

Men's Sticky Beak Tour and intergenerational activities for the aged

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INTRODUCTION

Australia's ageing population presents new challenges in how health is viewed and the need to adopt a more holistic approach. Access to quality service is a basic human right, and Eastern Eyre Health and Aged Care Inc is committed to providing quality service to meet the needs of older people, and to enhance their quality of life.

Cleve, Cowell and Kimba are communities in Eastern Eyre Peninsula South Australia with a population of 4475 people and covers an area of 11 734 square kilometres. Geographically, Cleve is the central town in the cluster with Cowell 45 kilometres to the coast and Kimba 75 kilometres inland, which is halfway across Australia between Sydney and Perth. The primary industry in this rural district is crop and sheep farming, with Cowell boasting a growing aquaculture industry as well as farming.

The organisation is one of five health units on the Eyre Peninsula affiliated to the Eyre Regional Health Service. Prior to July 2000 Cleve, Cowell and Kimba operated as separate incorporated organisations each having a hospital, hostel and very basic community health services. In July 2000 the 3 health services amalgamated to form Eastern Eyre Health and Aged Care Inc. Subsequently, new programs were developed and in April 2001 the Community Connections Activity Program was born.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Connections Activity Program, is to promote and enhance the health and well-being of individuals. The program promotes active citizenship through ongoing community participation, and creates a sense of belonging through maintaining a community connection. This contributes to social and emotional well-being. Integration, inclusion and maintaining strong social supports, help to reduce loneliness. Older people who live in the community experience the best mental health across the adult life span. Depressive symptoms and disorders are common in hostels and nursing homes in this target group. Providing meaningful activities to suit individual needs, enhances the social and emotional well-being of older people.

Eligibility for the program is determined through an assessment process. This is identified with the participant by the co-ordinator during initial contact.

The program provides services to:

- people over the age of 65
- people with disabilities
- carers
- people with a diagnosed medical condition.

Referrals to the program can be made by anyone to the Activity Co-ordinator either, in person, telephone, fax or writing, with the consent of the person.

Activities are available to be accessed by people living in the community, hospital or hostel. Hospital and hostel walls do not create a barrier to participation. Everyone has the right to participate regardless of where they reside.

The participant registration process provides a valuable source of information for planning and is based on individual needs. The participant interest form and a life long history form is completed and provides the foundation to individualise activities. All information is gathered with the person and carer. This provides the co-ordinator with insight into the persons past interests, previous occupation, club involvements and their family and friends. Participation plans are made with the person, and are reviewed on a regular basis, in line with the persons ability, and changing circumstances. The review is done in consultation with the participant, quite often with the carer or family member present, who will advocate on behalf of the participant, if they are unable to do so themselves.

The Community Connections Activity Program provides a supportive environment to allow people the opportunity to participate in activities that suit their individual needs.

Programming sessions are held with participants actively planning the monthly programs. This session is interactive where the group all reflect on past activities, and plan for new ones. Minutes are taken, and copies provided so that participants can access them at any time.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Operation manual

Comprehensive Operation Manuals have been developed to provide procedures and guidelines. This manual is an essential part of a consistent approach to service delivery across the three sites, ensuring equitable services to the communities.

Community careworkers

Community careworkers provide the level of support to successfully implement the program. In the initial setting up of programs a successful funding submission from the Eyre Regional Development Board enabled 27 people to access training in Certificate 3 in Aged Care locally across the cluster. Many have since completed Dementia Care Certificate 3. This was a first for training to be delivered on site across three communities. TAFE were contracted to provide training to careworkers, and applicants were required to commit to undertaking Certificate 3 in Age Care if they were to be registered as a careworker with EEHAC. Currently 60 careworkers are registered across the cluster. This is a high number of trained careworkers for a rural area. careworkers provide quality care where an individual focus is required.

Volunteers

A Volunteer Register has been developed across the three sites, and these volunteers provide invaluable assistance to careworkers and enhance the quality of activities and social contact with participants.

