

COMMUNITY WORKS TOGETHER TO CHANGE ATTITUDES TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

When youth mental health showed up as an issue for the Mansfield community in 2016, the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (Central Hume PCP) played its role of bringing organisations across the community together to take action.

Now young people in the town see a difference in attitudes toward mental health as one of the outcomes of a community wide project to improve youth mental health awareness and outcomes.

Central Hume PCP Executive Officer, Huw Brokensha said in 2016 the Mansfield Shire Council conducted a survey of young people aged 12-25, parents and services in Mansfield.

“We already had the Mansfield Health and Wellbeing Partnership in place. It is designed so members collaborate on a common interest and local priority issues. Once we saw the results and started working with Council and the Mansfield Secondary College, we provided funding so that Council could develop a community wide strategy for youth mental health,” Mr Brokensha said.

Mr Brokensha said this, and a variety of projects across many areas of health and wellbeing, show what the Central Hume Primary Care Partnership’s role has been in improving the health and wellbeing of people in the region for 20 years. It’s also part of the Central Hume PCP’s role to support the Mansfield Shire Council to implement its Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021. This project focused on priority theme 2: community resilience and connectivity.

Central Hume PCP, which covers Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield and Wangaratta council areas, is one of 28 PCPs in Victoria, all celebrating 20 years in 2020.

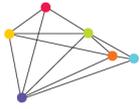
The key to PCPs is that they work to enable collaboration on multiple complex health and wellbeing challenges facing the community.

“Youth mental health is a serious issue where many people in the community want to help. This project has harnessed many partners,” he said.

Mansfield District Hospital Director of Operations, Mel Green, who was the Secondary College Council President at the time the project commenced, is one of them.

“It’s been an extensive response. Mental health first aid training has been provided to teachers and parents. We’ve established pathways for young people to have access to their doctors. There’s a secondary school psychologist one day a week. Eating disorders workshops and DARTA (drug and alcohol research training authority) workshops were held for students and parents,” Ms Green said.

Mansfield Secondary College principal, Timothy Hall said the College shares the view that youth mental health is a community-wide responsibility and the strength of this program is in the collective ownership of the developmental opportunities in youth mental health.



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“We have appreciated the opportunity to work in partnership to support the growth of our students,” Mr Hall said.

In 2018, the project started using the Resilient Youth Australia, Resilience Survey which measures the strengths, mental health and hopefulness of young people. Mansfield Secondary College students have completed the survey over two consecutive years.

“The teachers also had education from Resilient Youth on the first year data and the school has introduced new programs, such as Hands On Learning,” she said.

Hands On Learning gives students from grade 6 to year 9 one day a week where they work to a focus plan and undertake hands-on projects such as building, gardening, community and youth centre projects.

Rachelle Kinsmore, a parent and the youth group co-ordinator in Bonnie Doon is one of many who played her part in broadening understanding by taking part in the Mental Health First Aid training.

“After doing the training, I feel more confident in recognising the signs of someone who might be affected by a mental health issue. I learnt about chatting to them, guiding them to the proper channels. I learnt of more resources than I knew before. Listening to people’s experiences and sharing knowledge, built connections in the community. I feel equipped to get involved,” Ms Kinsmore said.

The Resilience Survey data enables the school to compare its students’ results to national data. The school will take part in the survey for three years.

ENDS

Please see attached case study

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