

# Amanda finds right track

AMANDA, 22, has done it tougher than most her age.

In and out of foster care since 14, the Geelong woman has battled with family life, the bottle, and a drug addiction.

Reflecting on those years, it scares her to think where she might have ended up.

"Shooting-up probably, or I might not even be here at all," Amanda (not her real name) said.

"I was smoking dope and drinking every day. Stuff was happening at home and at

school. I did it to get the thoughts out of my head."

But Amanda beat the odds that life dished out, and is now a grounded, healthy young woman with hopes and aspirations for the future.

She went to BAYSA Youth Services and, after six months, beat both her addictions.

With the program's support she's now working full-time and is living in a "proper house".

In two years the project has helped engage more than 238 young people in the region into clinical treatment.

An indication of its success, BAYSA has been nominated for the excellence in services for young people award at the National Drug and Alcohol awards in Sydney on June 23.

BAYSA manager Paul Weight said he hoped the award would help in securing Federal or State Government funding to ensure the outreach work could continue beyond September this year.

"To be recognised as a finalist is rewarding and deserving for our three outreach workers," Mr Weight said.

"We are all optimistic that the State and Federal governments will commit to a proven outreach program. If we don't receive long-term funding, the project will not continue."

In the future Amanda plans to study social work and help others who find themselves in a similar situation to hers.

She credits her new life to the program.

"They are amazing people. They showed me you can have fun without alcohol, and how to be healthy."



**Creative zone:** BAYSA's Paul Weight with youth worker Belinda Mitchell and community development worker Shannon Luttrell in the creative arts centre.

## Creative direction

BAYSA youth services recently opened a new Creative Arts Centre geared towards young people taking part in drug and alcohol treatment programs.

The centre in Gordon Ave, Geelong West, includes a visual arts studio, computer design and film editing suite, woodwork room, kitchen and counselling rooms.

Manager of BAYSA drug prevention and treatment programs Paul Weight said the centre gave young people aged between 12 and 21 a chance to pursue their interests while getting treatment and preparing for employment and further study.

He said alcohol was the most widely abused substance among young people, followed by cannabis.

The centre is dedicated to the memory of Peter Betts, who was chair of BAYSA for 22 years.