Risk management

A proposed venue for the activity, is first assessed through a “Venue Safety Audit” to ascertain its suitability. Risks are identified and recorded and acted upon to minimise the possibility of an incident. The Manager of Community Services and the Risk Management Co-ordinator review the venue assessment and advise on further recommendations if deemed necessary.

Creating awareness

- The production of a Community Connections Activity Program brochure outlining the types of activities, eligibility etc has helped to create a community awareness of the program. It is distributed at strategic places throughout the community and included in registration packages for community care, respite and activity program.
- A weekly column in the local newspaper was initially used to consistently inform people of services provided.
- A bi monthly newsletter is widely distributed.
- A monthly program is distributed widely.

CHALLENGES TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Transport

With the loss of independent transportation, many people in the community were unable to attend programs. The District Council of Kimba has owned an “Out & About” bus for some time, and Community Services in Kimba has priority use of it. The success of the Kimba bus, and opportunities it presents for the frail aged and people with disabilities, prompted EEHAC to purchase two “Out & About” buses for Cleve and Cowell. The buses are equipped to carry passengers in wheelchairs, as well as comfortably seating ten people. The program provides a service that picks up and delivers people from their homes to attend activities.

Cost

Older people often limit their activities through necessity of limited incomes. Access to the program is not restricted to financial ability. The program is funded through Multi-Purpose Service Program (MPS) and HACC, which enables us to provide a quality service to meet individual needs. The program is free of charge, although a small fee may be applied for special events where costs out of the ordinary are incurred.

Two programs that we are particularly proud of are the Intergenerational activities and the Men’s Sticky Beak Tour. These were introduced into the Activity Program with the purpose of keeping older people connected with the community that they have lived their life in. The role older people played in developing the farming land for future generations was significant. They actively participated in developing education opportunities for their children, and built the foundations to create the community lifestyle that we all enjoy today. When a farmer retires and the farm is handed to the next generation they often move into the township. They often continue to provide valuable support to their children by providing assistance at seeding, harvest and shearing or wherever an extra hand is required. Women contribute by helping with the preparation of food at shearing time and looking after the grandchildren, quite often

on a regular basis if the modern mother works. They take great pride and pleasure in contributing to the farm and family.

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Intergenerational activities promote and encourage interaction and connection between older people and the young. Enhancing relationships between older people and children has helped to break down barriers between the groups and has attributed in mutual respect and increased communication between generations.

In many cultures throughout the world and throughout time, the role of the grandparent is a fundamental part of raising a family. In these cultures, older people are revered for their wisdom and knowledge and are considered the leaders in society. With the increase of age expectancy, the need to adapt to changing living circumstances, the loss of a spouse or close friends, chronic pain and illness, decreased mobility and frustration with memory loss, may contribute to depression in the elderly. Encouraging interaction between older people and children significantly reduces the symptoms of depression, giving the elderly a sense of purpose with the knowledge that they are valued and still able to contribute to their community in a positive way.

The program aims to:

- increase the sharing of experiences and skills between both generations
- encourage positive attitudes toward our ageing population. Participation by children encourages understanding and acceptance of the physical and mental effects of ageing. It provides the opportunity to embrace their heritage and recognise and respect the part that the older people played in creating the community in which they live
- encourage two way respect and increase learning and listening between generations
- encourage participation between generations to promote mutual trust, respect and understanding
- actively encourage older people to learn new skills, through exposing the older people to the technology that children use in their learning
- provide older people with the opportunity to see the world through young eyes again, and the young people are encouraged to develop an understanding and appreciation of the world that the older people grew up in
- encourage older people to share experiences and skills of a bygone era.

Participants

The intergenerational interest is indicated by the individual and through the registration and life history forms. During the preparation of the participation plan with the person or family, intergenerational activities are offered and included in the plan if suitable to their needs.

Partnerships

Partnerships have been formed with the local school, kindergarten, girl guides and scout groups. Developing good relationships and communication with groups has created positive outcomes. Attending staff meetings at the school and kindergarten to brainstorm ideas, has been the source of many successful activities. The development of a yearly planner, in collaboration with the groups, has helped to set goals that are achieved throughout the year.

