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Brandon

Co-operation Grows along with the Gardens

Gardens are all about growing, so it only makes sense that Brandon's success with its community garden program has also included overcoming some growing pains. With over 100 area gardeners and numerous organizations involved, getting everyone on the same page wasn't easy.

Brandon's Community Garden Network was conceived in the fall of 2007 when a group of community partners came together with a vision of unifying the city's various gardening programs. A year later, Brandon gardeners are working together as part of the network along with Samaritan House Ministries, the City of Brandon, Healthy Brandon, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation.

The real advancement in the gardens was seen when the gardeners themselves where given control to set the layout of the garden and make decisions on their own.

Nancy McPherson, the Brandon RHA's organizational lead for CDPI, has an inside perspective on organizing the network. She is a member of the Healthy Brandon committee, on the board of the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, and also launched a CDPI community gardening program before the network was created. "There were other community gardens that were operating on a shoestring. We were blessed with this money and it seemed that if we wanted to create a Healthy Brandon, we should share it," said McPherson. "So we created the Healthy Brandon Community Garden Network - we wanted to use a visionary term."

A spirit of sharing characterized the beginnings of the network, but as time went on, there were differences on how the gardens should be managed and how resources would be distributed - issues that could have derailed the network. The CDPI community gardening program had been able to acquire city resources that the older community garden projects had been unable to obtain. "We were very successful working with the City of Brandon to get a water source installed at our newest garden site. The other garden sites had been trying for years to get this, so they were very frustrated with their inability to motivate city involvement," McPherson explained. "Our gardens all looked so easy."

Ironically, getting the CDPI community garden project up and running had not been all that easy either. Key staff were on vacation or quit during high garden season

in mid-June, and there was also some disconnect between the group that planned the project and the one that implemented it. Things eventually fell into place, with 30 garden plots prepared along with 16 raised beds for people with mobility issues. The real advancement in the gardens was seen when the gardeners themselves were given control to set the layout of the garden and make decisions on their own. Based on requests from the gardeners, workshops were provided at the site about composting and freezing. Both sessions were well-attended, and a communal spirit developed among the gardeners.

Plotting a Course for the Future

As for the Community Garden Network, a gardener's talent for patience, perseverance, and learning from experience was needed to pull everybody together. McPherson says there were some struggles with being upfront, honest, and working in true partnership among the organizations. "I've had this lesson before and I'm surprised I've had to learn it again," she said. "It's tricky to balance

honouring the experience of the non-profits that had been slogging it out with such limited resources with the need to move forward in a positive spirit."

Some of Brandon's existing community gardens had been running on limited funds for eight years and were leery that government funding would be pulled, leaving them strapped to pay for planned improvements. But additional funding has been secured from Neighbourhoods Alive! and Wal-Mart Canada's Green Fund, and it appears that a common direction of cooperation for the network has taken root and will now be difficult to dislodge. "It's more of a philosophy, and a direction we're all moving in, that is not dependant on government funding," said McPherson.

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Take Note

Did You Know?

Gardening lowers blood pressure, reduces stress, and can improve both your physical and mental health. Gardening therapists use gardening to help people heal physically and emotionally and to express their emotions.

<http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyPlaces/554.htm>

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Brandon

Proud to be Tobacco Free

If you have any thoughts of quitting smoking and you live in Brandon, you've got lots of support available. Tobacco Free is one of the four pillars of Brandon's CDPI program and there's a strong, active committee working to help anyone wanting to quit.

In Brandon different agencies and groups have a long history of working together towards tobacco control; Brandon got a smoke-free by-law even before the

Healthy Brandon CDPI programs were implemented.

From smoke-free public places, the campaign has now moved on with CDPI to supporting individuals to be smoke-free, in their homes and cars, and especially

around children. The Tobacco Free committee is a partnership of RHA staff and representatives of other interested agencies such as the Manitoba Lung Association. This means there's a lot of expertise on the committee and it's just a

Tobacco Free is one of the four pillars of Brandon's CDPI program and there's a strong, active committee working to help anyone wanting to quit.

matter of making that expertise available.

There were early signs that Fiona Jeffries, who heads the committee, would be an anti-smoking advocate. "When I was a little kid," she said, "I was the one flushing Daddy's tobacco down the toilet." Her dad quit smoking in 1981, despite her pestering, and Jeffries has continued to learn better ways to advocate for being tobacco-free. Fortunately, she's also a Health Promotion and Education Specialist with Brandon RHA and part of her role is to be involved with chronic disease prevention, so leading Tobacco Free is a good fit for her.

