

Drums provide an outlet for mentally ill

By LIAM CROY

THE Swan Mental Health Service, in partnership with not-for-profit organisation Holyoake, is using African drums as a remedy for mental illness and social isolation.

Developed in the Wheatbelt to engage young indigenous men, DRUMBEAT is now spreading into schools, prisons and communities across Australia.

In a comfortable setting, participants are taught to use rhythm to express and understand their emotions.

North Metro Area Health Service spokeswoman Dr Ann Hodge said the program was an innovative way of encouraging co-operation and building confidence.

"The African drum is the perfect medium," she said.

"It's easy to play, which reduces the fear of failure, and playing is physical so it releases tension."

Trish Vanderwall, who has been attending DRUMBEAT sessions at the South Guildford Centre, said it had given her a stronger connection to community.

"Because of my mental illness I tend to isolate myself and find it hard to reach out for support," she said.

"Grace, our drumming teacher, has a gentle manner and it rubs off on us as we play together.

"I'd recommend this for anyone who is stressed or feels alienated."

For more information, call the South Guildford Centre on 9279 6323 or Holyoake Midland on 9274 7055.



DRUMBEAT participant Trish Vanderwall (front) with therapy assistant Tony Bubb and drum teacher Grace Trusso.