

Follow my Lead

Background

The City of Stirling is located in the North Metropolitan area of Perth, with a population approaching 185,000. The Council's Physical Activity Plan identified young people, seniors and women as having high levels of inactivity, and some gaps were identified in the range of community programs the City offered. The Follow My Lead program was seen as an innovative and fun opportunity for residents to be active, showcase outdoor areas and to promote responsible dog ownership within the city.

Project Objectives

- Increase physical activity levels and awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits amongst City of Stirling residents, particularly young people, seniors and women.
- Establish a number of self-managed and sustainable walking groups at various venues throughout the City of Stirling.
- Market and promote the use of City of Stirling assets including public open space, sporting areas and animal exercise areas.
- Educate and promote responsible pet ownership within the City of Stirling.

Project Strategies

- Hold three expos showcasing physical activity opportunities.
- Establish a number of walking groups for people and their pets.
- Provide an information booth at expos to recruit walkers.
- Recruit and train a number of volunteer walking group leaders.
- Advertise and promote the walking program.
- Prepare an information brochure on walking groups and distribute at City of Stirling venues.
- Provide maps and guides of areas suitable for walking and target the establishment of walking groups at these areas.
- Establish guidelines for walking groups relating to exercising pets.
- Reinforce the responsible pet ownership message to City residents.

Project Results

Activities

- Two highly successful expo events were held to showcase physical activity and responsible dog ownership. Over 2,500 people plus dogs attended in February and over 3,000 in September 2005.
- Celebrity walks were held at the expos with over 50 participants in each.
- Eight walk group leaders were trained on how to lead groups and manage dogs.
- Sixteen Follow My Lead walking groups were established in the first three months. Thirteen continue to operate across six suburbs during the week and on weekends.



- Two group walks were also organised to which all leaders and groups were invited.
- Most walking groups regularly have five or more participants with a high representation of women and seniors.
- Close relationships have developed between many leaders and participants, resulting in social events outside the program.
- Twenty pedometers are available for loan from City of Stirling's six libraries.



Promotion

- Follow My Lead logo and branding slogan 'It's just a walk in the park' were developed. The logo was used on promotional merchandise including water bottles, hats and stickers and on clothing for walk group leaders.
- The program was promoted through the City of Stirling's newsletter to 90 schools, radio community switchboard announcements and expo advertisements, editorial, photographs and advertisements in community newspapers (20), *Kids in Perth* magazine and *Perth's Child* magazine. A segment also featured on Channel 7's *Have a Go TV* program.
- A contact list was compiled of interested walkers who attended the expos and people who contacted the City of Stirling directly.
- Follow My Lead was promoted at other City of Stirling events including community centre open days and gala days.
- 100 posters were printed and displayed in city facilities and 4,000 flyers were distributed.
- A colouring competition with the themes of exercising in parks was held for local school children.

Education

- Follow My Lead website was developed and included program information, walking trails, trail maps and physical activity information.
- 10,000 copies of a walking and walking areas brochure were distributed at events and in City of Stirling facilities e.g. senior citizens' and recreation centres, libraries.
- Guidelines were established for walking groups relating to dog participation.
- Program brochure included information on responsible dog ownership.
- Expos showcased local services for dogs and information on dog laws, health and well-being was distributed.

Where to from here?

- The Follow My Lead program will be retained within the Recreation and Cultural Services business unit.
- A refresher training course for current leaders will be held in 2007.
- Ongoing recruitment and training of leaders for targeted areas within the City's boundaries.
- General support and continued recognition of the program as an important part of the suite of physical activity opportunities the City of Stirling offers to the community.

Lessons learned

Recruiting suitable leaders can be difficult, therefore once suitable people are engaged they must receive sufficient support and recognition to ensure their continued involvement e.g. they decide when and where the group will walk.

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| Project Date: | October 2005 – October 2006 |
| Contact: | City of Stirling Phone: 9345 8949 |

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