The committee chose a workplace emphasis. Using CDPI funds, it put together Quit Baskets, which contain self-help booklets on how to quit and some practical hands-on tools such as toothbrushes and mints – when you're quitting smoking, it helps to put something in your mouth – and little stress balls, handheld games or toys for those who just need a few minutes to calm their nerves. They also contained information about different nicotine-replacement products. With the right information, tools and support, said Jeffries, "You can double their chances to quit."

The group put together ten baskets and targeted small businesses that don't have the resources to offer their employees a quitting program. Five businesses expressed interest, and baskets were put there. The baskets prompted discussion about smoking and quitting, and got people talking about ways to quit. In a few cases

the baskets happened along at the right time, and gave smokers wanting to quit a nudge in the right direction.

The committee's role model is the Brandon RHA itself, which has had all its facilities and grounds smoke-free since 2006. Not only is cessation support offered to all smokers on staff, but also every tobacco user admitted to hospital in Brandon gets a quick consultation, with further support if they're interested. Studies show that when facilities and communities go smoke-free, smoking does slow down. Lots of times people want to quit anyway, and a smoke-free workplace is the incentive they need. The Brandon committee has more ideas, too – they're looking at a group program in

which a smoker could attend a few sessions for encouragement to quit, and they're also considering training peer advisors in workplaces.

So for those smokers who don't have anyone to flush their tobacco for them, there's still lots of help available as Brandon moves towards a healthier, tobacco-free city.

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Take Note

As soon as an individual quits smoking, the benefits start:

- Quit smoking and you'll start feeling better within 24 hours. The minute you stop smoking, your body will begin cleansing itself of tobacco toxins. Two days after you quit, your risk of heart attack will start decreasing.
- Within one year of quitting, the risk of dying from smoking-related heart disease is cut in half.
- Within 10 years, the risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half.
- After 15 years, the risk of dying will be nearly that of a non-smoker.
- More than 50 per cent of former smokers report they are able to become smoke-free after one or two serious attempts.

<http://www.heartandstroke.mb.ca/site/c.lgLSIV0yGpF/b.3661109/>

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Brandon

Residents Turn Off the TV, Get Off the Couch and Get *In Motion!*

If you like to walk, you're lucky if you live in Brandon. With over 40 km of walking and hiking trails, Brandon is vying with Brantford, Ontario, for the title of the Walking Capital of Canada. The Healthy Brandon *in motion* committee is building on the walking momentum. Healthy Brandon is the name of the CDPI initiative in Brandon, which has divided its program into four separate "pillars," of which *in motion* is the physical activity "pillar." In partnership with many other community organizations, they've sponsored events to get more and more people in Brandon out walking and active.

Way back in October, 2006 Healthy Brandon *in motion* hosted a kickoff event to declare Brandon as an *in motion* community. Participants walked to City Hall where the mayor proclaimed Brandon officially as *in motion*. Local celebrities

Over 3,000 people enjoyed an evening of skating, walking, fireworks and socializing.

and athletes raced couches down 9th Street to encourage everyone to get off the couch and get "in motion." It seems the kickoff was successful: thousands of Brandonites participated in a walking challenge this October to honour the second anniversary of the initiative, and of course, to try to capture the elusive title from Brantford.

Other sociable sports are also getting a boost in Brandon. The Healthy Brandon committee recently nominated Brandon Riverbank and the City of Brandon for a Reh-Fit Centre Foundation Healthy Living Award. The two organizations collaborated to launch a lighted skating oval in the River Corridor area, and the area has since been expanded with lighting and a link to cross-country ski trails. The facility is available free of charge to the public every day throughout the winter for day and evening skating, walking and cross country skiing. It has become a hub of outdoor activity in Brandon in the winter-time, last year hosting the New Year's Eve kickoff of Brandon's 125th anniversary. Over 3,000 people enjoyed an evening of skating, walking, fireworks and socializing.

Among many other events, Healthy Brandon *in motion* has also sponsored a TV turn-off week in February, a skating party, free swims at the Sportsplex and a month-long challenge to workplaces to encourage continued physical activity.

