

'light up' Walmer

A project to create a culture of integrated art in the Bay

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DRIVEN by a passion for arts, a group of Nelson Mandela Bay actors is hosting an arts festival in Walmer this weekend to raise funds for a venue to teach aspiring performing and visual artists in the city.

The festival, taking place on Sunday at the Walmer Town Hall, is the brainchild of drama teacher Sharon Rother and actors Phambili Ngcayisa and Gift Buqa, who initiated a project called *Isithatha* (light).

The aim of the project is to raise funds to create a space that will provide an outlet for artists.

"We want to create a culture of integrated art, not only in Walmer, but in the entire city," Rother said.

She said the idea for the festival was also to get the youth off the streets and to get a venue where their talents would be nurtured.

The festival will be an opportunity for Bay artists to get exposure and showcase their talent.

"There are 18 tables in which artists will be displaying their work. We also have a dance group, a belly dancer and a couple of guitarists as well as comedy, plays and poetry reading," Rother said.

"People will be surprised by the talent they don't normally see."

Buqa said under *Isithatha*, Walmer children – especially those aspiring to be artists – would be given an opportunity to explore their talent.

"When we initiated the project, we felt we needed to share the little knowledge we have with the kids.

"This project will not only assist them in their acting skills or any other artistic skills, but will help instill a sense of discipline and pride."

The project would also boost the youth's confidence and self-esteem, Buqa said.

"We have got very big dreams and judging from the response we have received from people, we are confident we will see those dreams come true," Rother said.

The trio have been working on various theatre projects over the past three years, including the acclaimed *Master Harold and the Boys* by Athol Fugard, which was staged at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival earlier this year.

The festival starts at 10am and entrance to the venue is R10 for adults. Free entry for children under 12.