Tasmanian Food Access Research Project

In 2010, the Tasmanian Food Security Council, the body with oversight for the development of a Food Security Strategy for Tasmania, announced the release of funding for innovative and enterprising projects aimed at improving Tasmania’s access to a reliable supply of safe and nutritious food. The funding initiative was established in response to findings from the Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania which revealed that many Tasmanians are excluded from access to regular and nutritious food.

Interested parties were invited to put forward proposals that had a focus on enhancing existing capabilities which address food security in Tasmania. A total of eight projects received funding including the Tasmanian Food Access Research Coalition (TFARC) project. TFARC is a coalition that draws on the combined membership from six diverse organisations namely Anglicare Tasmania, Clarence City Council, Dorset Council, Primary Health North Esk (DHHS), Human Life Sciences (HLS – UTAS) and the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH – UTAS). These organisations came together as a coalition, attracted by their combined interest in food security research and ability to contribute specific knowledge, networks and skill sets required to achieve the project outcomes. The coalition was underpinned by community partnerships with the neighbourhood and community houses network in the respective study sites of Clarence City and Dorset municipal areas.

The TFARC project commenced in January 2011 and concluded in July this year. The aim of the study was to improve the understanding of food access and the associated determinants of food security in the municipal areas of Dorset and Clarence City. This was achieved through engaging communities to gather information about enablers and barriers to accessing healthy food and the different types and location of food resources available. Participants were invited to identify potential solutions for enhancing food security in their respective communities. Over 400 residents in each of the municipalities provided input into the study.

A range of data collection methods were used to collect information about food access. These methods included surveys, focus groups and an audit of food outlet in each municipality. Using GIS mapping technology, the study was able to locate food desert areas. The study collected information about the distance residents travelled to obtain healthy, nutritious foods.

Key findings showed that low income households are spending up to 39% of their income on healthy food in comparison to average waged households which spend up to 22%. The finding supports earlier research that showed that cost of food relative to income continues to be a significant issue, particularly in medium to low income households. With regard to barriers to accessing healthy and nutritious food, nearly half of the survey participants reported living beyond a five kilometre radius of their most frequently visited food shops, and relied on cars as their primary mode of transport to access food outlets. Distance between home and food outlets implied longer travel times and higher transport expenses. Aside from distance, physical limitations resulting from health conditions, disabilities, or ageing acted as a barrier to accessing healthy foods. Overall, the findings from the study revealed that a proportion of the residents in both study areas had limited financial and physical access to food and that vulnerable groups such as low income households and the elderly were most at risk. The research developed a series of food security survey tools that can be applied across different regions.

Further information about the study can be obtained by contacting the Community Nutrition Unit at the Department of Health and Human Services at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/pophealth/community_nutrition, or phone 1300 135 513.
Aquatic activities are now going to become more accessible for those with disabilities thanks to a program offered by the Royal Lifesaving Society and funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund.

Royal Life Saving will be offering the AUSTSWIM program MATE – Making Aquatics a Terrific Experience, an innovative and interactive community seminar aimed at optimising health and wellness opportunities for those with a disability. The program gives carers the skills and knowledge to take their mate to the pool for recreation activities. It is not a program about swimming strokes but a guide to encouraging and facilitating physical activity in an aquatic environment for people who may not always have the opportunity to participate in aquatic activities.

Royal Life Saving Tasmania General Manager, Julia Fassina said, “Funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund will enable us to provide this program to unpaid carers at low cost around the State. Once carers feel confident taking their mate to the pool, they too can have a relaxing and enjoyable experience. The program is suitable for all sorts of disabilities, from intellectual disabilities to those in a wheelchair, stroke victims and people with autism. It offers comprehensive notes, real life scenarios, simulation exercises and networking opportunities.

“This program will be of interest to any council who has a pool within their municipality. We can deliver the training which will assist in greater utilisation of their facilities by those with disabilities and better health outcomes in the local community. Aquatic activity is beneficial as it promotes a sense of wellbeing, maximises body function and independence, improves mood and self-esteem and provides fitness opportunities,” she said.

For anyone who would like to get MATE running in their local community, contact Tracey Parry at Royal Lifesaving Tasmania on (03) 6243 7558, or email tparry@rlssa.org.au.

Smoke-free Workplace Kit

Being exposed to tobacco smoke at work, inside or out, is a safety issue. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. A new, practical and free resource is helping employers around Tasmania remove exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke in the workplace, making their workplaces safer and healthier for everyone. The new resource, a joint Australian and Tasmanian Government initiative, is also helping employers support their workers to adjust to the change. Protect your workers and your business.

Businesses Encouraged to Review Health and Wellbeing Levels

Businesses around Tasmania recently had the opportunity to learn how to improve the health and wellbeing of their workplaces. It took the form of a free breakfast to kick off a series of health and wellbeing networking groups run by WorkCover Tasmania.

