

people from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. The exhibition was seen by over 600 visitors to the Gallery and it was applauded as one of the most successful local exhibitions supported by the Gallery.

Not surprisingly, at the end of the project the birthweights of the babies whose Mums participated were higher than their peers who had not been involved. Of the first group of 12 young women involved, nine were still breast-feeding 12 months on. The BHAG was achieved, and the midwives still use the arts as part of their work in the community.

The success of the Mubali strategy, the dedication shown by the midwives and their ability to trust in a 'wacky' arts intervention process and the leadership shown by both Denni and artist Jo Davidson to do whatever was required to ensure Mubali was a success for both the participants and the Gamilaroi Midwifery Strategy were acknowledged with the highest NSW award for a health initiative – the Baxter NSW Health Awards in 2005. Mubali won the Consumer Participation in Healthcare Award and was nominated for the overall Ministerial Award for Excellence.

BE is a small organisation and the core team have over 50 years' experience combining the arts and community development to create social change. What makes BE's work achieve outstanding results is the leadership qualities within its core team, its artists and its Board of Directors. The 'just do it' attitude is a prerequisite for working with BE and, combined with the respect shown by each member of the BE team for each other and all those who come in contact with BE, make it a

winning combination.

The individuals who make up the BE team are a study in duality. They are unassuming yet wilful, humble yet fearless. They are self-effacing, and have an outstanding level of professional will – that is, the commitment to do whatever it takes to achieve success for the participants and the community. These qualities define great leadership. Each project ensures that it is well-thought-out, in line with our mission and values and rigorously measured.

Often we work in very dislocated communities and it is not surprising to find community workers at an impasse. It's hard to keep fronting up day-after-day and have clients not turn up. Using the arts as a soft entry point presents a great opportunity and instant success for engaging with participants in a meaningful and lateral way. Using the arts focuses on the strengths each individual brings rather than the problems that need to be fixed. BE uses an asset-based approach to change. 'Don't tell me the things that are wrong or that you can't do – tell me the things you can do and we will work outward from there.'

In the 'just do it' paradigm, time is not wasted thinking how to fix a community or a person's problems. In the 'just do it' paradigm if the only thing you can do is run – then we will run. It might be on stage for 90 minutes but through the arts BE is committed to giving the person an experience they own, that they will receive applause for and that they can use as the platform to jump off, knowing that 'they can'. Great leadership focuses on finding ways for each and every person to experience

success and then to have them know they did it for themselves.

Many of the graduates from BE projects are now part of the BE leadership program Pathways. Pathways recognises the invaluable contribution of young people in our programs and the value they bring as mentors to other young people experiencing difficult life experiences. Funded through the Coca-Cola Australia Foundation, Pathways provides mentoring and skill development. It supports these 'graduates' in navigating their journey and provides the skills, resources and mentoring support to deliver small projects in their own communities and to work as mentors on new BE projects.

One of BE's next big projects is an alcohol harm minimisation project delivered in collaboration with Arts North West across 15 communities in the New England, North West and North Coast regions of NSW. The project has received backing from the NSW Government, The Alcohol Education & Rehabilitation Foundation, The Vincent

Fairfax Family Foundation and some individual donors. Called 'Message in a Bottle', the project will use art forms such as film, digital stories, dance, music, visual arts and performance to create tools that young people can use to buffer themselves against the harmful effects of alcohol misuse.

What underlies BE's work is reciprocity. As individuals we gain as much from the people we serve in BE projects as they gain from participating. We believe the heart of a good life is its meaning. Hopefully, BE projects provide opportunities for participants to gain meaning, connection and a pathway towards participation. BE is extremely fortunate that each day we are involved in meaningful work. And from this we gain that rare tranquillity that comes from knowing that we have had a hand in creating something of intrinsic excellence that makes a contribution.

