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MEDIA RELEASE

WANGARATTA SETS A GOOD STRIKE RATE

The Wangaratta junior fire brigade is continuing its good strike rate both on and off the running track.

This year Wangaratta will field two under 14 teams and two under 17 teams at the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Urban Junior Championships in Warrnambool on February 24-25. Sixty eight teams from across Victoria will take part in the annual event.

Nineteen juniors from Wangaratta Urban Fire Brigade will form the teams.

Coach John Seymour says the teams are shaping up well, but it's the bigger picture encouraging young people to become volunteer firefighters that's making a long term mark.

"It's extremely rewarding to see them go through and do their training to become volunteer firefighters," John said.

"We have a very good strike rate with getting young people to do their minimum skills training and quite a few have gone on to join, including lieutenants in neighbouring brigades."

"If they do minimum skills training as their lives change they'll still have those valuable skills and are more likely to rejoin as members."

Wangaratta has about 20 junior members, often following in their parents' footsteps or joining from neighbouring rural brigades.

"We don't go out and recruit but we usually have about 20 juniors," John said.

"They have been training well and competing at the demos. They're improving each week."

John said he was pleased with the juniors progress as all four teams have improved as a result of their efforts training twice weekly at the Apex Park track. On January 20 they competed at Mooroopna with Will Cheshire winning the under 17 One Man Marshall with Daniel Whieldon coming second. Wangaratta A won the under 14 Striking Second Disc with all four teams having good runs scoring places to gain Aggregate points.

On February 3 Beth Evans, Elizabeth Grant, Bronte Huggins and Mitch Huggins set a new record when they won Striking One Disc Twice at Bendigo. They also combined to place 2nd

in Striking First and Second Discs. Luke Cheshire and Shyla McKenney showed their skills placing 4th in the Wet Hose for Two Competitors. On Saturday the teams continued their improvement in times at Echuca with Will Cheshire winning the One Man Marshall.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said junior brigades and the championships were the best way for young people to become engaged and learn practical skills before being old enough to attend fires.

“The VFBV State Urban Junior Championships can set young people on a pathway to serve their communities,” Mr Ford said.

“They encourage family participation and help to instil a sense of community service and volunteerism in young people while raising the importance of local fire brigades,” Mr Ford said.

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