

CASE STUDY: CUPS IN CORRIDORS
Increasing community participation in arts and cultural development to impact positively on health

Dale Newman, Barwon Health

" Reminds me of my grandma who was born in a sea of controversy and was as gentle and fragile and beautiful as her precious tea cup. I have her special cup now and it is a connection with her. We never got to meet but I feel a strong soul connection with her & warmth and love. What a beautiful soul and person"

Cups In Corridors participant



BACKGROUND

Corridor One 4 is a community arts and cultural development Group initiated and coordinated by Barwon Health's Community Development Worker. The vision of the group is 'celebrating arts, culture and people in the north'.

Membership of the Corridor ONE 4 group is open to anyone with a focus on celebrating arts, culture and people in the north and increasing opportunities for participation in arts and cultural development activities that enhance the health of the community.

Members include residents and workers from a broad range of organisations including practitioners within primary and community health. The geographical focus of the group is the northern suburbs of Geelong (areas identified for Neighbourhood Renewal and other community building activities) as specified in Barwon Health Promotion Plan (2004 – 2006)

The benefits of community arts to health are evidence based and well documented.

The Australia Council says that community cultural development can be a highly effective means for communities to:

- develop new skills and address issues which affect them:
- interact and increase communication and networking
- address social justice issues
- represent themselves to their own and to other communities
- and enjoy rich and diverse cultural activities

'Active community participation in arts practice is an essential component of a healthy and sustainable society. Arts practice not only opens up fantastic vistas of community expressionivity but also...profoundly contributes to the development of community'. (Hawkes, 2001)

FROM THE TEACUP



Artist and storyteller Julie Tipene – O'Toole described her installation as 'a celebration of the age old ritual of sharing stories over a cup of tea'.

Julie's interest in collecting and preserving local stories created an installation featuring numerous tea cups, old and new, big and small with messages written on paper tags by everyday people and left in the cups to be read by others. It was an interactive installation,

which invites the viewer to respond by adding their own story or simply enjoy the stories that have been placed in the cups.

Julie's installation has grown since March 2003, when she used "From the Teacup" to encourage families affected by cancer to tell their stories. Today there are over 800 tags and countless cups and saucers and paraphernalia.

One of the members of Corridor One 4 had experienced Julie's installation and suggested the group meet Julie and identify ways to use such a concept to engage people living in the north in community arts and storytelling and increase their participation.

The From the Teacup Project was seen as a wonderful way to introduce Corridor One 4, hear the diverse stories of people living in the north and celebrate their contribution.



THE COMMUNITY VOICE CONFERENCE

Run over two days late in June the Community Voice Conference was an innovative and inspirational initiative for Corio, Norlane and Whittington to:

- celebrate remarkable people and groups
- create a forum for community voice and
- bring businesses, government, services and communities together

The conference was attended by over 500 people and included health forums, expos, a Family Bush Dance, Youth and Family activities and entertainment.

Barwon Health was a key member of the Community Voice Conference Planning Group.

Corridor One 4 decided to initiate their first community arts project at the conference to

- increase community participation and involvement in the arts
- ensure 'art' is accessible and owned by the community
- incorporate cultural and linguistically diverse groups
- ensure evidence based practice influences agencies, organisations and policy makers
- encourage and support creative collaborations between people in the North, artists and organisations
- influence change at a policy making level around the value of community arts and cultural development
- provide examples of community arts projects that are making a difference within the north Geelong area.

Project: Cups in Corridors

Aim: To provide an artistic forum for community voice and celebrate the varied and unique stories of people living in the northern suburbs through increased participation in community arts.



Why?

People living within the northern suburbs of Geelong have identified clearly through open forums, research studies and other

interactions the dramatic impact 'stigma' has on their health and well being.

'People say, "Where do you live? And I'm like. Well. Do I really have to say because this is the Bronx of Geelong, this is the ghetto... Like in LA they're got trailer park trash and in Geelong you've got Corio and Norlane trash... it's a very negative way to raise up every morning.'

(There's Good and Bad Everywhere You Go; Exploring Local Contexts for Social Capital" Deborah Warr, (2004), Centre for the Study of Health & Society, Uni of Melbourne Press

Corridor ONE 4 and indeed the Cups In Corridors Project wanted to make a direct response to the impact of stigma by providing an opportunity for the real stories of diversity and uniqueness to be told.

The Community Participation Working Party has three members on the Corridor ONE 4 Group and their involvement illustrates the commitment Primary Care has to a primary focus on health promotion.

PROMOTION



Cups In Corridors was promoted as part of all conference promotions and through its own networks within and outside the community. Funding for the project was sourced through Wholewomans Small Grants, and the Cultural Development Network of Victoria (members of Corridor ONE 4) funded the cost of Artist Julie - Tipene `O`Toole.

