living in financial and social distress through *A Start in Life*.

Nadia, one of the tertiary students supported through *A Start in Life* has generously given her time to fundraise by selling chocolates at her University campus. Thank you Nadia for giving back to help fellow students.

A special thanks to State Street who recently held a fundraising staff BBQ, and also Ringwood Secondary College in Melbourne who dedicated their Christmas Fundraising Appeal to helping other students.

Jamal Lazaar has set himself an ambitious goal to get fit and run a Marathon in under 3 hours! Jamal says that keeping motivated to complete his intense training schedule has been made easier, through knowing that the funds he is raising will help students in need, obtain a better education. To make a donation and show your support, visit gofundraise.com.au.

Want to help the students supported through *A Start in Life* and need some ideas for fundraising?

Please contact communications@astartinlife.org.au



UNSW Students fundraising for A Start in Life



Celebration Day at William Rose School

Prizes are exciting no matter what the occasion, and prizes for achievement are always especially rewarding. William Rose School held their 2016 Celebration Day at the end of the school year and invited *A Start in Life* to attend and present some of the awards.

We have been delighted to have been associated with the William Rose School for many years and are always particularly keen to help celebrate this day with teachers, parents and students from a school, so highly regarded for its sensory and special education.

This year, Allan Elliott (President), Neil Robinson (CEO), both pictured, and Vanessa Prospero provided awards to eight, very excited students. In fact, one of the William Rose students very excitedly skipped up to receive his award, shook hands with the presenter and skipped off just as excitedly, leaving behind both his Certificate and the Prize; sometimes it's just about the recognition!

Our association with William Rose School is based on a shared understanding of the benefits that will flow from students accomplishing their educational goals, providing enthusiasm and support to a student, and recognising and celebrating a students' personal best.

Colac Specialist School Compass Award Program

Over the past 3 years, *A Start in Life* has been partnering with Colac Specialist School to provide assistance to 30 disadvantaged middle year students, enabling their participation in The Duke of Edinburgh Compass Award. We interviewed Katrina Brooks, Learning Co-ordinator to hear more about this initiative.

Tell us about Colac Specialist School

Colac Specialist School (in Victoria) is a leading educational facility for students (K – Yr12) with diagnosed disabilities ranging from mild to profound. Students attending the school have associated impairments, in social, sensory, physical, emotional and behavioural areas.

And how does The Duke of Edinburgh Compass Award assist the students?

Modelled on The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, The Compass Award is designed to enhance the development of the individual child. Students learn new skills, develop initiative and commitment, and become more responsible motivated young people.

What does the Duke of Edinburgh Compass Award involve?

To obtain The Compass Award, young people along with their teachers, create a unique year-long program of activities, across four specific areas – Physical Recreation, Hobbies/Skills, Volunteering and Exploration. Students are given the opportunity to choose their own challenging activities within these areas.

What are the outcomes that you have witnessed, since this initiative began?

Students have the opportunity to experience many new environments and situations. From this, students have developed self-respect, self-confidence and positive social behaviours. They have a greater acceptance of each other's differences and are more tolerant of others behaviours and develop great friendships. They have also made valuable contributions to their local community.

Their enthusiasm for each aspect of the program has indirectly contributed to a development in their leadership skills.

Parents also spoke of their joy, when their child comes home and talks excitedly about their day in the program. Add to this, the improvement parents also witness in their child's behaviour.

For the students that have been fortunate to participate in this initiative, we have observed it also helps develop them independently, physically and socially.

We have been delighted with the benefits that have flowed to so many and that *A Start in Life* chose to partner with us.



Colac Specialist School students participating in The Compass Award program.

A Brighter Future Achieved

A Start in Life Alumni

Natalia Raspopova is a talented musician and professional conductor; she is also a former beneficiary of support from A Start in Life. Natalia recently gave an emotional speech at our Student Prize-Giving Ceremony and shared her inspirational story below; it is one to be celebrated!

In 1998, Russia was going through a turbulent political period. It was no longer safe for our family to live there and my parents made the tough decision to immigrate to Australia. Shortly after we arrived in Sydney, my parents, due to unforeseen circumstances, were left in an incredibly difficult financial situation. My father spent the last of his savings enrolling us for one term at the Australian Institute of Music. We were three teenage girls, all playing piano at a very high level, in desperate need of further music education and no means to afford it.

Fortunately, a member of the community that heard of our story was aware of the charity *A Start in Life*, and suggested we contact them.

Our application was approved and the support plan we received from *A Start in Life* covered our educational fees, including music tuition, books and music scores, along with basic needs such as transport costs and school lunches. Olly Bergstrom (President Emeritus) from *A Start in Life* even located a Piano for us to practice on.

I can honestly say that if I didn't continue studying piano at that time, I would not have been able to achieve the level required, to enable me to continue my studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. So this support played an incredibly important part in my professional development.



In 2005, I graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and commenced work as a freelance concert pianist, piano pedagogue, vocal repetiteur coach and accompanist. A decade later, out of seventy applicants, I was chosen as the first ever Assistant Conductor for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO). In this role, I assisted many high profile international conductors, including Simone Young. I also conducted many of QSO's concerts in my own right – in Brisbane and on tour.

In January of this year, I was selected out of 120 candidates, to take part in a Masterclass with Marin Alsop and the BBC Concert Orchestra in London - an incredible opportunity for my development as a professional conductor.

I am happy to say that both my sisters are also working professionally in the field of music.

One thing I would like to make very clear - without the assistance from *A Start in Life* - I would never have been able to develop as a musician. I am eternally grateful for the generosity we received. The vision for a better future is something that one can't quite quantify in value, because it is enormous and life changing.

I would like to help young Australians in need by making a gift of \$ _____

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