For more information about Beyond Empathy, Email:
admin@beyondempathy.org.au
or Visit:
www.beyondempathy.org.au

AMAZING WOMEN

There are so many amazing women
In my local community
With a wealth of passion and knowledge
To share with you and me.
When we open our minds
And unlock our hearts
We can learn so much more
Than we knew at the start
So smile and say hello
To the woman next door
You'll be amazed what she can teach you
That you didn't know before

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Thirsty for more

THE NSW REGIONAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS MENTOR PROGRAM

By Jo-Anne Miley, NSW Department of State and Regional Development



L to R: Mentor Sally Algate, Far Western Business Advisory Service Co-ordinator, Kate Attard, and mentoree Sandra Mannion. Photo by Gavin Schmidt. Barrier Daily Truth. Broken Hill

A tried-and-true business program based on the intrinsic worth of mentoring women in business has created 22 new jobs in the outback capital of regional NSW.

Eleven years ago the NSW Government through the Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) established this mentor-based program to help emerging women business owners grow their business.

And, judging by the slew of new jobs in Broken Hill, the program is a runaway success.

HOW IT WORKS

The NSW Regional Women in Business Mentor Program runs for three to four months, and is made up of practical business workshops, networking events and group mentoring.

The aim is to help women who have owned their own business for one to five years.

The 42 regional mentor programs which have been held across NSW have helped more than 1000 regional women grow their own business. It has also helped

their communities by inspiring the formation of business networks for women across the state.

For some women, the program is the first time they've ever met like-minded business owners. And they're thirsty for more.

When the program finishes, it often leaves a well-established network which ensures on-going business support.

TALES FROM BROKEN HILL

In June 2006 the Regional Women in Business mentor program hosted a graduation for the women who took part in the first program ever held in Far Western NSW.

A total of 28 women from across the region graduated from the intensive three-month business skills program coordinated by Kate Attard of the Far Western Business Advisory Service.

Some participants travelled more than 700 kilometres round-trip to take part. That's real commitment!

With six experienced and successful local business owners as mentors, the Broken Hill program achieved some remarkable results.

The final evaluations showed that 44 per cent of participants increased their turnover, while 42 per cent increased their employee numbers as a direct result of the program.

More impressive is the fact that 22 new employees were hired because of the program.

The women who took part in the Broken Hill program came from the usual spectrum of small business such as home services, retail, tourism, food, and the health and beauty sectors.

The mentors were typical of the regional mentor programs, namely high calibre, successful local business people.

A survey of local businesswomen held before the start of the program revealed some interesting facts such as:

- feelings of isolation
- a need for networking

The roots of effective leadership lie in simple things, one of which is listening. Listening to someone demonstrates respect; it shows that you value their ideas and are willing to hear them. JOHN BALDONI

- the need to formalise business plans
- the necessity for no-nonsense assistance in business planning
- problems balancing work and family commitments
- difficulties defining and distinguishing client relationships from friendships
- trouble with cash flow.

The Regional Mentor program addressed all of these issues. With full-day workshops on business planning, financial management, sales and marketing, participants learnt how to understand their market and thus grow their business.

These are some of the stories of those who took part.

Sally Algate – Mentor

Sally Algate, the executive officer at the Broken Hill Chamber of Commerce, has extensive business knowledge, and has owned several businesses in the region.

‘I was honoured to be asked to be a mentor,’ said Sally.

‘I am truly amazed at how my group improved in such a short time, and also taught me along the way. They all have the opportunity to go a long way in their businesses. We are going to continue to meet and support each other.’

Mentees

Dionne Delvin is the office manager of Go Dental, a business partnership with her husband, and also the first female president of the local YMCA.

Dionne, who is always on the lookout for ways to improve her business,

appreciated the financial management and marketing component of the program.

She is now in the process of creating a new webpage that promotes this diversity and has also hired new staff since completing the program.

Mentee Sandra Mannion of Holistic Rainbow Healing is currently expanding her services, thanks to the sound advice of her mentoring group.

Sandra benefited from the business planning workshop,

which gave her the insight to increase her business services. Sandra has also increased her turnover by offering new services.

