

27 December 2020

THE OFFICEWORKS BACK TO SCHOOL APPEAL HELPS CREATE BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR STUDENTS WHO NEED IT MOST

Today the Officeworks Back to School Appeal launches with the aim to support students across the country who need it the most through its partnership with The Smith Family.

Over the past eight years, thanks to the generosity of its customers, Officeworks has contributed \$3 million to The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* sponsorship program, supporting thousands of students needing financial assistance to pay for education and essential school supplies.

The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program provides the extra tools and resources that young Australians need to succeed at school or go on to further study or work. This partnership is an important part of the Officeworks Positive Difference Plan 2025 and its commitment to support 30,000 Australian students over five years.

The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* student 12-year-old Zoey and her mum Connie, reflect on their difficult journey after life took an unexpected turn when the family received devastating news.

"In 2015, I was diagnosed with breast cancer," says Connie. "During that time, I was unable to work. Since then, The Smith Family has helped us out in numerous ways, and they've been our support throughout these last four and a half years."

For Zoey, having access to The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program has been a great support, helping her to keep up in class and get the most out of her schooling. Being paired with a reading buddy through the *student2student* program helped Zoey improve her reading skills. She also attended a Smith Family after-school Learning Club one afternoon a week where volunteer tutors assisted her with her homework.

Zoey has big plans for her future, saying: "When I grow up, I want to be a nurse to support all the people with cancer and help them out."

Connie says she couldn't be prouder of her daughter who is always doing her best at school: "The thing that makes me so proud about Zoey is, with everything we've been through as a family, she's overcome all obstacles in leaps and bounds with the help that we have received from The Smith Family."

Officeworks Managing Director, Sarah Hunter, said: "We are proud supporters of education, and we believe that every student in Australia deserves access to a quality education. Through generous contributions from our customers and team members, last financial year we supported almost 2,300 students through The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* sponsorship."

"Our teams are really passionate about our long-term partnership with The Smith Family and are excited to launch this year's Back to School Appeal and raise awareness of the support many students need ahead of the new school year."

The Smith Family CEO, Dr Lisa O'Brien said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for the whole community to work together to tackle issues of equity and disadvantage and that's why we're very grateful for the support of Officeworks. For many families, affording the costs of their children's education can be a real struggle. The generous support of the Officeworks team and their customers will help struggling families to cover their children's basic educational expenses – such as books, uniforms, and excursions. At The Smith Family, we know that supporting a child throughout their education is critical to their future success, helping them to break the cycle of poverty," said Dr O'Brien.

This year's Appeal is on from 27th December until 7th February. By making a donation in store or online, customers help Officeworks raise vital funds to sponsor students through The Smith Family's *Learning for*

Life program. Find out more at: <insert BTS Appeal page>.

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Media enquiries

Emma Rowland

Officeworks Corporate PR Manager

E: ERowland@Officeworks.com.au

M: 0417 679 662

About Officeworks:

Established 26 years ago in Richmond, Victoria, Officeworks is committed to making bigger things happen for its customers, team, the community and stakeholders. It operates 168 stores across Australia, a website that is home to more than 40,000 products, a national call centre, and a business team that helps micro, small and medium-sized businesses start, run and grow. Officeworks offers customers a wide range of office supplies, technology, furniture, art supplies, education resources and helpful services like print & copy and on-site and remote tech support through Geeks2U – delivering an experience that is easy and engaging, no matter how customers choose to shop. Officeworks is focused on the safety, wellbeing and career progression of the more than 8,000 team members it employs. It's also dedicated to operating in a sustainable manner, including building and maintaining meaningful connections with the communities in which it operates, fundraising for its national partners and local community groups, continuing to reduce its impact on the environment and source responsibly.

About The Smith Family:

For almost 100 years The Smith Family has been helping vulnerable children. Today this national children's education charity supports young Australians in need to succeed at school, so they can create better futures for themselves. Students supported by The Smith Family live in low-income homes, with around 40% of students and 50% of their parents/carers having a health or disability issue. One in five students in Years 5–12, have attended four or more schools and one in five live in families who do not have a computer or tablet connected to the internet.

www.thesmithfamily.com.au

For The Smith Family Media Enquiries please contact:

Catherine Rodwell, Media Advisor catherine.rodwell@thesmithfamily.com.au 0450 388 033