The networking breakfasts, held in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, were hosted by WorkCover’s health and wellbeing advisors. The advisors travel the State providing free advice and resources to businesses looking to improve their workplace health and wellbeing. The service is a joint Australian and State Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health.

WorkCover Tasmania Health and Wellbeing Advisor, Samantha Forrest, said the aim of the sessions was to give employers a chance to hear first-hand the benefits of implementing health and wellbeing programs in their workplace, along with practical tips and advice. “It is important that healthy lifestyle practices exist in every aspect of a person’s life, including the workplace,” Ms Forrest said. “From an employer’s perspective, good workplace health and wellbeing leads to greater job satisfaction, less absenteeism, reduced staff turnover, higher individual productivity and ultimately higher profits.”

Kerry Gillard and Marjorie Fitzgerald of Central Coast Council spoke at the Burnie event about the Council’s health and wellbeing program, some of the barriers they faced and how these were overcome. Council’s health and wellbeing program includes morning stretching exercises, swimming and gym sessions, and nutritional guidance, as well as support initiatives to assist employees to better manage their emotional health.

Gretchen Long, Primary Health Care Coordinator for the North East Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Scottsdale spoke at the Launceston networking breakfast about the hospital’s health and wellbeing program which it initiated to encourage the organisation to promote health more strongly, and improve the overall health of workers. “The success of the program was evident in the high level of worker participation, positive feedback and the successful introduction of a smoke free workplace,” she said.

At the Hobart networking breakfast, Maria Moraitis and Rosemary Welch from the Friends’ School in North Hobart said that the introduction of their health and wellbeing program was well received at the school, with a high uptake among staff.

“The program has also contributed to a reduction in sick leave rates and an increase in retention rates, as well as generating positive feedback among our employees,” Maria said.

More health and wellbeing networking sessions will be held later this year. Look out for details on the Health and Wellbeing Advisors Facebook page at www.facebook.com/workcovertasmania.

If you would like a WorkCover Health and Wellbeing Advisor to come to your workplace free of charge, at a time that suits you, to discuss some cost effective strategies for your workplace, call 1300 776 572, or email workcoveradvisors@justice.tas.gov.au.
Three Reasons why we Drop out of Exercise

JO CORDELL-COOPER
Active Solutions and Health Network

So you want to take up exercise, you’ve tried a few exercise programs before but you’ve never continued. Here are the three biggest mistakes people make when starting an exercise program.

1: Choosing something they do not enjoy

Unless you are exercising for a particular event, or needing some rehab – why take on anything you don’t enjoy? If you love swimming, swim. If you love Zumba, do Zumba. Cycling? Do a cycling class. The important thing is to enjoy what you are doing, because life is too short for anything else. Move. Enjoy. Keep doing it. Simple!

2: Going too hard and then giving up because it’s too hard

We set a goal but is it realistic? Is it even likely that if you don’t exercise regularly that you will start doing it 5 times a week and keep this up as the year goes by. Be realistic, what can you sustain each week, every week, month, year? What other demands do you have on your time? Start with a realistic and achievable exercise plan and then if you do more – well that’s just good for you! You don’t achieve anything by getting disheartened and giving up.

3: Not making it a priority – so you really don’t have time for it

If you are sick, you make an appointment to go to the doctor. Treat exercise the same. You’ve selected the activity you want to do, it’s on Monday nights, 6pm. Sorry, can’t work back late that night, can’t cook tea, can’t pick up the kids – whatever. It’s in the diary, you can’t change it.

So next time you want to start an exercise program, make sure you enjoy it, commit to it (realistically) and make it a priority. Otherwise you are setting yourself up to fail.

To contact the Active Solutions and Health Network, phone (03) 6243 0552, or 0409 862 206, or email activesolutions@netspace.net.au.
“Don’t keep mental illness under your hat” was the message relayed by Mayor Bertrand Cadart and members of the Spring Bay Suicide Prevention Network, who hosted a Wear a Hat Morning Tea in Triabunna to raise money for mental health research.

Hat Day is Australian Rotary Health’s community action and awareness day and monies raised go towards helping fund research to find new treatments and potential cures for mental illnesses. More than four million Australians are affected by mental illness such as depression, schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s, anxiety and bipolar disorders at some point during their life.

Wearing his French beret, Mayor Cadart launched Hat Day at the morning tea which was attended by more than 100 people modelling hats of all descriptions. Guest speaker and author of *When it Rains*, Maggie Mackellar, of Glamorgan Spring Bay captivated the audience as she told of her own life experience and loss. The message which came through was the need for mental illness to be de-stigmatised so that sufferers are not ashamed to talk about their illness and seek help. A total of $1,450 was raised at the morning tea and a display of hats, from vintage to comical, created a great deal of interest.