The benefits of intergenerational activities have been embraced by community groups. They recognise that older people offer diverse expertise and experience, and help to enhance the developmental needs of the younger generation. The sharing of information, life and career experiences help guide them through life's challenges and projects a positive sense of the future. When children teach an older person a new skill, they are also learning about compassion, teaching, relationships and sharing.

Methods

- Older people reading to young children through the schools Learning Assistance Program.
- Participants attend school assemblies to keep in touch with the children's school activities.
- School children read to older participants at the Community Library.
- Girl Guides visits to the hostel.
- Older men visit the Technology Room at the local school, keeping them informed with new technology. Children have the opportunity to discuss projects that they are working on, and sharing of ideas.
- As part of the Alzheimer Association scholarship, Year 8 and 9 students did a project on "what it is like to grow old", and presented the completed projects to the participants. Increased interaction proceeded, with communication between the generations heightened.
- Year 8 students regularly recite poetry and ballads. This is included in the curriculum at the school, and the students develop good presentation and communication skills with this activity.
- Year 8 and 9 students participate regularly in table games and active games.
- Students from different classes join in Sing-a-longs. Children help the older people to find the correct page in the song book, and learn to appreciate the music from a different era.
- Older people made felt objects for each letter of the alphabet for Reception class, to assist in early learning.
- A mural with year 5 students and Community Art Group was made. Memories from the students and the older people were collected and then painted onto large boards. Memories included horse and cart from the older people, and a Gameboy from the students.
- To celebrate Seniors week a march is held annually with Senior Citizens Club, and children assist and march with older people.
- Regular activities are held with the Kindergarten:

- exploring and sharing play activities – past and present
- sharing ageless activities – favourite nursery rhymes, finger painting, puppet making, threading activities and stamping
- sing-a-longs – children’s songs

The activities with the kindergarten children are very rewarding. The children develop trust and respect towards older people at an early age, that continues as they grow older. The older people love spending time with this age group, and the interaction between them is special. Two reactions from both groups were:

- a kindergarten child, when learning Christmas carols to sing with older people, got very excited and stated excitedly: “can we go to the Nannas and Grandpas on the hill now?” He was very disappointed when told that it wasn’t going to be for another four weeks.
- older person after going for a visit to kindergarten stated “this is the best activity that we do” At a later date when the kindergarten visited the Hostel, she was unwell and in bed. Halfway through the activity she got out of her sick bed because she felt she couldn’t miss out on being with the children.
- The Eyre Peninsula Field Days is held in Cleve biennially and Eastern Eyre Health and Aged Care have a display site. The activity program is held from the field day site, where school children participate in activities with older people. Last years students committed to learning Tai Chi to demonstrate this as an exercise suitable for all generations.
- Children participate in concerts for Intracluster Seniors week events and Christmas party.
- Work experience students are encouraged and welcomed into the program. The program has had several students since its inception, and many have gone on to study Aged Care Certificate 3.

Currently a student with special needs works eight hours per week in the Activity Program. Kimberly began two years ago as a work experience student, and developed skills and personal development to a degree suitable for consideration into a work program. This has been a rewarding experience for not only herself, but our organisation and clients. As a result of this initiative, Kimberly was nominated for the Young Achievers award in 2004.

Outcomes for participants

- Positive perceptions of both older and younger people
- Breaking down barriers
- Improved health and well-being in older people
- Relieves boredom and isolation in older people
- Promotes strengths of one generation to meet the needs of another
- Promotes appreciation and understanding of each generation
- Carers are provided with respite, knowing that their loved one is cared for in a supportive environment and is being provided with activities that suit their needs.

- Older people experience the joy of developing young minds and are able to contribute to their learning by interacting with subjects like reading.
- Older people have skills that would be otherwise lost in today's technically advanced society. Engage the imagination of the children with the sharing of stories from their own school days, the depression and war years, to name a few.
- Encourages interactions between generations.
- Encourages social interaction.
- Lifts self esteem due to acknowledgements.
- Relieves boredom and isolation.
- Provides enjoyment and entertainment.

