

Ensuring future good health

By SCOTT BOURNE

Communities in the south of the shire will benefit from the training some of its residents have received through a farm health program.

Eighteen people are now part of a two-year Sustainable Farm Families program, with a two-day training session held at Wedderburn on Monday and yesterday.

The program, funded by the Department of Primary Industries and overseen in the area by the Inglewood and Districts Health Service, aims to improve farming family health, resulting in the enhancement of the family's bottom line.

Participants have to attend an annual two-day workshop throughout the duration of the two-year course.

Community health nurse Anne Donaldson said many of the participants found out about the program through the Wedderburn branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation,

who acted as the sponsor group for the program.

As a result the majority of the participants are members of the local VFF branch.

The service also promoted the program through its recent Sunday Fun Days in Inglewood and Wedderburn.

IDHS had to apply to run the program after Ms Donaldson attended a training session in Hamilton.

"The project organisers were trying to spread it over lots of different areas," she said.

"Most of the participants are locals - they are from the Wychitella-Wedderburn area, and it really is targeted for this area."

The two-day program focused on health factors relevant to those which local farmers and their families would encounter.

Sessions included cardiovascular health, cancer, farming health and safety, nutrition,

stress and osteoporosis, as well as men's and women's health issues.

"The sessions show that we are a bit poorer with our health [compared to urban residents]," Ms Donaldson said.

"Basically it is not about giving information, it is about sharing information and finding out about farmers thoughts.

"It is still a research part of the program, it is based on farmer needs."

Each participant underwent a physical health check to assess blood sugar levels, cholesterol, body mass index, waist-hip ratios, blood pressure and full physical assessment.

The participants will be rechecked in 12 months time, when the results of the two tests will be compared.

"So far from the programs that have been held, there have been major improvements in health factors [of participants]," Ms Donaldson said.

"Cholesterol, weight,

lowering blood pressure, [and participants in other groups are] saying they are working out family time, the attitude is also changing.

"We are trying to prevent and also reduce incidents of cancer, heart disease, those things."

Wychitella resident Keith Bird decided to participate after Ms Donaldson visited a VFF meeting and spoke to them, which Ms Donaldson said they were "really excited about".

Mr Bird said that weight was a major health issue for people in the area.

"So many things can go wrong with it, and just the importance of looking after yourself, keeping your weight down, exercise, eating the right type of foods," Mr Bird said.

"The program is well presented, it is easy to follow.

"I think everyone is having an input, which is really good."



Participants of the Sustainable Farm Families training session in Wedderburn on Monday listen to a presentation.



Inglewood and Districts Health Service Community health nurse Anne Donaldson runs a session at the Sustainable Farm Families training session on Monday.