

Hip-hop's massive for Cat

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CAT Sweeney is happy to take the rap for Jungle City Massive, which uses hip-hop to bring together culturally diverse young people in the west.

Since 2005, Jungle City Massive has focused on developing hip-hop dance groups to promote respect and understanding, and counter racism.

Last week, the Foundation for Young Australians announced Ms Sweeney had been selected to take part in a year-long mentoring program so she can further develop her community project.

The Footscray resident, busily teaching some 30 hip-hoppers and co-ordinating the program, hopes to find a permanent performance space and formulate a business plan for Jungle City Massive.

She said there was an increasing demand from young people to get involved, but help had come from organisations such as Maribyrnong Council and Footscray Community Arts Centre.

"[Growing up in St Albans and Footscray], I've seen that a lot of new communities have to deal with racism and stereotypes," Ms Sweeney said. "Helping people in the western suburbs is very close to my heart."

Ms Sweeney, 26, said ultimately she would love to work on the project full-time.

"Because it covers a lot of different artforms like dance and deejay-ing, hip-hop is accessible to a wide range of young people."

Over the past four years, almost 100 people aged between six and 23 have taken part in the Jungle City Massive program.

Ms Sweeney is studying youth work at university and now fully engaged in that field.



New high: Cat Sweeney finds hip-hop the right way to counter racism and promote understanding. Picture: Michael Copp