

Heart Foundation Kellogg Local Government Awards
The Lions Club of Kangaroo Valley
Healthy Community Project



**In conjunction with Shoalhaven Council and
Health Coaching Australia**

1 Project Summary

The Kangaroo Valley Healthy Community project is a community-based community-wide health intervention, operated by local residents for local residents. The project highlights heart health and other chronic disease risk factors and encourages health-enhancing lifestyle changes among the residents of a small rural community.

The project represents a broad collection of various sub-programs, events and activities that educate and support people to make changes that will enhance their short-term and long-term physical and mental health. The project promotes changes in relation to physical activity, nutrition, smoking, alcohol consumption, depression, anxiety and stress management, social and practical support and social networking.

The project has benefited from a community-based coaching and social support strategy that teaches participants to coach and support each other in making behavioural and attitudinal changes. This approach has been responsible for the success of the program in building stronger community ties and friendship networks as well as improving the general health of the community of Kangaroo Valley.

2 Project Objectives

1. Increased community awareness of chronic disease risk factors;
2. Increased community awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle;
3. Increased level of health-promoting behaviours among sub-program participants;
4. Increased level of well-being among sub-program participants;
5. Foster community spirit; and
6. Development of resources kit to be used by small rural communities.

2.1 *Need / reason for project*

- Small rural community with:
 - Many 'newer' residents not socially integrated.
 - No dedicated medical/health facilities or services.
 - No Public transport to nearby towns.
- Physically and psychologically isolated:
 - Winding mountain roads in and out.
 - People delay/ don't access services (especially elderly).
- Higher than average deaths from Coronary Heart Disease in Illawarra region¹.
- > 20% of young Australians overweight in rural areas²
- Overweight/obesity 10% higher in rural/ remote areas³.

3 Resources

3.1 Budget and staff

- \$80,000 grant from Department of Health and Ageing, Chronic Rural Disease Initiative.
- \$35,000 operational expenses, \$10,000 resource kit, \$35,000 project management.

4 How the project will improve heart health

4.1 Illawarra Region Heart health facts & needs⁴

- Leading cause of death: coronary heart disease (1 in 4).
- Premature death rates for CHD, men and women, significantly higher than NSW average.
- Cardiovascular disease most common cause of death among older people.
- Falls are the most common form of injury death in people aged 65 years and older.
- Major reason for hospitalisation 65+ years is circulatory system disorders.
- Adult overweight/obesity nearly 5% higher than state average.
- <50% residents consume recommended quantities of vegetables.
- <25% eat recommended quantities of fruit.
- Current smoking rate 24%.
- Depression, anxiety and stress major factors in chronic disease

4.2 Specific links between project and heart health

The project directly addressed modifiable CVD risk factors:

- 6-week Quit smoking programs
- 8-week Health, fitness and weight-management programs
- provided psychological, dietetic and exercise specialist support
- program participants taught skills to coach each other to make lifestyle changes in small group coaching sessions
- health checks at annual show incl. blood pressure, BMI/hip-waist ratio, heart health information etc.
- several ongoing exercise classes established (general and chronic disease specific)
- directly and indirectly addressed depression, anxiety and stress management in adults and children

- activities enabled people to make new contacts (name tags always provided) & social interaction encouraged
- broad range of activities to encourage maximum community participation
- deliberately encouraged social network building and social support – established activity groups and support groups
- health information and program editorials disseminated by sponsoring pages in local monthly paper

5 Project targets in the community

5.1 Who & how many

The entire community (awareness, prevention, understanding) – approximately 1000 full-time residents

Subgroups:

- Primary school children (activity, depression, anxiety, healthy lunches)
- Senior citizens – chronic disease prevention/management, injury prevention (from falls), social isolation
- Overweight/obese people
- Smokers
- Existing chronic disease sufferers
- Men's health

5.2 Special access features

Brought services and health/medical professionals to the community, allowing seniors and parents access otherwise restricted due to fear of driving over mountains at night and child-minding issues.

6 Community Consultation

6.1 Outline

Community consultation conducted via:

1. in-depth interviews with local opinion leaders,
2. visiting & briefing community groups,
3. continuous community consultation via group representatives, and
4. two community-wide surveys (pre and post).

The needs assessment survey:

- proposed numerous health and community activities and asked residents to indicate interest in attending each
- listed chronic health conditions and asked what information (if any), residents would like to access
- included self-perception ratings of respondents' health, happiness and optimism

Survey distribution:

- survey published in the local paper
- distributed via the local school and pre-school newsletters
- extra copies available in both local post offices and the news agency
- drop boxes to return the survey were provided in these three locations
- A follow-up letter posted to residents via the local paper's distribution list
- Notices about the survey and the project were posted around the town
- most community groups were personally visited by the project manager, members briefed about the project and survey copies handed out
- project manager door-knocked to inform residents in township about the survey (during a 3-day blackout)

6.2 *How the information was used*

- One third of the adult population responded to the survey (250).
- Responses dictated which programs and activities were organised and which chronic disease information obtained and disseminated at activities.
- Priority was given to the most popular activities.

