

Good comes from bad

BRETT COX

AFTER a childhood that included two years with cancer, physical abuse and a period alone on the streets, you'd forgive Daniele Maisano for giving up on life.

It makes his achievement of setting up a charity for youths in Chullora even more remarkable.

Mr Maisano, 28, said more than 100 young people had participated in the Streetworx program since he founded it 18 months ago.

Now he wants to make it bigger and better.

The charity organises regular activities across Sydney that include handing out food, blankets and life packs to the homeless, entertaining children in hospital and cooking food for young people living on the street.

He said he was planning to start a youth program in Bankstown that would include counselling and helping troubled children get into organised sport.

"I became a man at nine when I developed cancer," he said.

"I've lived on the streets. I was beaten as a kid and I've been in trouble with the police.

"But I've had this idea for Streetworx since I was 12."

Mr Maisano says about 10 per cent of the youths who volunteer in Streetworx activities come

from troubled backgrounds like his.

Pointing to a 16-year-old boy with a criminal record who had twice tried to commit suicide, he said: "The boy's mother came to me and said: 'How can you help my son?' He's either going to be in jail or be dead".

"I thought, I've had my own depression in my life, I can relate to this kid."

Now a professional golfer, Mr Maisano will hold a Charity Golf Day in December at Macquarie Links International Golf Club to raise money for Streetworx.

He is looking for local businesses to lend support to the event.

Bankstown Hospital pediatric ward unit manager Linda Burns told the *Express* the Streetworx volunteers had recently visited the hospital dressed as clowns.

"Their support helped put a big smile on some little faces," she said.

Mr Maisano said he hoped to spread the program across Sydney one day.

"Youths need support and direction, and that's what we provide," he said.

"It's so beautiful that in reality it's youths helping other youths."

□ To find out more or lend a financial hand, call Mr Maisano on 0433 165 453.



Streetworx founder Daniele Maisano is organising a Charity Golf Day at Macquarie Links International Golf Club.

Picture: NICK BLOUKOS