Cups In Corridors consisted of:

- **An academic presentation on the health benefits of community arts participation**
- **The 'From the Teacup' installation**
- **'How to Host Your own Teacup Project' workshops**
- **CALD groups demonstrating their rituals around tea drinking and preparation including local Russian and Indian communities**
- **Community singing performance**
- **Tea- leaf readings**

Run over the course of the two days, one participant described Cups In Corridors as "The soul of the conference'.

OUTCOMES SO FAR:

All in attendance at the conference interacted with the project at some level. Cups In Corridors workshops were very well attended and highly valued

Members of the Indian community provided an array of teas, demonstrated their unique rituals, dressed in national costumes and remained at the conference to form connections and future collaborations and Projects with those attending.



The stories shared by people have been added to the 'From the Teacup' installation and will travel throughout Victoria and to California in 2007. Participants reported feeling valued for their unique contribution and stories.

The willingness of everyone to openly share their stories and insights into their lives during the workshops.

PARTNERSHIPS & NEW PROJECTS

New partnerships and collaborations have been initiated as a result of the project. These include

- A Teacup Project as part of this years Senior Citizens Week
- 'Reclaim The Night' teacup project.
- Hospital in Geelong, children's ward fund raiser (Mad Hatter's tea party)
- A Whittington-based Geelong cultural performance group have invited Julie to work with them to produce and perform a myth. The production will celebrate Maori language, songs and dance and storytelling.

100 people participated in workshops and 50 new story tags were written.

The Corridor ONE 4 database now has 40 new names from northern residents interested in supporting the work of Corridor ONE 4

Participants were provided with starter packs to initiate their own 'Teacup Projects'.



FROM THE TEACUP; WHAT CONTRIBUTION CAN THE ARTS MAKE TO OUR COMMUNITIES ?



'Culture breathes richness and vitality into our lives; it animates those things which make us human- meaning-making, identity, belonging'

Bridging Cultural Conflicts, Michelle Le Baron, 2003

Kim Dunphy, Manager of Cultural Development Network of Victoria, Kathleen Ryan of Bethany Community Support, Lynden Costin of Courthouse Youth Theatre, Danielle Hughes of Barwon Health and Sue Hartigan of Geelong Arts Alliance presented projects that have contributed to the health and strength of individuals and communities in many ways.

Outcomes of local projects described by presenters include:

- recognition and validation experienced by participants
- development of resources to be used by Local schools and organisations
- creation and sharing of stories increased people's ability to address issues in their lives
- skill development, positive engagement with other young people and service providers
- improved family relationships through increased understanding of the issues for young people

EVIDENCE

In the UK in 1997, Francois Matarasso made the first large-scale attempt to gather evidence of the social benefits and impacts of participation in the arts. Using rigorous research methods, he identified fifty social impacts on individuals and communities through participation in arts programs.

Matartosso concluded that participation in the arts does bring benefits to individuals and communities including;

- increase in confidence
- creative and transferable skills
- human growth translating into wider social impact
- building of confidence of minority groups
- promoting contact and contributing to social cohesion

Deidre Williams describes studies in Australia and the UK that show social and educational outcomes of involvement in community arts programs including:

- building and development of communities
- increase of social capital
- activation of social change
- development of human capital
- improvement of economic performance

'There is a large body of evidence that the major residual benefits from community based arts programs comes from developing social and human capital, that is, in how these experiences can develop new insights, connections, skills and knowledge which influence changes to people's attitudes and behaviour' (Williams 1996)

OUTCOMES SO FAR

Through the academic presentation, individuals, organisations and groups were provided with evidence of the far-reaching benefits of community arts. For example, Danielle Hughes described one young woman who has gone from being a client of Jigsaw to performing in two films and the Somebody's Daughter play 'Blame Crazy Jane' and producing art work for a series of promotional postcards and posters.

This young woman had previously lived a life of isolation from her family and the community. Today she is a confident healthy young woman who speaks at public engagements and has been

acknowledged as one of Geelong's 'Remarkable People' at the Community Voice Conference. Jodie no longer attends Jigsaw and lives a full and healthy life within the community.

CONCLUSION

Community arts and cultural development are the right of all people. Cups In Corridors, the Community Participation Working Group and Corridor ONE 4 continue to implement activities that empower people to contribute to the culture of their community. Barwon Health is committed to increasing the level of participation in civic life of people disconnected from mainstream opportunities.

References

***From the teacup; what contribution can the arts make to our communities?* Kim Dunphy, Cultural Development Network, 2006**

***From the Teacup, China, Paper String;* Julie Tipene- O'Toole, 2006**

***There's Good and Bad Everywhere You Go: Exploring Local Contexts for Social Capital,* Dr Deborah J. Warr, 2004, Centre for the Study of Health and Society, University of Melbourne**



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