Partnerships with local non-profits and other groups are the key to success in Brandon's initiative. Groups are

encouraged to brand their physical activity initiatives as *in motion* so that this becomes a part of Brandon's "genetic code" for the future. Permanent *in motion* signage is in place in the city. The initiative targets 30 to 59 year-olds but all ages are joining the fun and gaining the health benefits that come from being more active. "Healthy Brandon *in motion* is working towards building a healthier Brandon through regular physical activity," said Donna Epp, *in motion* co-chair.

A creative and user-friendly website provides a quick and easy way to get the word out about upcoming *in motion*

events. The website celebrates and promotes partnerships, allows on-line registration and is expandable as needed. "It is a breathing, living document," said Epp, "always 'in motion.' We had fun with it, and are still having fun!"

Click in at www.brandoninmotion.ca/

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Take Note

The benefits of recreational skating:

- Improved muscle strength and definition.
- Improved balance and coordination.
- Weight loss.
- Stress relief.
- Cardiovascular fitness.
- Fun!

http://figurespeedskating.suite101.com/article.cfm/figure_skating_training_program

Burning Calories on the Ice

While speed skaters can expend 950 calories per hour, almost anyone can burn 450 - 600 calories on the ice. What's more, the body has to work harder to maintain core temperature in chilly conditions.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2006/dec/16/healthandwellbeing.features3>

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Brandon

The More You Keep Moving, the Better You Get

Brian Fowell was devastated when he was told by his doctors that he wouldn't be able to work for six months. A heavy-duty mechanic, Brian had torn the rotator and bicep at the top of his arm while at work.

"We were lifting a tire," he recalled wryly, "and the two other guys decided it was too heavy."

When the doctor told him how long he'd be off, he said, "I felt real down on myself. I wasn't used to being at home and I had no idea how much work I'd be able to go back to."

With time on his hands, Fowell noticed an ad in the paper for community gardens, and went over to check it out. He came in on the ground floor of the project, which was just starting on an 11-acre plot originally set aside as a school site. He helped measure out his plot, and the other plots as well, and planted his garden. Once his arm started to heal, he noticed some people were getting a bit behind with their

"The people there are really happy and they're lining up to get involved. The more you keep moving, the better you get."

weeding, so "instead of complaining," he said, "I tackled a row here and a row there." Other gardeners came along and said, "What are you doing? This isn't your garden," but before they knew it they were helping too, and the garden has become a communal affair. There's a lot of trading of produce that goes on, said Fowell, "and we've got our own little marketing system."

Fowell has a history of lending a hand. He's originally from Carroll, 20 miles south of Brandon. "Out there, this is what we do," he explained. "We just help each other out. So when I came to Brandon, my roots came with me. My mom and dad were big into gardening. It's nice working in the dirt."

It was a great year for a garden. Potatoes, beans, peas, carrots, cucumbers, beets and pumpkins grew heartily in the community plots. The food is a significant money-saver for some, but people also came for the relaxation, the joking, the camaraderie, the comparison of who's got the biggest tomatoes. All ages came to garden, including some new Canadians who are "so happy to get their feet in the dirt." Fowell's family came to help, including his wife and his 28-month-old granddaughter Kendra and her parents. This spring Kendra stomped along happily behind her grandpa as he planted beans, but when he turned around he realized she'd been picking up the beans and eating them almost as fast as he could plant them.

Fowell's shoulder is substantially better, and he's back at work, although he says he'll never have the arm he used to. But he

credits the community garden for easing him through an extremely difficult time in his life. Last year he was nominated for and received the Golden Carrot award for his help and leadership in the gardens. “I was very, very pleased about that,” he says half-jokingly. “You don’t always get recognized.” What he’s most pleased about is the success of the gardens. “The people there are really happy and they’re lining

up to get involved. Anything to get them moving,” he concludes. “The more you keep moving, the better you get.”

