

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Thanks to the continued support of Amanda Armstrong's 'Fall in Light' events and with help from Troys House of Music and Monterey Guitars, the campaign's 'Guitars for Schools' program is about to distribute an additional 57 guitars to school students in Victoria.

We've been busily recruiting schools to the program, inviting them each to nominate students they consider to be worthy recipients of a free guitar.

Thomastown Secondary College music coordinator, Kylie Villela, joined the program during the pilot phase last year and saw a dramatic improvement in the playing and confidence of her student, Chelsea Turner. Kylie's five recommended students will all benefit by having their own instrument because, she says, they've all shown true dedication to learning, despite not having a guitar of their own.

'Alex has a family that is quite musical and he's likely to receive support from family members in his quest to develop musically. He joined the school guitar program with basic guitar skills already in place. He often asks to use a guitar during lunch time,' she says.

'Then there's Richard. He began lessons in year 7 and has been a diligent student who is rarely absent. Richard is a quiet student who has demonstrated anxiety about playing to a large audience. Providing Richard with a guitar for home practice will greatly enhance his confidence to play to a larger audience.

'Christopher also began lessons in year 7. He took a risk at the end of last year to perform a cover song with two fellow music students, before an audience of 150 Year 7-10 students. Being somewhat introverted, Christopher's decision to play guitar for the Unit Revue took all by surprise! He and his

band received a very encouraging applause – an experience which did wonders for his confidence.

'Dominika is a student with a permanent and serious medical condition but she refuses to let this restrict her involvement in extra-curricular activities. She is another of the students who has asked to borrow a guitar during lunch-times.

'Nives has been taking guitar lessons since primary school. She is quite talented and works hard to develop her skills. Having a guitar for home practice will give her an opportunity to develop her guitar technique and skills to an advanced level.'

One of the prerequisites for participating schools is the involvement of a committed and enthusiastic guitar teacher who will create opportunities for the five students to play together.

In the case of Cheltenham Secondary College, that's Rowan Lucas. 'He has been on staff for three years and during that time the program has strengthened remarkably,' says Assistant Principal, Pam Noonan in her written submission to join the program. 'He is a dedicated, innovative teacher who inspires trust and confidence in our students.'

Together, Pam and Rowan have decided on guitars for an all-girl group. 'We have five Middle School girls who have already shown musical dedication and promise. Our girls need every encouragement as guitar classes tend to be dominated by boys,' says Pam.

Jessica is in Year 7. She loves the idea of having her own guitar and being in a practice

group with other girls:

'I think it's good to be in an all girls group because us girls can communicate with each other easier than if we try to talk to the guys. Guitar is a very important skill in my life because it is something I will have a knowledge of for the rest of my life.'

For Michelle, also in Year 7, there is a special family connection which has spurred her love of guitar:

'The reason I started playing guitar was because my uncle plays the guitar. I always watched him play and he was so good. I wanted to be just like him, imagining that one day I would be a rock star. So I started having lessons at school. I look forward to my guitar lesson every week because I enjoy challenging myself and getting new music to practice. I think it would be good to play in an all girls group because you can meet new people who share your interests in guitar, you can challenge yourself to keep up with the other members and most importantly you have fun while you are entertaining others.'

We will be profiling more of the participating schools and students on the campaign website.

2006 participating schools include:

- Cheltenham Secondary College
- Keilor Downs Secondary College
- Kumai College
- Melton Secondary College
- North Geelong Secondary College
- Portland Secondary College
- Thomastown Secondary College