

EXAMPLE STORY

Category: Heart of The Community

Story Name:

Nesan Kistan - the voice for those less fortunate

Dooley's Lidcombe Catholic Club

Winner 2015



Nesan Kistan – Auburn Salvation Army Captain

DOOLEYS are proud to nominate Nesan Kistan for the ClubsNSW Heart of the Community Award. Nesan and his family arrived in Australia from South Africa in 1981 in the middle of a recession. It was a terrible time to arrive in a new country. In fact, when Nesan first encountered the Salvation Army at the age of eight, it was as part of a new migrant family badly in need of assistance. Nesan joined the Salvation Army and quickly set about making positive changes to benefit the needy.

Nesan first came to work at the Salvation Army at Auburn 10 years ago when no one really wanted to fill the position, as Auburn was seen as an area with too many problems to be able to fix. Nesan however took on this challenge, knowing he had an uphill battle to face. He initiated 'Salvos Legal' in 2005, then known as 'Courtyard Legal', providing free legal advice for disadvantaged residents, an invaluable service still helping people today. Over the years, Nesan has developed the local Salvo's into an integral part of the local community, with his sheer hard work, determination and dedication. He now has 400 people regularly attending weekend church services and is also the Chaplain for the Local Area Command Police at Flemington and Rosehill.

As a psychologist by profession, Nesan has a natural ability to reach out to people in need, listen to their stories and help in a meaningful way. Nesan is a well-known and much respected member not only of DOOLEYS but also of our local community as a whole. He has developed close working relationships with all local MPs, religious leaders, local Council and community organisations throughout the Auburn Local Government Area. He also sits on both State and Federal Government Committees for Multicultural Issues and is a Member of the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and Refugee Council of Australia. Auburn to Africa Project

Nesan was instrumental in setting up the Auburn to Africa Project in 2009. In 2008, the leadership of the Salvation Army at Auburn was challenged by members of the congregation (refugees from Sierra Leone) to find a way to help their countrymen who were still suffering from the devastation of the 15 year Blood Diamond War. With hundreds of thousands of misplaced children, 80% unemployment, illiteracy rates of around 40% and over 50% of primary and secondary aged children unable to go to school. The Auburn to Africa Project set out to adopt the village of Lui in Sierra Leone, in order to provide a school for the village's 200 children and to provide adult literacy classes for parents and young adults. This incorporated a church program by building a multi-purpose community hall as part of the project.

Nesan's other community achievements

Nesan has been involved in many other community projects and continues to be across many different aspects of life and help wherever he can. He initiated the 'Auburn Together 4 Hope' 2014 Project, targeting Suicide Awareness and Prevention. Nesan set up English classes in conjunction with Macquarie University

to help local migrants better integrate into their communities. He also set up a multicultural driving school in Auburn, to facilitate the large number of residents from diverse backgrounds learning to drive and become more mobile. Nesan has been instrumental in the partnership with Bright Employment (Auburn Community Kitchen) – an initiative that provides meals for disadvantaged residents whilst also providing hospitality training for refugees.

Nesan has also recently achieved some well-deserved recognition for his community work, including being the Runner Up in the 2013 Auburn Citizen of the Year. With all of Nesan's tireless efforts in strengthening and supporting both his local and broader communities, he is without doubt, a great ambassador and example of someone truly the Heart of the Community.