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“When I go into my garden with a spade, and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health, that I discover that I have been defrauding myself all this time in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841

Take Note

Reap a Healthy Body

- Gardening uses all the body’s major muscle groups. Gardening also improves coordination and burns calories.
- Depending on the activity, working in the garden for 45 minutes can burn the same number of calories as 30 minutes of aerobics or jogging. Even something as simple as planting seedlings can burn 160 calories in only 30 minutes.
- If exercise is your goal, your total gardening time should add up to at least 30 minutes per day. As with all exercise programs, warming up is important before you start. You will get more exercise taking smaller loads in your wheelbarrow and making more trips than you will by making fewer trips with heavier loads.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/gardening.html>

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Brandon

Healthy Workplaces in More Ways than One

Imagine the sustainability of your CDPI program if the businesses in your community took it up as their cause, incorporated it into their budgets and allotted staff to it. That's what's happening in Brandon as businesses large and small are incorporating employee health initiatives into their corporate culture. Brandon RHA has 2,400 staff, making it the biggest employer in Western Manitoba. With health as its business, the Region is putting its money where its mouth is by setting aside \$35,000 annually for staff wellness initiatives. Any staff member can apply with an initiative and whatever is designed has to be available for all staff to participate. Cindy Buizer, who oversees the program as the RHA's Coordinator of Staff Education, is also the Region's rep to Healthy Brandon *in motion*. "We care about people's health enough that we're taking care of staff," said Buizer.

Taking care of staff includes purchasing a

"We care about people's health enough that we're taking care of staff."

cart full of yoga equipment and providing rooms for the sessions, while participating staff members pay for the instructor. If you're ready for weight-watchers, you can get 50 per cent off your fees for two 10-week sessions. Staff can have \$5 per paycheque deducted (\$120 per year) to get unlimited access to three fitness areas with a full array of equipment like cardio machines and Virtual Gyms supplied and maintained by the RHA. Like to ski? The RHA pays for the bus to the hill and half the cost of the lift tickets. Busses fill up immediately, said Buizer. This fall the RHA is running a six-week walking challenge with teams of four staff members each. This is the Step by Step Challenge developed by Winnipeg *in motion* and adopted by Healthy Brandon *in motion*. In a similar nine-week challenge in spring, 172 staff participated. "Our goal is to actually change habits," says Buizer.

A Gilded Success Story

The RHA initiatives are impressive, but no more or less so than the efforts of smaller Brandon corporations like Guild Insurance, with 36 staff members. As a Brandon Workplace *in motion*, Guild has incorporated a "health and wellness benefit" right into its recruiting program. Staff members can get \$200 a year for any recreational membership, such as golf, hockey, curling, or a swimming or gym pass. A year or two ago, Kristin Andrews, Human Resources Advisor at Guild, attended a CDPI Workplace Wellness Seminar. "I went as a Guild Insurance rep wanting to see whether I could get our

workplace active,” she said. She came away with a binder full of practical ideas to make physical activities and health a part of employees’ daily lives.

Today each department at Guild has cold water coolers to encourage hydration and drinking water rather than coffee or soft drinks. There’s a full kitchen for preparing healthy lunches rather than grabbing fast food to go. About half of Guild staff members will walk for half an hour at lunch in the Brandon vs. Brantford Walking Challenge this fall. All the activity is producing an overall team spirit. “If someone’s happy at work,” says Andrews, “it’s inspiring.” Guild Insurance is a community-minded business, and “rather

than putting our dollars into advertising, we’ll put it into kids’ soccer teams, health benefits for our staff – we feel that money’s going to a better place.” To keep the spirit of the healthy workplace going, a second Healthy Brandon Workplace Wellness Forum is planned for the fall of 2008.

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Take Note

Did You Know?

Adult Canadians spend more than 60% of their waking hours at work.

Accessing Workplace Wellness

According to a 2008 Healthcare Survey, only 37% of employees with benefit plans have access to workplace wellness programs – a decrease from 2005 (41%), 2004 (43%), and 1999 (38%).

- Of those employees that have access to wellness programs, just 40% are using them, down from 45% in 2005.
- Those who strongly agree they are satisfied with their job are over twice as likely to be in excellent or very good health (75%) than those strongly dissatisfied (34%).

<http://ebnc.benefitnews.com/asset/article/644281/staying-current/workplace-wellness-programs-need-boost-employers.html>

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Brandon

In Motion at Work!

In 2008, 1,858 employees in Manitoba signed up for the Workplace Physical Activity Challenge, in which workplaces across the province challenged each other to see who had the most active employees. A total of 105 workplaces took part in the challenge, which was organized by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Manitoba, and 43 of them were in Brandon alone! The impressive turnout had a lot to do with Healthy Brandon *in motion*, a combined Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative and *in motion* group that promotes increased physical activity in the Wheat City.

