



Healthy Food Access Tasmania

CASE STUDY

Peace of the garden

Bruce Ransley, Healthy Food Access Tasmania Project Officer
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In 2013, the 'peace of the garden' veggie box scheme – named for its intention to distract the local kids from all the war on TV – was serving up food boxes to local residents.

The scheme was ably hosted by the Northern Suburbs Community Centre, had a great team of volunteers helping out, and a lot of untapped potential.

Funding from the Heart Foundation saw the appointment of a project officer to grow the enterprise to a point where it was financially sustainable.

The project officer brought entrepreneurial flare to the venture, and also established some valuable baseline metrics around the current state of play – food preferences and preferred price points, for example. She built relationships with local businesses to establish a secure supply of healthy food for the scheme, and was able to enlist UTAS student volunteers to help with some of the everyday workload. Soon they had an online ordering system in place.

Current chief of the scheme Dwayne Cowie says that it hasn't all been plain sailing.

"A few times our supply has broken down and we haven't been able to get a regular volume of healthy food," he said.

"But we tended to get back on track eventually. We're now supplying more local residents, and have also begun tackling the issue of food literacy by working through TAFE to build cooking skills. We now also include recipes in each delivery – prepared by UTAS nutrition students to match the produce – to give people ideas about how to prepare the food they receive."

Data on reach and success has proven difficult to compile, so Dwayne and crew rely on anecdotal feedback, which has proven encouraging. Young kids are getting excited about veggies being delivered (where once they weren't). Kids are eating more vegetables. Instead of trying to get a whole family to the supermarket, food just arrives. Once they get access to the scheme they love it.

Peace of the garden is facing a familiar problem – the need for expansion. More staff are needed, which increases managerial load. Logistical challenges are arising.

But Dwayne sees streamlining operations as far as possible is key to running effectively.

"We offer good training, we maintain our networks, and we follow good business practice," he said.

"It's also important to bring the wider community along for the ride."

More information:

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