



OPAL Case Study

Plant Your Own Fresh Snack

City of Mount Gambier

Goal: Home Meals

Theme: Healthy Snacks

Strategy: Environments

Summary

Plant Your Own Fresh Snack is a program that supports tenants in Housing SA (HSA) homes to grow fruit and vegetables in their own backyard with the support of trained mentors for a minimum period of 12 months. Families are invited to participate for a minimal fee of \$10.00 and partnerships support the program.

Our approach

After exploring a number of options to support HSA residents to garden, a model was agreed between a range of partners including HSA, Mount Gambier OPAL, Lifeline, Anglican Community Care (ACC), Skills for All, a gardening centre and South East Regional Community Health Services.

HSA refers residents to OPAL if they are interested in participating in the program. Residents are offered their choice of two fruit trees, a garden box filled with potting mix and their choice of vegetable seedlings or seeds. Lifeline do police checks and train mentors for participants with financial support from Skills for All. ACC refer families into the program and also conduct complementary programs

such as pruning, cooking and pizza making (using local ingredients).

Participants have also been able to access support to clean up yards and attend further education courses. This multi-agency approach is helping reach and assist Mount Gambier residents with higher needs.

Our achievements

The Plant Your Own Fresh Snack program is empowering for both the participating individuals and their mentors. There have been 20 participants to date and their stories illustrate the positive impact on their lives including greater participation in and links with the local community and increased social connections. The volunteers have also benefited from the training and their mentoring role. Although there are small numbers of participants and the program is time intensive the partnership between agencies, especially with Housing SA, will be useful for future joint activities and this is a rewarding program for all involved.

Why

Housing SA has regular contact with those who are more disadvantaged and are likely to have more health needs and poorer health. For this reason Mount Gambier OPAL was keen to develop a partnership with them.

It was acknowledged that Housing SA residents might find it difficult to participate in community gardens but would benefit from the physical activity involved in gardening as well as the chance to grow and eat healthy foods.

Who

The target group is Housing SA residents in Mount Gambier, prioritising families with children.

Rationale

There is clear evidence that health status worsens as disadvantage increases.¹ Most Australians eat only half the amount of fruit and vegies recommended for good health. Adults need to eat at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables each day.² Those on lower incomes, for example people eligible for public housing, also eat less fruit and vegetables. Regular physical activity is important as a means of promoting good health and preventing disease and gardening by children and adults is important in being active and maintaining a healthy weight.³ Self-efficacy in individuals improves health outcomes. Local partnerships offer multiple benefits.⁴

Opal



The OPAL project, 'Plant Your Own Fresh Snack'



has achieved more than I thought was possible. The secret I think is the mentor assisting our tenants in an informal and personal way. Tenants who have experienced long term, extreme hardship and vulnerability have moved from a position of social isolation to now engaging with the wider community, deliberately examining their diets and activity levels and taking active measures to address their own wellbeing. This really is a project that addresses obesity levels among the most vulnerable of our population in a practical, 'hands-on' way. I believe the impact will have a ripple effect to promote a positive message far greater than the 20 participants of the project.

Mark Thompson, Regional Manager,
Limestone Coast Office, Housing SA

Resources

Promotional posters have been developed.

About OPAL?

The OPAL (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) initiative supports children, families and their communities to eat well and be active. It is South Australia's largest ever investment in obesity prevention. OPAL uses a range of interconnected strategies

to build knowledge and skills and change policies and environments in partnerships with others to support healthy behaviour. This case study is one of many linked projects that together are helping children, through their families and communities, to be healthy now and stay healthy for life.

Contact:

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¹ World Health Organization (WHO). Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health (final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health). Geneva: WHO, 2008.

² Go for 2&5. Home. [on line]. Available from: www.gofor2and5.com.au. (Accessed 4 July 2013).

³ See for example NICE. Obesity: Guidance on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children. [on line]. Available from publications.nice.org.uk/obesity-cg43/guidance#public-health-recommendations (Accessed 4 July 2013).

⁴ VicHealth. Fact Sheets Partnerships. [on line]. Available from: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/VicHealth-General-Publications/Partnerships-Fact-Sheet.aspx. (accessed 14 August 2013)

