

Drop-in for Deadly Tucker

CRAIG EDWARDS AND ANGELA COLBEY

*Public Health Nutritionists, Department of Health and Community Services
Nhulunbuy, East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory*

A drop in centre is not on the normal target list for most nutritionists when it comes to looking at places to educate the community about healthy eating. Mind you, Craig Edwards and Angela Colbey are rarely called normal anyway! This initiative is designed for the Yolngu youth of Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala and Ski Beach in the East Arnhem Land of the Northern Territory. It's located at the Anglicare Youth Drop-In Activity Zone (YDIAZ) which runs every Friday after school.

The goal is to provide regular opportunities for Yolngu youth to learn about healthy food shopping, food hygiene, cooking skills and the health benefits of proper nutrition. The nutritionists from the Department of Health and Community Services and the staff of Anglicare Youth Service East Arnhem recognised that healthier food choices need to be easy choices, because nutrition is difficult to achieve for many Yolngu people and simple nutrition education in schools alone is not enough. It requires practical cooking opportunities in a variety of settings.

The key limiting factor for getting this project off the ground was the lack of cooking equipment. In the early days the nutritionists brought in their own personal cooking utensils and equipment in order to assist the young people to prepare the most basic of meals. At the end of 2006 a small grant was won from the Foundation for Young Australians. This allowed the purchase of a variety of cooking equipment dedicated to the program.

The basic format of the session is to take a few young people

to do the shopping at 2:30pm on Fridays. Then 2-4 young people take turns preparing and cooking the ingredients. The delicious meals are normally eaten by up to 40 attendees by 4pm. Then the music is turned off and all activities put on hold until the dishes are done and the rubbish is put away ... on the odd occasion a complete lock down of the building is done to stop washing up escapees – usually the teenage boys!

It's important to have a focus on fun and entertainment with these sessions because it isn't a school class where attendance is mandatory, it's drop in where young people can come and go as they please. So the young people are often involved in choosing the meals they want for the following week. Sustainability has been assured as Anglicare have pledged financial support for food for the YDIAZ drop-in centre sessions.

Special thanks must be given to Anglicare Northern Territory – Youth Service East Arnhem staff Emily Connell, Sina Heller, Jarrad Merlo and Wendy Smyth, and the Yirrkala Dhanbul Sport and Recreation Officer, Stacey Dwyer for making this program possible.

Craig Edwards and Angela Colbey
Public Health Nutritionists, Department of Health and Community Services
Nhulunbuy, East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Email craig.edwards@nt.gov.au and angela.colbey@nt.gov.au
Phone (08) 89870395 and (08) 89870313

