

life & **style**

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 2018

Weekend

JUDY PIPPEN

MEET THE VOLUNTEER MAKING A COLOURFUL DIFFERENCE TO THE COAST'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

TASTE

SPICE UP CHEESECAKE WITH SOME REFRESHING LEMON MYRTLE

BUSINESS

SAVOUR THE COAST'S FRESHEST PADDOCK-TO-PLATE EXPERIENCES



Judy Phippen volunteers her time to tutor Spiral's Theatre Workshops every Friday morning at the Black Box Theatre in William Street, Nambour.

PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON

CREATIVITY IN THE BLOOD

VOLUNTEER JUDY PIPPEN HAS SPENT A LIFETIME IN THE PERFORMING ARTS, EITHER ON STAGE OR AS AN ADMINISTRATOR, AND IS NOW LENDING HER FORMIDABLE SKILLS TO NAMBOUR-BASED NOT-FOR-PROFIT DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDER, SPIRAL

WORDS: LAYNE WHITBURN

Imagine a Saturday night along Ocean Street with no live music, a weekend without artesian markets or a social calendar with not one local festival or event. The Sunshine Coast without the arts wouldn't be very shiny.

One woman on a colourful mission to develop and nurture the creative industry of our region is Judy Phippen, and she's doing it all from her heart, volunteering on average 20 hours per week for the cause.

"I am constantly amazed by the vitality of the cultural life of the Coast," Judy said.

"I think the arts are absolutely vital to our evolution. The fact that we have this creativity in our life, that we can free that side of ourselves that's innovative and think freely. To me, that's just so basic to being human, and I believe that the arts are the cradle for that."

At 71, Judy has an outstanding career behind her, having worked in French theatre schools on a grant from the Australia Council in the 70s, organised more theatre workshops

than she can remember in Brisbane, spent 15 years as a Feldenkrais practitioner, became a movement trainer with actors and drama educators at QUT, and finally completed a PhD in Performance Practice at QUT in 1999.

"After a period as a Catholic nun in Sydney, my life has been a search for learning, always with theatre at its heart," Judy added.

"I have volunteered in community theatre wherever I have lived and worked in professional theatre when I could.

"I spent some years working with Arts Queensland, managing the regional Arts Development Fund, which is where I learned about funding from the other side.

"I had the privilege to travel the state training RADF committees in funds management. I still work as an external assessor on several state and local government arts funding programs.

"I really value this as it gives me a helicopter view of the sector and I learn

something from every application I review."

Nowadays, Judy volunteers her time working on the board of Spiral, a not-for-profit disability service provider based in Nambour.

With an extraordinary background in theatre, both in training and experience, Judy also tutors for Spiral's Theatre Workshops every Friday morning at the Black Box Theatre in William Street, Nambour, where 30 students gather and enjoy learning experiences that enhance their lives.

"Working with them is so rewarding. I am inspired by how the staff create every opportunity for the participants to make their own choices so we can build a theatre event together," Judy said.

"There can be a lot of receiving as well as giving in volunteering."

The other board Judy serves on is Sunshine Coast Live, the Sunshine Coast Theatre Alliance. Currently, 12 theatre groups are members of the network, sharing resources, audition and performance

information.

"I have undertaken to canvas the members, assess training needs and create a year's workshop calendar to answer them," Judy explained.

"This is a vital and committed community of creatives with over 800 combined members spending time in theatre activity on the Coast.

"Of course, I am writing a grant for them to develop the program!"

There's obviously no rest for the wicked, as Judy's volunteer work doesn't stop there.

"The other activity in my all singing, all dancing seventy-first year is the ukulele," she said.

"As a member of the eight-strong group the Uka-lalians, I perform in nursing homes and respite centres and we have been invited to develop a program for pre-schoolers so they can see that oldies can still enjoy themselves!

"I continue to learn in U3A ukulele classes each week that are affordable and life



Judy Pippen approaches life's challenges with gusto because she knows no other way.

PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON

ABOUT SPIRAL

SPIRAL stands for **S**upporting **P**eople **I**n **R**espite and **L**ifestyle.

It is a not-for-profit disability service provider based at Nambour.

Spiral was established in 1981 - the International Year of the Disabled Person.

Spiral supports individuals who are eligible for Government-funded services in parts of the Sunshine Coast Council region.

