

Expansion of the Aquatic and Recreation Officer Role



Background

The Shire of Lake Grace is an isolated rural community of 1,530 residents situated 345 kilometres south east of Perth, and consists of an area of 9,245 square kilometres. Lake Grace and Newdegate are two of the Shire's four communities, with an estimated 700 residents living in the town of Lake Grace and 250 living in Newdegate. Many more families live in close proximity and easy travelling distance of these towns.

Excellent recreational facilities are provided in both towns, however, these facilities are not fully utilised. The expansion of the role of the Aquatic and Recreation Officer aimed to encourage residents to become involved and participate in physical activity on a regular basis and better utilise the available facilities.



Project Objectives

- Increase physical activity participation in the towns of Lake Grace and Newdegate.
- Increase participation levels in social and fun activities with sporting groups.
- Raise awareness of the importance of physical activity within the community.
- Increase the number of trained volunteers available to conduct and support physical activity programs.

Project Strategies

- Provide activities that were identified in a community survey.
- Provide social netball, basketball and tennis games.
- Increase awareness of recreational and physical activity facilities including dual use pathways, and encourage increased use of these.
- Conduct a media awareness campaign on physical activity and available opportunities.
- Consult with the local community to further identify physical activity needs.
- Conduct youth and volunteer training to support physical activity programs.

Project Results

- Muscle Men and Aqua Fitness classes were provided, with good attendance recorded;
 - 60-80 people attended the five classes per week; and
 - Each participant exercised for 45 minutes.

- An increase in participation, particularly in the men's classes (Muscle Men).
- Social netball, basketball and tennis games were run over a period of ten weeks.
- Local community members were trained in aqua-aerobics, fitness and Bronze medallion lifesaving to assist with the delivery of programs.
- A regular fortnightly newsletter was printed in the local Lakes Links newspaper, which included exercise session timetables, physical activity advice and latest news.
- Demonstration sessions of new programs including Aqua Fitness, Fit Chicks and Muscle Men exercise classes were conducted to show community members what is involved in particular sessions.
- Cardio classes were conducted for football and hockey groups as part of pre-season training.
- A morning walk and bike ride, followed by a healthy brunch, was conducted with the Regional Be Active Coordinator.



Where to from here?

- The project is continuing for another twelve months with funding from the Shire of Lake Grace.
- All classes will continue and be promoted to the community.
- An Active Mums' program will be conducted with funding from a new Local Activity Grant.
- Additional fitness instructors from Lake Grace and Newdegate will be trained in sports and fitness programs with funding from the Department of Sport and Recreation. They will be employed to develop and conduct new and extra exercise classes.

Lessons learned

- Promoting new classes and activities was difficult. Participation was generally higher after individuals were spoken to individually. Advertisements in the local paper and posters alone did not increase participation in physical activity.
- Once individuals become active and involved in the classes they are more likely to attend classes regularly.

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