

SHIRE OF GNOWANGERUP

Fitness Fun and Food

Project Date

October — November 2012

Project Location

The towns of Gnowangerup, Borden and Ongerup in the Great Southern, about 350km south east of Perth.

Target Group

People from rural and regional communities.

Background

The area's sporting activities are concentrated April to September, with one weekly fitness class being one of the few organised sports activities for the remainder of the year. It was desirable to see if residents would participate in organised physical activity in other months. Also, some foods are hard to come by and are expensive, so it was deemed useful to publicise methods of cooking basic foods healthily and in a budget.

Objectives

- Increase community knowledge of healthy eating habits.
- Demonstrate how healthy eating can apply to the family and be achieved on a budget.
- Increase the number of residents participating in physical activity and the frequency of involvement for those already so engaged.
- Increase the opportunities for adults to take part in organised sports.

Method

- Hold a free nutrition seminar for the whole community .
- Hold healthy eating classes in each town.
- Post healthy recipes on a Facebook page.
- Offer mixed netball games and walking groups.

What Happened?

- A full-day 'boot camp' was organised for a Saturday in November in Gnowangerup, which showcased exercise classes, cooking demonstrations and a nutrition seminar.
- The nutrition seminar was timed not to coincide with any other event and this resulted in close to 100% participation of the 76 people who attended the day's events. Email addresses were taken so the nutritionist could send further information to those who wanted it.
- All the participants were women.
- Almost 50 people attended two healthy cooking classes at the boot camp, based on the Food Sensations program and delivered by a local dietitian. Participants were given recipes to take home.
- Almost 80 people attended eight fitness classes, many of whom were previously relatively inactive.
- Almost 40 people joined walking groups established in the three towns.
- The mixed netball competition did not eventuate. The healthy eating classes were held during the boot camp.



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continued



Feedback

The Facebook page was deemed a great success, allowing access to healthy recipes for everyone whether they attended the sessions or not.

A crèche allowed women with young children to attend the boot camp. Most participants easily recalled simple 'Swap It' ideas and thought they had learnt a lot both about healthy eating and eating on a budget.

Tips

- Saturation advertising is a key to a successful turnout in country towns. Not only was the program advertised in every shop in the three towns but registration forms were also available in these shops. Phone texts also were used as were personal invitations made during conversation. "People like to be invited," said one organiser. Also, the deadline for registration was made flexible to accommodate latecomers.
- Timing is critical and needs to be well thought-out. Important to try and avoid clashes with other events, school holidays, harvest, etc. The idea of a mixed netball competition was abandoned because it would have followed on closely to the end of the netball season and players wanted a break.
- A school bus was hired to ensure people from one town could make events in another.

Where to from here?

Some exercise classes were so popular at the boot camp that yoga and Pilates classes have been organised for adults in Gnowangerup, as well as jazz ballet classes for children.

Participation in the walking groups suffered as expected during the summer months but one in particular has revived of its own accord.

The Shire is looking to pursue grants for similar programs and to make the boot camp an annual event.

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