6.3 *Ongoing consultation*

- Residents completed a follow-up survey aimed at detecting the impact of the project on individuals, families and the community of Kangaroo Valley.
- The results of both surveys were published in the local paper.
- A community consultative panel has been established to assist the KV Lions in managing a newly built Community Centre and to continue running health and community programs under the Healthy Community banner. Fund raising, organising programs and actively encouraging community involvement make up most of the panel's charter.

7 What we did

7.1 Key Strategies to achieve each objective.

Please see attachment 1 listing specific project components (too numerous to list here)

Objectives 1 & 2: Awareness of Chronic disease and benefits of healthy lifestyle

- Various Seminars, Workshops & Information nights conducted
- Health risk assessments conducted & health information distributed
- Website constructed to access health and community information & computer equipment purchased for Community Centre & Internet searching classes conducted (free)
- Health articles and activities editorials published in local paper

Objectives 3 & 4: Increased levels of health-promoting behaviours and levels of well-being among sub-program participants

- Two 8-week health, fitness and weight-management programs including separate small group coaching sessions, healthy cooking demonstrations and practice, tai chi and exercise practicals and educational components (coaching psychologist, dietician and exercise specialists involved).
- Weekly self-sustaining exercise classes started, including specialist instructor training (Yoga & medication, HeartMoves gentle exercise (NHF), Tai Chi for Arthritis).
- Competitions for school children (eg, pedometer competition between 5 small schools)
- School Depression and Anxiety program.
- Activities clubs and groups formed (bush walking, weekly walking)
- Pedometers and arthritis aids purchased and distributed at or below cost
- Support groups formed (fibromyalgia, arthritis, weight-management, quit smoking).

Objective 5: Fostering Community Spirit

- Social and networking occasions organised
- Social contact and activities encouraged in sub-programs
- Name tags used to assist introductions and interaction
- Wide range of programs to maximise participation
- Logo t-shirts “Kangaroo Valley A Healthy Community”
- Activities conducted to bridge across community groups

Objective 6: The resource kit is currently under construction

- Assists communities to conduct similar projects
- Provides specific resources and contact information for government and NGO programs already established (eg, Just Walk It, Walking for Pleasure, HeartMoves, Friends Depression and Anxiety school program etc.)

8 Achievements and Evaluation

Attendance data and event evaluation

- At least 308 different people (2/5 adult population) participated in project events.
- Of those who attended, the average number of activities attended was 2.7.
- All primary school children took part in school activities
- The average participant evaluation score for events was 8.9 out of 10.
- None of the seven people in the quit smoking program are currently smoking (however, only 5 months have passed).
- The 8-week health program participants lost an average of 2 kg and 5 cm from waist measurements during the programs. Most also increased flexibility and cardiovascular fitness. Positive psychological changes were also seen (eg, less negative emotions). Some participants went on to lose large amounts of weight (and more importantly centimetres) over time. Most of the participants continue to pursue healthy behaviours as a result of the program. About 10 individuals still attend monthly support group meetings (the “Fit Club”).

Follow-up survey quantitative data

- 64% of the 110 people who responded to the follow-up survey to date said that they made new acquaintances or friends as a result of the project. Of these, the average number of new social contacts was 8.
- Eighty two percent of respondents said that they believe that the KVHC project has affected them or their family in some way.
- Ninety percent said they believe the KVHC project has affected the KV community in some way.

Qualitative responses - Strong themes

1. Increased level of personal and family health-promoting behaviours
 - Increased exercise (individual and social)
 - Changed eating habits
 - Intentions to pursue a more healthy lifestyle
 - Improved health and weight-loss
 - Enhanced happiness and well-being

2. Increased health-related awareness
 - Increased awareness of chronic disease risks, the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to be responsible for own health
3. Diffusion of health information throughout community
 - Non-participants enjoyed reading health information and articles in local paper
 - Health and related matters increasingly a topic of conversation
4. Community Building and enhanced social support
 - Increased social interaction around shared activities and ideas
 - Enhanced social support
 - Creation of new friendships and broadened social networks
 - Community building & cohesion
 - Enhanced community spirit
 - Sense of belonging in the community
5. Enthusiasm for the project and its outcomes and effects

These themes suggest that the population of Kangaroo Valley consider the project objectives to have been met.

