



Newsletter no.3, December 2005

## Act-Belong-Commit Kicks Off

***The Mentally Healthy WA Campaign has now been launched in six regional centres in WA.***

It is appropriate that the first regional launch of the Act-Belong-commit Campaign was on World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2005, in Albany WA. During the next six weeks the campaign was launched in the remaining five demonstration sites, Geraldton, Esperance, Northam, Karratha and Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Typically, each regional launch was opened by a key community member and then followed by two community forums held at different times to accommodate a wide range of community members. After introductory talks, a brief history on the background of the Act-Belong-Commit concept was provided by either Prof. Rob Donovan or Dr. Ray James. The participants then broke into smaller groups to discuss their ideas for events and activities that could be run in their town to promote the Act-Belong-Commit concepts.

The forums also helped to identify people in the community who were willing to be involved in the campaign. Community feedback and evaluation reports indicated that the launches and forums were a great success. Community members said that the forums raised awareness of things you can do to improve mental health, helped them form new networks, promote their own organisation and motivated them to participate in the Act-Belong-Commit campaign.

Project Officers said that the forums were a positive experience: they 'made new contacts', 'learned how supportive the community can be', 'learned more about activities going on in town', and 'greatly increased number and range of personal network'.

Ideas suggested at the community forums included:

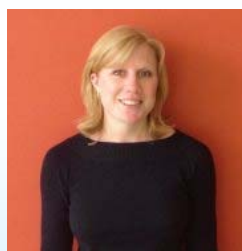
- 'Have a go' days...for sport and recreation activities
- Orientation and welcome packages for people new to town
- Family events
- Create opportunities and promote volunteer work
- Inter-generational activities
- Arts, music and drama activities
- Mentoring programs



Amberlee Laws, Northam Launch 2.11.05

## Welcome and Farewell

We would like to welcome Jennie Ambridge to the Project. Jennie has taken over from Colby Sidebottom as the Research Associate for the campaign team in Perth and will assist with the implementation phase. Colby Sidebottom has relocated to Karratha as the Health Promotion Officer at the Pilbara Gascoyne Population Health – West Pilbara. Colby will continue working on the project as the Evaluation Officer in Karratha for the Project and looks forward to seeing the positive impact of the campaign in the Karratha community.



Jennie Ambridge



Colby Sidebottom

## Can we be Mentally Healthier?

In 2002, Healthway contracted Professor Rob Donovan and others to ask community members in Western Australia: 'what can you do to remain or become more mentally healthy?' Respondents said that you need to: keep an active mind, be physically active, take time out for yourself, be socially active, and have good friends to talk to. Research in the fields of positive psychology, happiness, social capital, mental health and neurobiology supports these perceptions.

There are things we all can do to enhance our mental wellbeing. We sum it up as: **Act-Belong-Commit**.

Lawrence Katz, a neurobiologist at Duke University says that better brain function causes more active lives and richer social networks, and people with active lives and rich social networks maintain better brain function.

The mental health benefits resulting from physiological changes occurring during physical activity are well documented and include improvement in mood and control of anxiety and depression. Social interactions also benefit the brain and mental states. So the basis of our program is **Be Active**: physically, mentally and socially.

A 2002 study conducted by Martin Seligman and Edward Diener showed that the most salient characteristics of participants with the highest levels of happiness and fewest signs of depression were strong ties to friends and family. Friends, social networks and connections are important. So we say: **Belonging** is good for your mental health.

When Seligman talks about 'Authentic Happiness' he says that the two most important attributes are: **engagement** (with family, friends, job, hobbies) and **meaning** (using personal strengths to serve a larger end). Making personal and civic **Commitments** can enhance your mental health.

For your 2006 New Year resolution, make a list of 3 ways that you can Act-Belong-Commit. Here's to your Mental Health.



Dudes Day Out, Albany 25.11.05

## Summary of Benchmark Survey

A benchmark telephone survey of 2,200 adults, aged 18 years and over, was conducted by random digit dialing in October/November 2005, prior to local campaign implementation. The sample consisted of 200 adults in each of the six regional intervention communities (Albany, Karratha, Geraldton, Northam, Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance), 200 adults in each of three regional comparison communities (Bunbury, Port Hedland and Busselton), and 400 adults in the Perth metropolitan area. Respondents were recruited in two age groups (18-39 years and 40+ years), with equal split of males and females in each age group.

The questionnaire gathered self-reports on the salience of mental health promotion, people's understanding of mental health and what they believe they can do for their own and others' mental health. The questionnaire also recorded self-reports on behaviour changes, e.g. individual and group activities such as reading, walking, joining a club, etc; and assessed social capital, community cohesion and general mental and physical health. A number of socio-demographic measures were included in the survey.

The survey will be repeated on independent samples at the end of 12 months and 24 months of the campaign.

For more information on the survey, you can contact Geoffrey Jalleh Associate Director Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer Control [g.jalleh@curtin.edu.au](mailto:g.jalleh@curtin.edu.au) or 9266 3789.

## How to find out more about the Mentally Healthy WA campaign

For more information about our regional activities, project officers, advertisements and local press articles, please check out our web site or contact our Project Team in Perth on 08 9266 4648 or [ray.james@curtin.edu.au](mailto:ray.james@curtin.edu.au).



**Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for 2006 from  
all the Act-Belong-Commit team**

