



Pathways to sport – Success stories

North West Tasmania Softball

This document demonstrates the pathways to community sport and physical activity made available through the Australian Government's Active After-school Communities (AASC) program.

Sport: Softball

Location: North West, Tasmania

Date: Term 3, 2010

Participants: 175

Transitions: 25 to date

Summary

Softball clubs and associations located on the North West Coast of Tasmania have been using their partnerships with the Active After-school Communities (AASC) program to boost club membership.

In Term 3, 2010, Latrobe and Districts Softball Association, Ulverstone Softball Association and the Wynyard Softball Club were recruited to be involved with the AASC's *Play for Life...Join a Sporting Club* campaign which aimed to connect children with sporting clubs in their local area.

A series of gala days were held in Latrobe, Ulverstone and Wynyard for nine schools and out of school hour care services (OSHCS) involved in the AASC program. The events gave children the opportunity to experience games and the skills of softball in a fun and friendly environment. Each club hosted a follow up 'come and try' event to give children a second chance at experiencing the game and to sign on for local competitions.

Across the three organisations, 25 children signed up to be involved in club sport on a regular basis.

Planning

The Latrobe and Districts Softball Association, Ulverstone Softball Association and the Wynyard Softball Club have been involved with the AASC program in different ways over the past several years.

Latrobe and Districts Softball and Ulverstone Softball, in particular, have used the AASC's Community Coach Training Program (CCTP) to train its coaches and deliver AASC sessions in schools and OSHCS.

With the concept of large softball gala days on offer through the AASC's *Play for Life...Join a Sporting Club* campaign, all three clubs signed on to run a gala day and three individual follow up 'come and try' events.

Planning for the gala days with each individual club and association included:

- Providing invitations to schools involved in the AASC program in the local area
- Booking the venue (council ground) and bus transportation
- Providing club and association coaches/leaders for the day as well as volunteers to help process registrations
- Planning a series of weekend 'come and try' days and designing associated promotional flyers
- Distributing flyers to children in the AASC program

Implementation

The *Play for Life...Join a Sporting Club* gala days occurred on 4 October (Ulverstone) 11 October (Latrobe) and 20 October (Wynyard) 2010.

An event model using the expertise of club coaching and the knowledge of the local AASC Regional Coordinator was developed to provide maximum opportunities for participating children.

Participants were split into two groups, the first consisting of grade 4, 5 and 6 students and the second consisting of student from grade 3 and below. The group of older students was further split into two groups, one focused on game play in an innings of softball whilst the other was focused on skill work. This design allowed for game play to occur without the batters and fielders having to spend lengthy periods of time not actively participating.

The group of younger students was again split into smaller groups that rotated through station work consisting of fielding, throwing, striking and a rounders game. Again, small groups kept the



children active and busy and gave them the maximum chance of experiencing and enjoying the game.

At the end of the day, coaches from each club spoke about upcoming 'come and try' events that would be held at their respective clubs and each child received a promotional flyer.

Outcomes

Following the *Play for Life...Join a Sporting Club* gala days, Latrobe and Districts Softball Association and Ulverstone Softball Association reported that 25 children from the AASC program had attended the follow up 'come and try' events. Wynyard was yet to host its follow up event at the time this case study was written.

Representatives from the three softball clubs agree that the primary benefits of this partnership, aside from membership growth, has been the promotion of the sport within the local community.

President of the Latrobe and Districts Softball Association, Shelley Dodd said "We are very impressed with the Active After-school Communities program. Volunteers are very busy and having the support of the AASC Regional Coordinator to organise access to children, booking of coaches and arranging venues has been great. It is then up to us to turn up and focus our attention on coaching the children and encouraging them to join our club."



Learnings

It is important to plan gala days and sign-on events to coincide with club registration dates and membership opening periods. By having a program or competition for the children to directly transition into, you avoid the risk of losing enthusiasm and interest.

Representatives from clubs currently involved in the AASC program can be key spokespeople for the program and are a great pathway to help start conversations with other clubs or associations.

AASC Regional Coordinator David Munns worked to establish these pathways for children in North West Tasmania into softball.