

Walk the Wheatbelt

Local Government Authorities

Shires of Goomalling, Toodyay, Northam, Cunderdin, Dowerin, Moora, Dandaragan, Victoria Plains, Chittering, Bruce Rock, Tammin, Merredin, Kellerberrin, Yilgarn, Westonia, Kulin, Corrigin, Wagin, Lake Grace, Wickepin and Dumbleyung

Background

Be Active Schemes have been operating across 21 Local Governments in the Wheatbelt Region for a number of years. Four Be Active coordinators, supported by Healthway, the Local Governments and the National Heart Foundation, aim to increase participation in physical activity across the community. The region is comprised of mainly small towns with a total population of 36,687 spread across 94,400 km².

Responding to the diverse needs and capabilities of each community, this project in partnership with the local health services, sought to involve the whole community in a free walking program.

Project Objectives

- Increase physical activity levels and increase awareness of benefits of walking among community members.
- Increase number of people walking each day.
- Increase awareness of local physical activity programs and walking resources.

Project Strategies

- Provide information kits.
- Promote morning and evening walk sessions and local walk trails.
- Recruit walk leaders and conduct training.
- Establish walking groups.
- Target specific groups to participate.
- Encourage and support leaders as role models.
- Provide pedometer loan system through telecentres.

Project Results

Receiving strong support, the Walk the Wheatbelt project has created interest and participation from a wide section of the community. Results from the project include:

- Promotion through a variety of media of the projects (including radio advertising and newspaper articles) attracted 4,838 active participants across the regions.
- Average time spent being physically active was 45 minutes per session.



- An estimated 1,400 information kits and pedometers were made available for hire via local libraries and telecentres. Over 200 pedometers hired by other community members since they became available.
- 35 people attended walk leader training and 3 other sessions are planned in Goomalling, Cunderdin and Dowerin.
- Established 11 new walking groups within schools and in the community e.g. Kulin Old Rollers.
- Established walk trails in co-operation with Landcare (to be mapped in 2005).
- Increased community awareness of benefits of physical activity by targeting school, council staff and related officials, hospitals, new mothers, the aged, local business, sport and community groups.
- Promotion through flyers, articles in the local newspapers and displays set up at each pedometer loan outlet.
- In Moora 100 people participated in the *Wildflower Walk* with an average 4.5 km walked for most participants. Seniors averaged 2 kms.
- Participants in sporting activities wore pedometers and showed the following results:
 - Ladies golf ranged between 9.3 and 13.3kms
 - Footballers travelled up to 9kms in a session
 - Netballers recorded between 1000 and 3643 steps per quarter
 - Cricketers at a pre season training session reached 4.4kms
- 300 participants in the Workplace Challenge, High School Challenge and Shire Challenge.
- Established a new *Moving Mothers* walk group using the Carnaby Cockatoo Trail
- A mini trial was conducted with the aged in Moora.
- 400 students participated in the *Walk to School Breakfasts* at Lake Grace and Kulin High Schools.



Where to from here?

- Continue to promote health benefits of walking.
- Encourage the hire of the pedometers from local telecentres and libraries.
- Be Active Coordinators will continue to offer assistance with walking programs, establish new groups and trails within the community.

Lessons learned

- Establish more than one leader in a walk group to allow for dropout and lack of availability.
- Encourage walk leaders to empower participants and increase group numbers.
- Timing is important to train and establish walk groups. Consideration needs to be given to harvesting calendar to ensure participation.
- Improve co-ordination of training for all library and telecentre staff to avoid repetition.
- Training days need to be planned to target a specific group to do training e.g. Community Health professionals and encourage individuals to attend training.
- Restructured walk leader training as a half-day course.

Total project cost: \$149,800 (including \$46,000 Local Activity Grant).
Project Date: November 2003 – November 2004
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