



BRINGING OUT THE STARS IN ALL OF US!

Andrew Williams *Entertainment Columnist*

I recently came across a different form of entertainment offering that's starting to make its mark in our clubs called **STARS** and this month I wanted to share it with you. **STARS**, which is an acronym for *S*chool, *T*alent, *A*rea, *R*egion, *S*tate, is a community-based concept that appears to be another children's entertainment activity, however after some investigation on the concept I quickly learnt that it's in fact a program which is available for all age groups.

STARS was created to positively activate the community. That is, from a school perspective the **STARS** schools educational program engages students about being active and healthy, while encouraging their potential in performing arts and sports. So, how does **STARS** fit within New South Wales clubs? The concept was created by Andrew Hill, Ryde City Council's *Citizen of the Year* (in 2007) who has collaborated the **STARS** program with a few clubs and local councils with their own take on television talent competitions such as *Dancing With The Stars* and *The Voice*, as well as uniquely fun sports-based competitions.

Hill considers the **STARS** program to be an appealing and engaging way to attract people to clubs all over New South Wales. And after collaborating with a club, Hill and the **STARS** team take their **STARS** educational program to local schools to inform them about their local club's **STARS** talent tournament or sports competition. For those clubs that have taken the **STARS** program on board have staged various rounds of the competition on certain weekdays between 4pm and 6pm, which is usually a downtime for the clubs. As Hill explains,

"If your looking for something different to encourage visitation, especially during traditional downtime periods at your venue, a STARS program may be well worth investigating."

"While the children are enjoying the two-hour activity, their parents or carers are usually enjoying one of the other areas of the club. As the programs usually finish at dinner time, those clubs are then enjoying the flow-on effects to their eating areas."

When it comes to formatting, these **STARS** talent competitions have built-in flexibility with options available for staging anywhere between a single session event through to a weekly, multi-month tournament. "All of the children are encouraged to have a go, and are praised for their hard work and efforts," adds Hill. "It's not about winning, it's about having a go."

For those children who do go on to win the competition though, they not only take out their share of the prize pool, but are then invited back to have their own starring moment at the club's end-of-year Christmas concert or local council community festival.

Hill's sports-themed **STARS** program is also another available option. The **STARS** sports program has seen countless greens at bowling clubs turned into tournament spaces for fun-based sports activities. Hill enthuses, "The sports activities are a great opportunity for a club to utilise more of their sports spaces when they're usually not in use."

When I threw Hill the question of what if a club doesn't have an entertainment space or an area in which sports-based activities can be played, he was quick to point out that they would pick a local sporting ground or park to carry out the program and link the concept back to the local club by way of signage, meal deals, promotions, or other incentives.

I highlighted earlier that children are not the only targets encouraged to take part in a **STARS** program, with Hill creating programs for all ages. "Our adult programs are fun activities designed to bring out the child in all of us," he tells. "Our oldest participant recently was Betty, a 103-year-old who could still whip out a mean table tennis game!"

If your club is looking for something different in the form of entertainment or sports-based activities to encourage visitation, especially during traditional downtime periods at your venue, a **STARS** program may be well worth investigating and is sure to tick the box for your club's potential community engagement. For further information, simply jump online and visit starstv.com.au. Alternatively, contact Andrew Hill via telephone **0447 827 788** or email info@starstv.com.au ♣



ABOUT ANDREW WILLIAMS:

Coming from a musical family and performing professionally in NSW clubs for the past 28 years, Andrew is a multi-Mo and ACE Award winner who has worked for and with Australia's biggest music booking agencies and promoters, and has the creator of various tailor-made shows. Having worked with Mounties as Group Entertainment Coordinator for almost three years, he recently joined Hurstville Council in Sydney's south to oversee.