

Dancing to the beat

Eve Lamb

Castlemaine's Ned Middleton does not shy away from the fact he was born with down syndrome. Nor does the 22-year-old aspiring actor let the fact he has down syndrome stop him doing what he loves best - dance.

In fact right now he is preparing to get up on stage and demonstrate his dance prowess as part of a special event happening at Castlemaine's Theatre Royal this Sunday afternoon.

Celebrating International Day of People with a Disability, this Sunday's event at the Theatre Royal, will include a unique dance performance featuring local dancers with e.motion21 dance group - including Ned.

It will also feature a special preview screening of new documentary, *Raising The Bar*, and another short documentary called *No Hands*.

Raising The Bar is a moving documentary which follows six remarkable young people with down syndrome - including Ned - who met at the World Down Syndrome Congress in Chennai India last year.

It tells the story of three Victorian dancers and three Indian dancers.

Not one to hide from new challenges, nor from pushing the boundaries of his comfort zone, Ned travelled to India last

year to participate in the World Down Syndrome Congress.

This week he summed up the experience of being involved in the documentary with one word - "big".

Ned was looking forward to his final rehearsal when the *Castlemaine Mail* caught up with him in his local studio.

"I'm doing a solo dance all by myself," he enthused.

It's not the only large achievement for the Castlemaine local who last Friday completed his Cert II in Dance through Bendigo's Seven Turns Dance Studio and Ausdance.

"That was a big achievement for someone with down syndrome," Ned's father Ian Lillington says of his son's dance course graduation. Ned trains locally on Monday and Wednesday nights to perfect his dance moves.

"My favourite is break dancing because of the flexibility," he says.

"I have hip hop dancing on Monday night."

Apart from one other preview showing in Melbourne, this Sunday's special event in Castlemaine will be the only chance to catch *Raising The Bar* ahead of its commercial distribution, Ian says.

Sunday's dance performance and documentary screenings will take place at the Theatre Royal from 2pm.



Castlemaine's Ned Middleton is preparing for a special dance performance this weekend.