Awakenings Festival

Bernadette O'Shannessy, Awakenings Festival

My discussion will be based around the health benefits of participating in an arts festival such as Awakenings. It will begin with testimonials from participants—some of which have been used as letters to the editor and included in funding applications for people to return and present their own workshops.

I will then present the findings from a VicHealth Evaluation that is due to come out at the end of February. The research investigated selected outcomes at the individual, organisational and community level to provide an evidence-based measurement of the mental health impacts of these festivals in all sectors.

Preliminary reports from surveys collected for this research, as well as other surveys taken at the Festival, show a great increase in participant’s individual empowerment, sense of community, inspiration to get involved, opportunities to socialise and meet someone new.

Presenter

Bernadette (Bernie) O’Shannessy is the Administrative Assistant/ Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Awakenings Festival. She began helping out as a volunteer with the festival in 2002. She soon became hooked and jumped at the chance to become more involved when she was offered a part-time position as administrative assistant in 2003. This required attending all co-ordinator meetings and taking the minutes, which in turn lead to her taking on the voluntary role of Volunteer Co-ordinator in 2004 along with various other volunteer roles within the festival. She was employed part time by Grampians disAbility Advocacy Association as a disability advocate in the Wimmera region in 2004.