

Festival brings community together

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PURE JOY: Wangaratta Grit and Resilience Program coordinator Bek Nash-Webster tries her hand at creating giant bubbles during Friday's Grit and Resilience Festival held in King George Gardens. PHOTO: Milk & Honey Moments

A perfect spring evening in Wangaratta's King George Gardens provided the ideal setting for the fourth annual Grit and Resilience Festival last Friday.

Wangaratta Grit and Resilience Program coordinator Bek Nash-Webster said it was difficult to determine just how many people flowed through the gardens during the two-and-a-half hour festival, but it was more than enough to instil a feeling of community in those who were there.

The festival is held each year on World Mental Health Day, 10 October, and aims to promote connection, inclusion and community spirit.

It brings together local mental health services and activity groups to showcase how they support wellbeing across the Rural City of Wangaratta, and offers locals the chance to discover the many social and activity groups on offer in the community through interactive stalls manned by group members.

"We had so many volunteers for the event, which was wonderful, and some of the reflections from those who attended mentioned that there were a lot more young people there this year, which was great to see," Bek said.

"There were lots of little kids, but also a lot of young adults, including the Galen College year 12 music students who entertained the crowd."

Visitors to the event included singer Katie Noonan, who was due to take the stage at the Wangaratta Performing Arts and Convention Centre that evening and took time to check out the festival.

"Our working group for the festival, Tegan Allen and Ronan Holdsworth, did a wonderful job and made this a community-run festival for fellow community members on World Mental Health Day," Bek said.

"We were really happy with the number of stallholders, which included many social groups who made connections with other groups from the area.

"Ultimately, it was a brilliant party, and based on feedback, there are very strong indications that it did create a real feeling of community."