MENS STICKY BEAK TOUR

Men's Sticky Beak Tour describes an activity designed specifically for older men, many who are retired farmers. It is a modified version of 'crop inspections' enjoyed by generations of farmers. This is the time when farmers in the district get together and go around to several farms 'checking out' the neighbours crops and comparing notes. They enjoy a BBQ, take a full esky and usually end up at the local hotel. A local agronomist from Primary Industries joins in, and a good time is had by all.. The men discuss different farming techniques, successes and failures with chemicals, varieties of seed used, advantages or disadvantages of no till, direct seeding, burning etc. It's a time when they bond and share all the stresses and glories of the past year.

Farmers often stay on the farm until the next generation of family manage and work the farm. If they have no children or their children do not wish to carry on the farm, they need to sell and are faced with losing the land that has been in the family for generations. They experience grief, loss and a sense of failure at not being able to continue with their life, as it has always been. Moving into the town, takes them off their guard, as there is no longer a need to do all those little things they are so used to doing. No need to check the rain-gauge after a day of showers, or get up at the crack of dawn to check the livestock. Suddenly they find themselves in a place where they no longer own land for kilometres in each direction, and they are confined to a space the fraction of what they are used to. They now have neighbours living right next door, where before they had to drive for several minutes to see the guy next door. It is often at this point, where the finality of their situation is fully realised.

Aims of the program are to:

- provide a supported program so that the older men in our communities can continue to participate in an activity that has been so important in their lives
- enhance the social status of participants, including the continued involvement of personal friendships and past interests for which the community recognise that person's previous involvement
- maintain a connection to farm activities for retired farmers
- educate and keep informed on new technologies for farmers

- maintain self esteem and feeling of worth
- provide the opportunity to participate in familiar activities and continue lifestyle choices.

Participants

- The registration process is the same for all activities. The life history provides information to identify the interests and past occupations of the men.
- Referral is a common way that a participant for the Men's Group is identified. A family member, friend or another agency refers somebody when they notice that they are beginning to show signs of loneliness and isolation. Other men in the group often refer friends whom they feel would benefit from participating.

Partnerships

Partnerships have been formed with:

- Primary Industries
- Local bus service
- Farmers
- Sims farm (donated to the school for education)
- The National Trust

Methods

- Men help to plan the day. They discuss where they would like to visit, what they would like to see and how they would like it implemented.
- We have extended the annual 'crop inspection' to include tours at shearing and seeding times, enabling older men to enjoy the experience of the various farm activities that happen throughout the year.
- Harvest crop inspection. Farmers are contacted, the services of an agronomist is acquired and suitable dates are agreed upon. A suitable venue is found for a BBQ lunch, and the wives of the farmers prepare freshly baked morning tea. The crop inspection would not be complete without the traditional esky.
- Shearing inspection.
- Seeding inspection.
- Older men visit Sims Farm with secondary Agriculture Students.
- Men integrate with The National Trust and assist in the restoration of old farm implements.

Outcomes for participants

- Reduced loneliness and isolation by maintaining friendships.
- Continue to be connected with their previous lifestyle.
- Kept informed of new technologies.
- Self esteem and self worth is restored, thereby reducing the risk of depression.
- Improved health and well-being.
- Provides an individually focused activity.
- Promotes social interaction.
- Provides an opportunity to make friends.
- Provides enjoyment and entertainment.
- Maintains community contacts.

CONCLUSION

The program has highlighted and enhanced the awareness of the community that older people can maintain an integrated part of the community. Active participation is a key factor in maintaining wellness, through activities that promote health. Social and emotional well-being is enhanced which reduces loneliness.

We believe that this program contributes significantly to positive health outcomes of older people.

PRESENTER

Jill Schultz is the Community Connections Activity Co-ordinator at Cleve for Eastern Eyre Health and Aged Care. She has been in this position for 3 years, having previously been a Community Careworker. Jill's background was in small business in the hospitality industry and tourism industry, before joining the health industry.