Mentee Janet Hay got so much from the program she decided to start up a new franchise called Curves.

‘It is a gym especially for women, and this program has inspired me even more,’ she said.

Janet, who opened on 1 July 2006, has brought 11

new jobs to the town and feels her new business will work as ‘women motivate each other and can stay focused whilst achieving many other things!’

For more information about upcoming Women in Business programs, including dates, Visit:

www.smallbiz.nsw.gov.au and follow the Women in Business links, or call Jo-Anne Miley, Manager, Women in Business on Ph: 1300 134 359.

I'M LISTENING! REALLY I AM!

By Carly Anderson. Article from the Australian Business Women's Network (www.abn.org.au)

If there is one skill that has the ability to significantly impact every part of our daily life, it's the skill of effective listening. Effective listening is the capacity to truly hear everything a person is communicating and involves more than just what is said and how it's being said.

Listen without preparing a response – If you are preparing a response in your head while a person is still speaking, you are no longer listening and most likely missing out on vital information. I observed this recently with a person giving a series of small group presentations. Often the facilitator missed the essence of what a person was asking and his reply didn't hit the spot. I can only assume he was editing information in his head. As soon as he heard something that fitted with what he knew, he stopped listening.

Listen with all your senses switched on – When we learn to use our whole body as a sensory receiver, we begin to ‘hear’ more. This may sound strange, but once you've learned to simultaneously use your heart, head, ears, eyes and gut feeling, listening will never be the same again! And it's a learnable skill. I recently met a beautiful woman who teaches tantric. She told me she doesn't have a preconceived way of how to work with an individual or a couple, as the key to tantric is having nothing but the present moment matter. The same applies to effective listening.

Give everyone the gift of your full attention – If you are on the phone and a person stands in your office in a manner that says ‘I want your immediate attention’, you can no longer give your full attention to the person on the phone. If you are meeting with someone and your mobile phone rings or a pretty sound announces the arrival of an email, you have broken the flow of your conversation and especially your concentration. Practise the habit of switching off your mobile when with people, or switch off the sound of emails arriving. Educate people to respect that whoever you are presently listening to or speaking with is more important than anything else.

How do you feel if someone is distracted when you are speaking with them? Do you trust them? Do you want to work with them, do business or be around them? Respect and trust grow when we go the extra distance and put aside our automatic responses. Mostly we only get one chance to make a great impression. Being totally focused on hearing a person, be it on the phone or in person, increases our chances of establishing an ongoing relationship that will prosper.



Involving young people in community organisations

Community groups at any level are often keen to make sure they are representative of their own communities and membership base, but often overlook one of the great recruiting grounds for volunteers and community-conscious people who are prepared to work hard to bring about change – our youth.

You only have to look at the recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures to see that one of the booming areas of volunteering is in the younger age groups where youth are converting their commitment to a cause into action. While some community leaders appear dubious about bringing young people into the leadership loop, the benefits of attracting young people are many.

As well as energy, enthusiasm, creativity and time, young people generally are often better able to adapt and embrace change. They also know how your group can be more relevant to people in their own age group. Engaging the services and support of young people can go a long way to

ensuring the future of your organisation.

It is important when engaging younger people in your group that they are treated with respect and as equals among adults. There is no point inviting young people to sit on your board or committee, only to dismiss their views or refuse to treat them with the same weight as those of more experienced committee members. Young people should have an equal say and an equal vote on community issues.

Advantages for having young people on board:

- An injection of energy that can help re-invigorate a group.
- The addition of fresh and creative ideas and a different perspective on most issues – and how to communicate that to a new audience.
- Creating a diversity of experience and skills and the ability to use new technologies to spread your message and work.

- A greater level of flexibility and adaptability to make the most of new technologies and trends.
- A greater level of inclusion to ensure your group is truly representative of various community interest groups at both a formal and an informal level.
- A bridge to the next generation of community leaders that helps ensure the future of your group.
- Expertise on issues and challenges facing youth and the things that matter to them.
- Access to new networks and circle of friends, which in turn may mean your organisation will grow and gain increased community support.