It's no surprise that it was Brandon employees who ended up winning the grand prize in the Heart and Stroke Foundation Challenge. Fittingly, the winners worked at Brandon's Community Sportsplex, which received an assortment of sporting equipment along with other prizes. "The Challenge has really increased our awareness of the benefits of physical activity," said Sportsplex manager Perry Roque, who's also co-chair of Healthy Brandon *in motion*. "We've seen a reduction in staff absenteeism and notice that staff are making physical activity part

of their daily routine, walking or riding bikes to work or joining a gym or running club."

Sportsplex staff are encouraged to be active whenever they can. Staff members bring their walking shoes to work and join "walk and talk" meetings, getting healthy activity and more time to discuss issues. Sometimes they even pick up garbage along the way, tripling the benefits. One of the clerks began walking to and from work every day and also organizes walking challenges in different locations around the city that are open to anybody. And staffers are willingly giving up a chunk of their coffee breaks in favour of a 20-minute afternoon walk – getting a healthy energy boost to get them through to the end of their day.

"CDPI is some of the best money we can spend," said Roque. "Education is really important – we're lifelong learners, educating ourselves about our bodies and about our health and making sure we stay active."

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Take Note

Did You Know?

Adult Canadians spend more than 60% of their waking hours at work.
Promoting walking in the workplace has benefits for both the employee and the employer.

Having an active and healthy workplace can lead to:

- Improved productivity.
- Fewer insurance and worker compensation claims.
- Reduced absenteeism.
- Decreased accidents.
- Reduced staff turnover.
- Lower-cost related to retirement, training and orientation.
- Improved staff attitudes towards the organization and higher staff morale.
- A more receptive climate for, and ability to cope with workplace changes.
- Enhanced business.

<http://www.walkbc.ca/workplace-walking>

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Brandon

Warning! Laughter may be Hazardous to What Ails You!

This comedic catchphrase was the lead-off line on posters advertising “The Laughter Fix,” a motivational community event held in Brandon this spring that featured comedians, special guests, award presentations, belly-dancing – and, of course, lots of laughing!

The dinner evening was supported by Healthy Brandon’s “Living Well With Stress” working group, which helped to design the event to focus on relieving stress, getting people together, and inspiring them to live healthier lives.

The Healthy Brandon initiative incorporates the three CDPI pillars of physical activity, healthy eating, and smoking cessation, and adds a fourth category by addressing stress issues as well. “Brandon is the only community in the province that made the decision to

Laughter may be the best medicine, but the dedication and hard work of community-minded people also goes a long way toward improving our lives.

look at this specific area as being highly important when it comes to Chronic Disease and our prevention initiatives,” said working group chair Tracy Young. “Healthy Brandon, and more specifically Living Well With Stress, is committed to building a healthier Brandon through stress reduction initiatives, life management skills sessions and training opportunities.”

Over 130 Brandonites attended The Laughter Fix, which featured CBC’s well-known comedian Dean Jenkinson. Another highlight of the evening was the “Power to Inspire” awards presentation, which honoured individuals who have motivated and inspired others in Brandon to live a healthier lifestyle and address stress. In addition to an overall honouree, nominees were recognized in three different categories: Mind, Body, and Soul.

One of the laughs of the evening came when the winner of the overall Power to Inspire award was ironically unable to accept his award in person because he was busy doing the very things he was being honoured for!

Laughter may be the best medicine, but the dedication and hard work of community-minded people also goes a long way toward reducing our stress levels. One of those people is Young, who juggles Healthy Brandon work with her regular duties in Mental Health Promotion for the Brandon Regional Health Authority. “I do a lot of speaking about life management and the close tie that stress has to our health. It is

certainly a strong passion for me,” Young said. “We need to be aware of how stress impacts on both our physical and mental well being. We need to be more mindful of how we are addressing stress and how effectively we are managing it in our daily lives.”

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Take Note

Laughter Fun Facts

- Laughter positively affects all body systems, including respiratory, circulatory, blood, cardiac, and immune systems.
- A daily laughter workout of 15 minutes can burn 40 calories and melt away 4 pounds over the course of a year.
- Laughter can actually help to lower blood pressure and is also very good for people with diabetes.
- The positive effect of laughing lasts for 30 to 45 minutes.
- Laughing reduces the effect of stress by lowering stress hormone levels.
- Laughing lifts your mood – even if you have to force yourself to laugh.

http://www.gnb.ca/0131/Healthy-NB-en_sante/mental_fitness-e.asp