

Strut dares us to be different

GRAPEVINE Group is daring the Mackay community to make a difference at the Dare to be Different Porters Strut this Saturday.

The group is planning to strut their stuff, and their message using the theme: Have a Ball... and make a difference, distributing post-cards to spectators on suicide intervention.

The Grapevine Group invites people to join in ball-gowns, top hats, boas and masquerade masks in the Festival of Arts Strut.

The group has created masks for members, which will later be auctioned at the Festival's Final Event at the Grand Mercure to raise funds to sponsor high school teachers and police through the Livingworks Intervention program.

Grapevine Group chairperson Debbie Knight said this was the third year the group had been involved in the Strut.

"We have had excellent response from the public in the past," she said.

"The created masks that many Grapevine volunteers will be wearing are donated for auction to different events and we have an ongoing collection held in storage for the annual Mayor's Charity Ball fundraiser.

"Many artists have contributed to the collection and we invite local artists to make masks that we can auction."

Ms Knight said Grapevine Group has been well received in the arts world, with artists from as far away as Melbourne contributing to the masquerade mask collection.

"Each creator signs the mask before donating them to the group and I have been talking to Lifeline Queensland about how Grapevine contribute to a statewide program.

"It's exciting to see how the Grapevine Group has progressed in just tyears. To date we have assisted over 33 local teachers and police through the program and have been fundraising to train another Livingworks trainer," Ms Knight said.

"The RADF grant, that al-

lowed us to establish a website which profiles local artists and events while offering a list of resources on where to go for assistance if you or a person you are concerned about needs help, has had excellent response.

"Over the past 12 months we have been recognised by the national Arts Business Partnership as a success story for our awareness and fundraising campaign held in conjunction with Macrossan & Amiet solicitors last year.

"We were also generously supported by the Mackay Trust Foundation in 2006 as one of two beneficiaries.

"We want to make a difference. It's about having a positive focus, doing something fun and achieving something that keeps us all enthusiastic. The statistics are scary – the number of deaths in Australia from suicide is greater than those from car accidents. If what we do is drawing attention to help for people in need then we are happy to be involved in making a difference."



MASKS MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Sisters and local teachers, Rachel Joyce, left, and Andrea Lewis, participated in the Grapevine Group's Mask Making Workshop held on the verandah at Old Town Hall on Sunday July 15. Picture: Contributed