

Going After the Missing Sheep project



Project overview

The key project aim was to connect people who did not participate in activities with a suitable transport support. The most cost-effective way to provide transport to the group activities was to establish a car pool system.

Project description

The Vietnamese Senior Citizens' group of Hume started their project by conducting a study into the reasons why isolated older people in their community were not participating in their group.

Through this study, 56 members were identified as not participating in regular activities or never attending activities.

The outcomes from the study lead to the development of the Going After the Missing Sheep project.

The overwhelming reason for not people attending social activities was the lack of suitable transport to and from the group.

Project model

- Four to five members were recruited to pick up isolated older people from their homes.
- On average, 19 isolated older people used the car pool to attend 24 social activities throughout the year.
- In addition, car pool volunteers provided useful information about how to use public transport by pointing out how and where to catch trains and buses, and accompanying some older people with low English proficiency and lack of confidence on their first bus and train trips.
- The group advertised this project via weekly church bulletins and word of mouth.
- The executive members made formal contact with 'missing sheep' and any other Vietnamese seniors with phone calls and face-to-face meetings.
- The group also developed new and interesting activities to attract new members and retain existing members, including cooking classes, tai chi and excursions.

Budget

Total project cost:	\$3,360
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Project challenges

Of the 56 members listed as 'missing sheep', 27 had moved interstate or back to Vietnam and 11 had moved to suburbs away from the reach of the project.

Project outcomes

- The group had an increase of almost 200 per cent in members actively participating in fortnightly social meetings.
- A total of 252 people attended the 2014 New Year (Vietnamese Year of the Horse's Tet), which included the entire group membership and over 150 non-members from community group partners including Vietnamese younger people.
- Nineteen socially isolated members were given transport to regular events, and taught how to use public transport. Also, with information provided through this project, 12 members now have Seniors Cards and seniors myki cards.
- The group has a steady, active and ever-increasing membership as a result of the project, and members are now equipped with a new-found confidence to participate in social activities, finding their own means of transport to meetings and readily taking part in the group's activities.
- The group has welcomed six new members and reconnected 15 'missing sheep' back to the group.

Project sustainability

The car pool volunteers will continue to transport about 10 very frail members, enabling them to participate in activities.

The new tai chi physical exercises have proved very beneficial to the members' general health and are now an integral part of the group's ongoing activities.

Importantly, this project has developed new partnerships with a number of community organisations, in particular, the Vietnamese Women's Group in Hume and the Hoa Lu Scout Group of Glenroy.

The Vietnamese Women's Group provides food and entertainment. The Hoa Lu Scout Group provides volunteers to help set up and clean-up after functions and events. Both of these partnerships are very important to the group and will continue well beyond this project.

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