What do you need to be aware of?

Involving young people in a community group brings with it certain responsibilities. An organisation has a duty of care to its younger members to ensure the environment is a safe one.

When enlisting the help of young people you also need to consider your organisational procedures to accommodate youth involvement. You might need to incorporate more flexible working conditions to suit their needs, or modify your training programs so they do not feel like they are stuck in a school-type environment.

A community group also needs to qualify why they need more young people and how they can best utilise their skills. Young people need to feel that their contribution is worthwhile otherwise there is little point in them being there. If you are asking them to take on a position of responsibility, then give them the responsibility – don't make it a pseudo-position.

Tips when recruiting young people:

- Appoint a youth coordinator to coordinate and take responsibility for young members.
- Set up a mentoring program so all members have the opportunity to work with older/younger people and swap knowledge and skills.
- Identify areas where youth involvement would be best utilised.
- Set clear goals and guidelines so the young person understands their duties and where they fit within the organisation.
- Adapt the organisation's procedures to accommodate younger people. Ask them what they want to do. Offer flexible jobs. Give their ideas a go and allow them to act on their suggestions.
- Conduct an orientation and screening process so the

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needs of both the young person and the organisation can be met.

- Make sure there is sufficient feedback and encouragement to maintain enthusiasm.
- Ensure all younger members are aware of relevant health and safety laws.
- Where necessary, ensure there is parental/guardian consent.
- Make sure young people are aware of all your reporting structures and any emergency and risk management plans, and who their supervisor is so they can speak to them if they have any suggestions/complaints/problems.
- Appoint appropriate tasks to young people and don't place them in a dangerous or difficult situation.
- Budget for any organisational change – training, time, catering, etc.
- Sell the benefits of recruiting young people to your members. People brought into an unhappy environment are unlikely to stick around.

How do you attract younger volunteers?

Once the decision has been made to recruit younger people and your board/committee is committed to making your organisation and leadership roles more accessible to younger people, start from your own organisation and work out in wider circles. Start with people who know about your group and your work and explain why you need them and why working with you would help to achieve their own community goals and needs.

Ask yourself: why would a young person want to be involved in our group? You might need to:

- Review your recruitment strategies. How have you found support in the past? Can it be directed towards youth?
- Review your marketing and communications. Does your marketing speak to youth? Would they know your organisation even exists?
- Review your advertising. Make sure you put information in places where a young person might read it. Target youth publications like the street presses, music magazines, etc.
- Tell the people who are most interested. Let your established membership and supporter base know that you are seeking youth involvement – exercise the 'word-of-mouth' option. Your members might know some young people who would be keen to get involved.
- Talk to schools, universities and other youth groups in the area.

How do you keep young people involved?

To maintain youth involvement, there must be support for both getting more young people involved with your group and in getting them involved in leadership positions. Your community group might need to look at structural change along with a cultural one, but, for most groups, keeping young people keen, enthusiastic, involved and dedicated to your organisation is little different than maintaining a strong volunteer program.

Most people leave groups or become disenchanted when there is poor organisation, poor supervision and feedback or where they feel they are left to do unsatisfying or unsuitable jobs.

And like any other volunteers, young people need to be confident that their contribution is not a token one and that it is recognised and appreciated. To ensure this occurs groups can:

- Assess programs regularly and ensure you seek feedback from younger members/volunteers/leaders.
- Consult widely if you plan to make changes.
- Ensure younger people are represented throughout the organisation and that there are opportunities for them to develop within the organisation.
- Provide training or mentoring for younger people to keep improving their skills and to show they are valued.
- Ensure that younger people are afforded the same respect as others. Don't talk 'at' or 'down' to younger people.
- Make sure they are aware of how their help is contributing to the community group.
- Ensure there is open communication and that young people have access to all decision makers and that there is a process for their suggestions to be heard.
- Value all your members.

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