



Matura Family Fun Day

Initiative: Matura

Theme: Working Together in Place

In 2008 a health needs assessment started a flurry of activity around the Matura community. Our health outcomes, services for families, educational outcomes and general community well-being were on agency radars for all the wrong reasons, we needed to take control. Hence the birth of the Matura Taskforce.

Over the last four years the taskforce has led and driven many initiatives, including establishment of several pre-school activities, community directory, community garden, full-time community coordinator, community historical walks and many more. Specialist Taskforce groups that focus on particular topics such as early childhood education and public events have emerged and the expansion of the core Taskforce group has created several opportunities for local residents to be part of projects that were of significance to the individual. Some of these people found themselves working alongside each other for the first time, and the expansion of membership of the Taskforce increased the resources available to execute projects as well as a stronger understanding of each other.

Meanwhile during this time a change of membership to our local Community Board was also occurring with the election of four new officers to an existing five positions. Collectively the newly elected representatives were a reflection of changing public needs and noticeably the highest vote count was received by a 29 year old candidate. Traditionally residents usually chose far older candidates.

This has all resulted in dynamic leadership styles for Matura and a large group of people together working towards the same goals. Whereas previously the local community board had been seen as a little bureaucratic and mostly focused towards local govt infrastructures and services, by the end of 2011 the two groups had recognised the opportunity of strength in numbers and were increasingly working together towards the undisputed goal of an improved and vibrant community. This overruled personal histories and brought these groups together to work on the Matura Family Fun Day.

Mataura Family Fun Day emerged from several Mataura Gala Days which had been organised by the Taskforce Events group. These gala days were improving outcomes each time but public feedback on the events was not always assessed openly and critically. The Community Board was often the bearer of public feedback and as such the Events group struggled to receive the information in a non- emotional manner.

The solution? It was suggested that both groups combine to collaboratively plan and execute the Gala together. First steps were to sit around the table together to discuss the relationship and the event. The Events members were open about how some of the feedback had been delivered from prior events and how it had made them feel. The Community Board members were dismayed that the feedback had been perceived as personal and assured Taskforce members that the work completed was outstanding and that everyone was indebted. Both groups continued to remind themselves that they all wanted exactly the same outcomes and once the air was cleared a stronger understanding of each other emerged.

This conversation also resulted in a collaborative group approach to organising and executing the Mataura Family Fun Day which was held in March 2012 on a clear blue Saturday at our local recreational grounds. Ultimately the joint group's main goal was to provide fun, low-cost family entertainment for Mataura residents (creating memories) but the process cleverly delivered on a secondary objective. This secondary objective was in response to a separate project from 2011, which was to strengthen and support local groups and organisations. The groups had met in November to profile and talk about needs which could be categorised to funding and recruitment which formed the secondary objective of the day . The Family Fun Day was to provide a platform for local groups to not only raise money through selling products on the day but also to connect and inform the community of their existence and what to expect from particular clubs. Many clubs ran information registers on the day to collect interested locals' contact information.

The organising committee worked together with absolutely no budget but found that because of the collaboration, many hands made light work. The day was well organised, easily executed and incredibly successful. With over 20 local clubs hosting booths, activities and displays and approximately 1500 visitors on the day the Mataura community began to get to know itself again. The committee managed to source some major funders and there were rides and activities that were free to children on the day, our newly based competition Kapa Haka regional secondary school group performed, our new league club hosted drills and our local constable measured the running speed of our local children with her speed gun. Great fun!

The day was fantastic with so many happy families and many people coming to thank the committee for the event and the chance to know their community better. New clubs were able to introduce themselves to the town, older clubs were able to display some of their hard work and many clubs used the chance to fundraise for current projects which they also got to discuss with community members.

And of course two separate groups with a history of avoiding each other came together to create an improved and outstanding community event that truly brought the town together.

Intent: To work together across boundaries to host a successful Family Fun Day in Mataura.

Key Learnings

- Negative news can become a positive. Look for opportunities to make changes when harsh news is received.
- Finding a common ground can bring those who formerly didn't work together. Each individual brings different strengths to the table and accepting these specialties brings a much wider set of resources to draw on as well as actively (re)building relationships and strengthening projects.
- Clearing the air can be an important part of this process. Interpretations do not always match intent and honesty and respect goes a long way towards resolving historical differences.
- Set "How We Work Together" rules for newly formed collaborations. Basic ground rules that highlight how members of a group want to be treated by each other.
- Listen to the actions of your community, sometimes that feedback is louder than the voice. Attendance numbers and ease of recruitment of helpers need to be critically evaluated to whether those barriers are non-voiced feedback.

Key Outcomes

- The health needs assessment provided the impetus to start the Taskforce which led to many local initiatives, and helped grow new ways of working with the Community Board as well as between the local marae, primary school and Kohunga Reo
- Combining two strong groups increased the successful outcomes as the resources net became wider. The members own group memberships opened doors to free services, ground rentals and club use at no charge and increased local organisation participation.
- Trusting peoples good intentions meant formerly opposing groups increased their understanding of each other for strengthened collaboration and improved relationships

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