Spiral provides:

- Individual social support
 - In home respite
 - Small group community engagement focusing on skill development and vocational opportunities.
- For more information, visit www.spiralinc.org.au.



For Sr. Jean Marie (alias Judy Pippen) the lures of the world were winning by 1970! PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Judy Pippen awarded the Creative Award at the 2018 Sunshine Coast Australia Day Awards held at the Events Centre, Caloundra. PHOTO: WARREN LYNAM



Judy Pippen standing in front of artist Larissa Salton's 'The Old Nambour Bakery Wall'. PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON



The Uka-lalians in rehearsal. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

affirming."

With new projects always on the go, there's no chance of Judy slowing down any time soon.

In fact, she's already given retirement a go. This resulted in her founding the not-for-profit, organisation, Creative Regions, a company still going strong today producing performances, exhibitions, digital content and hybrid arts experiences which connect communities, governments and industry through the creativity of artists.

Judy retired from Creative Regions in 2011 due to a battle with breast cancer and moved from Woodgate Beach, near Bundaberg, to the Sunshine Coast to be closer to her mother and sister.

Judy had a bilateral mastectomy and to celebrate survival, she got two dragons tattooed on her chest.

As a true fighter, Judy went on to volunteer for the Old Ambulance Station in

Nambour, a social enterprise which sustains itself financially to enable creativity as a core strategy for growing community well-being, social-cultural capital, innovation and employment. She finished up at the Old Ambulance Station late last year after the opportunity with Spiral popped up.

When asked about retirement, Judy's answer was a simple "no."

"I think I would be bored," Judy laughed.

"You can only go to so many coffee mornings! For me, it's all about learning and keeping your brain alive. I'm terrified every time I forget something, so learning the ukulele and working with people all help to keep me feeling young."

All of Judy's volunteered time, effort and passion doesn't go unappreciated.

Earlier this year, Judy was humbled to receive the 2018 Sunshine Coast Australia Day Award in the Creative section for her voluntary service to artists and creative

industries in the region, particularly working with the Board of the Old Ambulance Station to develop the building and its programs and attracting \$200,000 in funding for maintenance and projects.

"I found it very reinforcing of who I am and it felt like a reward for a lifetime of volunteering," Judy said.

"Because you're a volunteer, you don't ever set out with any expectation of reward, that's just the nature of volunteering... So never having looked for an award, I felt like it was a crown of some sort. Something I really valued."

Judy said the arts and theatre have always been at the heart of her life and it makes her extremely happy that she can now go back into volunteering into the industry she loves.

"Wherever I have lived and whatever age, I've always been either in a choir, in a play, joined a theatre company or started some initiative to start theatre," she said.

"It's been in my blood for a very long time.

"Volunteering on boards is a way of working where decisions are made and you can try to make a difference. After leaving the Old Ambulance Station late last year, Spiral invited me to join their board and I am committed to doing that because it is a critical time for them with the roll-out of the NDIS and I would like to understand how that works and assist in promoting the organisation and exploring their funding opportunities.

"So, it's not just a matter of giving my time as a volunteer, but I'm learning. I'm a lifelong learner. And that's what the ukulele is about too. I'm trying to develop a new musical instrument at this late, in my 71st year with my arthritic fingers!"

So, don't expect to see this superstar in the retirement village any time soon, unless of course, she's performing there in her ukulele band.

Free Presentation on 22nd March with Ben Alexander our expedition specialist. *Bookings essential*



ANTARCTIC EXPLORER

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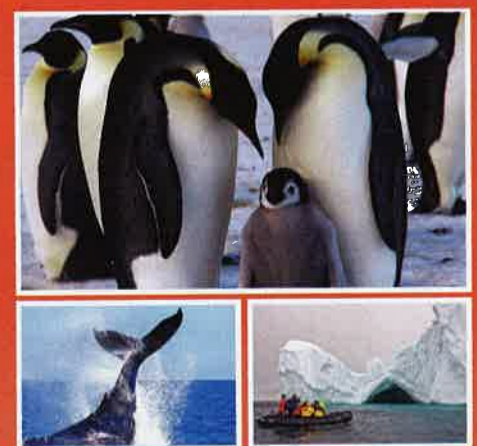
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