

Young creatives shine at "Expressions Festival"

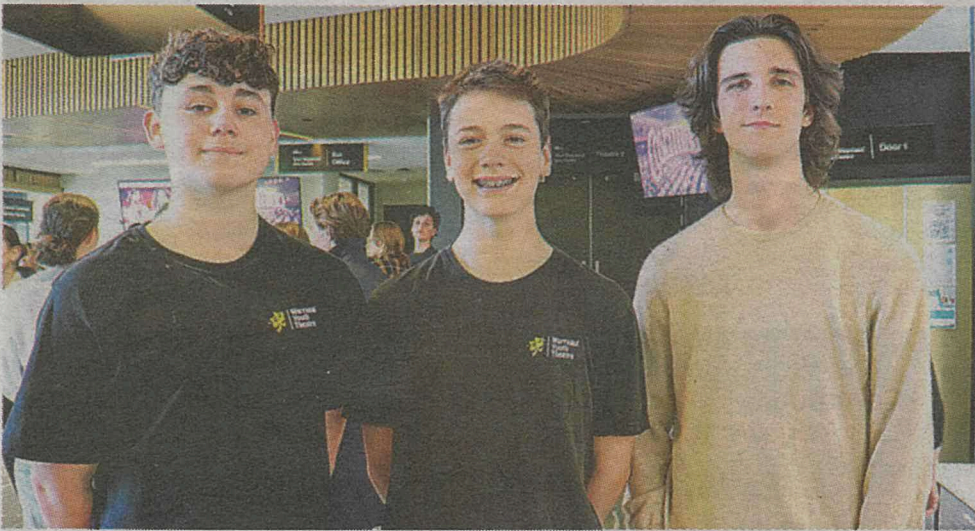


Left: The Expressions Festival young producers (from left) Ethan Smith, Elizabeth Hall and Inara Wilhelms, (front, from left) Flynn Francis, Abbey Peterson and Leila De Groot. Photograph by LAUREN MURPHY

Below: Celebrating their friends' creative works are Ashleigh Kubale, Toby Duck, Max Forward and Alex Oxley.



Showcasing their artworks created through the L.I.F.E program are Taylor, Coby and Georgia and Cindy from the L.I.F.E program.



Warragul Youth Theatre performers Edwin Pappin, Kaelan Lowe and Angus Parker performed a snippet of their recent show "Hammered - A Thor and Loki Play" at the festival.



Left: Regional Arts Victoria senior manager creative learning Pippin Remi, Future Reset co-ordinator Stephanie Clark and Regional Arts Victoria Gippsland Regional manager Lyndel Moore were all smiles at the Expressions Festival.

Right: Enjoying the atmosphere of the Expressions Festival are AJ Glaister, Regi Brown and Lucinda Reeves.

Gippsland's young creatives took over the West Gippsland Arts Centre recently for the inaugural "Expressions Festival".

Celebrating talents across visual and performing arts, 65 young Gippslanders showcased their creative works on the stage and throughout the WGAC foyer at the Regional Arts Victoria and WGAC collaborative event.

Led by Regional Arts Victoria future reset co-ordinator Stephanie Clark and a team of six young producers, Abbey Peterson, Flynn Francis, Inara Wilhelms, Leila De Groot, Ethan Smith and Elizabeth Hall, the intention of the "Expressions Festival" was to provide young people with a platform to express their perspectives and experiences.

"I grew up performing in the original Xpressions Festival and Warragul Youth Theatre, proudly using WGAC as a second home," Stephanie said. "That festival sparked my love of theatre, original works and writing. People telling me that my voice and art matter changed my life, and to be able to give that to a new generation of creatives is incredibly important."

The festival theme was "My Happy Place:

Self Expression as a Young Person in 2024". Artists were encouraged to explore different spaces, both physical and emotional, where they felt most at home and authentic.

In their opening speech, young producers Inara and Abbey explained the important role that art plays in supporting youth mental health.

"In a world where self-expression is a form of communication and a tool for connection, (the festival) invited these artists to explore and share their unique interpretations of what it means to find joy, comfort and belonging in their own experiences and identities," Inara said.

"Art plays a very powerful role in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, especially for young people," Abbey said.

"Engaging in creative expression allows individuals to process emotions, reduce stress, and build self-confidence in a safe and supportive environment. By fostering creativity, art not only provides emotional relief, but also cultivates a sense of purpose, belonging and personal achievement, all of which are essential for maintaining strong mental health."



Year 12 student Rebecca Place showcased her book "Macbeth" at the Expressions Festival. The book is a Gen Z, pop culture themed re-write of Shakespeare.



Liberal candidate for Monash Mary Aldred and Kellie Phillips from the West Gippsland Arts Centre celebrating the hard work of the young creatives.



Year 11 student Alyssa Munckhof performs some of her original music at the WGAC forecourt.



Young singer Lily Leggett travelled from Swifts Creek in East Gippsland to perform at the Expressions Festival.