9 Sustainability

9.1 The project is ongoing and will be sustained with reduced intensity

- The exercise classes were designed to be self-sustaining and hence ongoing.
- The bush walking and weekly walking groups are also self-sustaining and established under the NSW Government and NHF Walking for Pleasure and Just Walk It umbrellas.
- The website is an ongoing project, sponsored by the Kangaroo Valley Lions Club. An access point is provided at the community-operated Community Centre.
- Health seminars and workshops will continue on an opportunistic basis.
- The Lions Club has established the Kangaroo Valley Lions Healthy Community Committee to take over the management of a new Community Centre facility. A Community Consultation Panel has been established to ensure ongoing community participation in the management of the facility and the running of further health programs.
- The community is raising funds to conduct health programs and risk assessments at the Community Centre (through the sale of t-shirts and pedometers at present).

- The project manager and others are making submissions where possible to obtain funding to conduct more 8-week health, fitness and weight-management programs and quit smoking programs among other initiatives.

10 Support Material

Photos – four photographs will be e-mailed:

- Men’s Health Information Night
- Bushwalking Group outing
- HeartMoves Class
- Health Check Tent at local show

11 References

1. Illawarra Area Health Service (IAHS), *Health Improvement Directions Statement, 1998-2001: Planning Health Services for the Future*. On IAHS website.
2. ASSO Media Release, *Too many young Australians are overweight*, 9 September, 2000.
3. Dr Tim Gill from the International Obesity Taskforce, quoted in LandLine, “Wellington aims to lose a tonne”, Sean Murphy, 6/4/03.
4. http://www.iahs.nsw.gov.au/about_us_too/profile.htm

12 Attachment:

1. Kangaroo Valley Healthy Community Project Components



Kangaroo Valley Healthy Community

Project Components:

General & administrative activities

1. Community consultation (numerous groups and individuals consulted)
2. Community health needs & health perceptions survey (pre & post-measures)
3. Kangaroo Valley Healthy Community logo & website artwork created
4. KVHC website– site is under construction and available at <http://www.kvhealth.org>
5. Resource kit created for other communities
6. Evaluations of most activities collected & compiled

Workshops and seminars

7. Understanding and managing depression workshop
8. Stress management workshops x 3
9. Understanding and managing anxiety & panic attacks workshop
10. Diet & nutrition latest research workshop
11. Healthy cooking workshops
12. Meeting energy ratings in homes seminar x 2
13. Goal-setting and coaching workshop
14. First Aid refresher workshop held (CPR, Shock, venomous bites & stings).
15. Propagating plants workshops x 4
16. Financial investment seminar
17. First aid accreditation course
18. Positive Parenting Practices workshop
19. Accessing the Internet for beginners (2) and advanced (2) workshops
20. Men's Health Information Night
21. Ladies Community Lunch with guest speaker

Programs

22. Health Fitness & Weight-management 8-week programs x 2 plus 'Fit Club' support groups
23. Quit smoking 6-week program (workshop plus 'Quit Club' support group).
24. Give-it-a-go awards for primary school children
25. Pedometer Challenge for primary schools
26. Sponsorship of Anxiety & Depression program for Primary School; incl. teacher, parent & children's training modules

Weekly and ongoing activities

27. Local weekly walking group established under National Heart Foundation umbrella Just Walk It
28. KV Bush walking club formed under Dept. Sport & Recreation Walking for Pleasure umbrella
29. Wildflower walks (exercise & education) x 2
30. HeartMoves gentle exercise weekly classes
31. Tai Chi for Arthritis weekly classes
32. Yoga & Meditation weekly classes

Support and Information

33. Various health articles published in local paper (Gout, diabetes T2, benefits of yoga, making lifestyle changes, tai chi, fibromyalgia, anxiety & panic attack etc.)
34. Free Health Check stand at local show (diabetes risk assessment, eye health check, blood pressure, body mass index, waist/hip ratio, peak flow measures, chronic disease and agricultural injury information)
35. Health and chronic disease Information handed out at show – arthritis, diabetes, cancer, asthma, farm safety, hypertension etc.
36. Healthy Lunch box ideas pamphlets purchased for local pre-school
37. Fibromyalgia support group formed
38. Arthritis support & resources group formed
39. Introduction to Masters Rowing workshop sponsored
40. Arthritis aids purchased to disseminate among seniors and arthritis sufferers
41. Dozens of pedometers purchased and sold at cost to local residents
42. T-shirts with logos printed and distributed
43. Car pooling for medical appointments and shopping being organised (to be web based)
44. Home visiting for isolated residents being organised
45. Management of community complex and use by specialists and community groups.
46. Visiting medical and health specialists being organised for community complex.
47. Action group formed to get funding for more pathways and cycle ways in Kangaroo Valley
48. Discussions with Tourist Association re branding of KV as a 'healthy community'
49. Computer equipment for Community Centre purchased for access to health information