

# GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A CHANCE

## NEW PROGRAM AIMED AT DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Connections UnitingCare is encouraging young people across Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs to apply for scholarships in the newly launched South Eastern Chances program. South Eastern Chances provides support for children and young people to obtain educational, cultural and social opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them due to a lack of financial and/or broader supports.

South Eastern Chances is an innovative scholarship program that exists to:

- create opportunities that develop the interests and talents of young people, developing a sense of self belief and hope for the future;
- foster and support disadvantaged young people in the south eastern suburbs with the aim of strengthening the wider community and engaging broader support networks, including clubs, groups and schools.

'This is a great program – we're asking young people to apply for a scholarship if they can show a passion or demonstrated natural ability in educational, cultural or sporting endeavors,' says the program's manager Connections Communications and Fundraising Manager Matt Clear.

The benefits of South Eastern Chances can be far-reaching, propelling young people on to bigger and better things. As the coordinator of the program, Connections believes that by supporting and encouraging vulnerable children and young people to develop their interest and talents and pursue their dreams this will contribute to providing a better chance for them individually and the broader community into the future.

'We're very supportive of this program,' says Paul Di-Masi, Chief Executive Officer, South East Local Learning & Employment Network. 'It's great to have a program that recognises, encourages and supports disadvantaged young people – getting-in early and giving them a chance,' says Mr Di-Masi.

Young people like Zachary who experienced severe bullying forcing him to move schools have benefited from the program. He subsequently took up karate to build self esteem and in less than one year accelerated through 3 levels to be nominated to compete in the Victorian Karate Championship and then the Australian Championships. Due to family illness and financial strain, Zachary could not have attended without the help of the South Eastern Chances program. Financial assistance was provided for flights and accommodation. Of the 26 young people that participated in the event, he placed 5th overall - a fantastic result, especially for someone with such a short history within the sport. He still has a keen passion for karate and hopes to represent Australia in the Olympics one day.

The South Eastern Chances scholarship program is supported by the Hawthorn Football Club, Centre for Multicultural Youth and SELLEN (South East Local Learning & Employment Network).



**More on South Eastern Chances:**

**[www.connections.org.au/chances](http://www.connections.org.au/chances)**

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Connections is a community welfare agency of the Uniting Church's UnitingCare network in Australia providing a range of innovative and early intervention programs that support vulnerable children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.

More information at [www.connections.org.au](http://www.connections.org.au)