

Universal nature of youth

YOUNG refugees had their day in the sun last Tuesday with a free festival at Dandenong's Hemmings Park to celebrate World Refugee Day.

Families relaxed in winter sunshine with a halal barbecue while youth played basketball, took over the skate park, tried African drumming and took part in an Aboriginal dance demonstration.

Roving puppeteers and face-painting entertained the littlies.

Later in the day, musicians and dancers rocked new youth venue The Castle in a showcase of young local talent.

Organiser Chris Hortin, from the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, said the event was partly about bringing together young refugees and Australian-born young people.

It helped break down negative stereotypes that contributed to government policies that could make life difficult for refugees, she said.

"A lot of people think refugees choose to come to Australia and that's not the case," Ms Hortin said.

"People are uprooted and have to flee often without saying goodbye (to friends and family)."

Young refugees faced "the same issues other Australian young people face in negotiating your identity and those crucial formative years, but there's an extra layer of challenges in relation to the refugee experience", she added.



Louisianne joins in the festivities celebrating World Refugee Day.

Pictures: VALERIU CAMPAN. N52OS402



Dancing Jida Murray Gulpillil.



Melinda Marshall D'Artist & infamous perform at The Castle.



Farid, 12, has his face painted by Francis Russo.



Blane Broumhall goes to the birds.