

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Eat Better, Play Harder, Live Longer program

Project Date:

October 2011 - March 2012

Project Location:

Wirrabirra Primary School, Gosnells and Neerigen Brook Primary School, Armadale

Target Group:

Parents and families

Background

The Community Development Foundation's Eat Better, Play Harder, Live Longer program encourages parents to advocate a healthy lifestyle to their family's and the community.

Objectives

- Increase the level of physical activity of parents, and subsequently their children and the community.
- Promote healthy eating.
- Increase awareness of chronic disease and how to reduce associated risk factors.

What happened?

- Three physical activity sessions were provided each week at each school.
- Forty one physical activity sessions were conducted throughout the program (27 at Wirrabirra Primary School and 14 at Neerigen Brook Primary School).
- Parents who regularly attended the physical activity classes were provided with an accelerometer to count their steps.
- Ten two hour cooking classes were run fortnightly by the South Metropolitan Public Health Unit at the schools.
- Involvement in physical activity such as Jump Rope for Heart, walkathons and walking to school was encouraged.
- Messages on chronic disease prevention was discussed at the physical activity and cooking classes and guest speakers spoke about diabetes and obesity. Resources on these topics were distributed to parents.
- Parents were encouraged to be involved in their child's sport and recreation activities.

Results

- Across the two schools, more than 19 hours of health related activities were delivered each week during school term.
- At Wirrabirra Primary School about 12-14 participants attended physical activity sessions and 8-10 participants attended the cooking classes.
- At Neerigen Brook Primary School, five participants attended each physical activity session and 10 participants attended the cooking classes.
- Eighteen participants completed the Eat.Play.Live Bronze Level in Term One, and will start the Silver Level in Term Two.
- Before starting the Eat.Play.Live program over half of the participants were walking less than 3,000 steps a day. This number increased to over 5,200 steps per day on average. The most engaged participants (top 20%) increased their step count from 5,000 steps per day to 9,500.
- Fitness circuit classes proved to be successful with school staff also taking part.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION continued

- Parents swapped sitting on the couch with their children to exercising the dog and walking their children to school instead of driving.
- Parents continued their physical activity throughout the school holidays.
- Since participating in the cooking classes a number of parents have cooked the recipes at home for their children and family's.
- Parent champions at Wirrabirra Primary School are keen to run the cooking classes themselves in Term Two.
- One school is planning a community restaurant once a term to showcase the meals they have prepared at the cooking courses.
- Where possible, schedule activities at times and locations that are convenient for participants and consider running activities together such as an information session with a "fun" activity.
- Have a regular scheduled time for activities so it becomes a habit for participants to attend.
- Engage and add value to existing programs run by local agencies where possible.

Program Partners

- The Heart Foundation
- Neerigen Brook Primary School
- Wirrabirra Primary School
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- WA Health Department – WA Healthy Schools Project
- Murdoch University
- The University of Western Australia
- The South Metropolitan Public Health Unit
- Gosnells Women's Health Service
- Local Chef - Ben Boekholt
- Calico
- City of Armadale
- City of Gosnells
- Genesis Fitness

Promotion and Integration of the Swap It campaign

- Go for 2&5 recipe cards, hats, key rings and drink bottles were used as incentives. Healthy Food Fast cookbooks were distributed as more substantial rewards for regular cooking class attendance.
- The cooking classes helped educate parents about healthy alternatives to foods; how to cook a healthy meal on a budget; how swapping takeaway foods for home cooked meals can be

cheaper; which foods to freeze; and swapping highly processed treats in children's lunchboxes for healthier home made choices.

- It was also demonstrated to parents that these changes reduced the risk of themselves and their families developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- The Swap It logo was used on The CDF website, on the cover of the program booklets, and Swap It Flyers were used at both launches. Eric the mascot was also at the launch.
- The Heart Foundation Swap It branding will continue to be used throughout the program, on The CDF website, at events and on the program booklets.

Participant quotes/comments

- One parent asked if she could add the Bronze Eat.Play.Live Certificate (which was earned by completing all core and 3 optional activities of the Bronze Level over an extended period of time) to her Curriculum Vitae as she was applying for a job.
- A parent who works a 12 hour shift overnight and also cleans houses during the day always came to the morning physical activity sessions. She said she now has more energy and is now able to run 20 minutes continuously.

Tips for others

- Consider tailoring physical activity sessions to suit all ability levels starting with easier classes and building the intensity over a number of weeks. Participation rates will be high if parents feel in control of what type of classes are being conducted.

Where to from here?

The Community Development Foundation plans to continue supporting the program at Neerigen Brook Primary School and Wirrabirra Primary School for 2012 and into 2013. Other schools have expressed an interest in being involved in the program. Networks will be developed with local agencies in these new areas including local public health units and tertiary institutions to replicate the model piloted in Armadale and Gosnells in 2012/2013.

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