

# Festival writers are mostly local

*From poems to film scripts to song lyrics, the Off The Page literary festival has it all covered, writes Janie Walker.*

**T**HE LINE-UP for the Off the Page Kapiti Literary Festival hasn't needed to import the quality writers that are taking part – many of them live on the Kapiti Coast.

August 13, 14, and 15 at the Paraparaumu Library sees writers including Kate De Goldi, Vivienne Plumb, and locals Dinah Hawken and Briar Grace-Smith taking workshops and participating in panel discussions during the festival.

Entry prices have been lowered to encourage more young people to participate and organisers are hoping that having a workshop on song lyrics, led by Doug Coombs and Elan Mills (respectively from bands Too Funky and The Volunteers) and Wayne Mason (Apra Silver Scroll winning writer of *Nature*), will give young people the chance to gain confidence in expressing themselves.

Key organiser, published writer, and local, Linda Niccol, says the festival is about looking at how diverse writing can be.

"It's not just about books but about giving

the community a different way of reading," she says.

"[For example] people who enjoy movies might want to go to the writing-for-film discussion. This festival is unique in that way and I'd be surprised if there's another regional model like it."

The Kapiti Coast is known for visual arts; and with this second Off the Page Kapiti Literary Festival, Ms Niccol says the region will showcase its literary talent as well.

Ms Niccol was involved in the first Off the Page festival and says it was arose out of a love of libraries.

"Libraries are under threat, so anything that gets people into libraries is great. The Friends of the Library have been fantastic in organising this event.

"For me it's very stimulating being involved in something like this. I have a life here on the coast and interacting with like-minded people is really important."

Ms Niccol has published two collections of short fiction titled *The Geometry of Desire* and *The Temperature of Water*. Her film script of her short story *The Handkerchief* won the 2006 British Short Screenplay Competition and she co-write Kiwi film *Second-Hand Wedding*.

"I'm a fully-fledged addict to writing," Ms Niccol says. "This is my life."

Celebrating local writers is another reason

the festival was created.

"It's often a solitary occupation so it's great to be able to get writers out from behind their computers. The festival is also to help the community realise writers are professionals who don't just twiddle their thumbs. It is their 'real' job."

Off the Page is offering workshops in poetry and writing song lyrics, and panel discussions on writing for film and writing for children.

The festival starts on Friday night when the winners from the festival's 500-word short story competition will be announced. Competition co-ordinator Janet Secker says the calibre of the 149 entries were received was very good.

"The ones that stood out were sensitive and very well-written. A few of the entrants needed to think more carefully about the short story genre – particularly plot – as some were essays."

Next year Ms Niccol hopes to include playwriting.

"The festival is flexible. Different kinds of writing will keep it fresh and alive."

The festival starts on Friday, August 14, with the launch from 7.30pm-9.30pm and runs through the weekend at the Paraparaumu Library.

■ For more information phone 04 905 0834 or go to: [www.kapiticoastlibraries.govt.nz](http://www.kapiticoastlibraries.govt.nz)



**Write stuff:** Local writer Linda Niccol has momentarily put down her pen to organise the literary festival. Photo: Janie Walker