

DAVIS PROJECTS FOR PEACE 2015
PROPOSAL: "Planting the Seed for Peace"
STUDENTS OF INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

"Don't wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul"
- Veronica A. Shoffstall

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International House Wollongong requests Davis support in order to further educate our local community in the cultivation of local produce in an effort to contribute to a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. Funds from this grant would contribute towards the establishment of sustainable produce and education programs to support disadvantaged groups within our local community.

It is our working definition that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of positive experiences and lifestyles. As academic Deborah Kirkwood has noted, "Food plays an important part in our lives, it requires time and energy to obtain and prepare. It is a ritual of family and communication. Food is a basic building block of life and health, a part of social interaction and a link to community". However Kirkwood has acknowledged a significant disadvantage in the Illawarra region, "there is a substantial percentage of people who are affected by food insecurity, the level stated by the ABS is 6.8% of the regions population which is more than 18 000 people".

Our project aims to directly address this challenge through the education of community groups in the Illawarra in the benefits of local, sustainable produce and through supplying these groups with the resources to make this a sustainable vision.

International House Wollongong is in a unique position to carry out this project through our strong and extensive community ties to local organisations and community groups. We have developed these through a long history of community engagement, a large portion of which has been fostered through previous projects undertaken through Davis funding. We hope that through this project our own knowledge and understanding of these pertinent social issues will be substantially increased and that we will gain a greater insight into both the causes and the possible solutions to the problems our local community faces.

Proposed Activities:

- Education of our team in the growth of sustainable produce
- Engagement with local community garden programs
- Collaboration with local community groups e.g. schools suffering disadvantage, community centres
- Educating such disadvantaged groups in methods of growing produce and suggestions for incorporating produce into a health lifestyle including the distribution of a 'garden pack' to each individual.
- Engage in a local community co-op whereby we can deliver the produce we have grown to local disadvantaged groups
- Compilation of a guidebook outlining the best methods for growth and recipes for healthy meals created through this produce

Project Benchmarks:

- Our team will become knowledgeable in the growth of sustainable produce
- Community groups will be able to begin growing their own produce
- Community groups will gain knowledge into how to make such produce sustainable and relevant to their lifestyles.
- Community groups will receive further produce on a regular basis
- Community groups will be able to further educate others on the benefits of growing their produce as we have shared with them

Target geography and population:

Our target geography includes disadvantaged community groups within Wollongong. E.g. community youth centres such as the local PCYC.

OBJECTIVES:

This project will be broken down into a number of objectives:

- 1. Increasing the understanding that sustainable produce can contribute to a sustainable lifestyle including our involvement in a community garden program.**

Wollongong city council has addressed one component of the continued food shortage concern in the Illawarra foregrounding that "Climate change poses a real threat to local food security whilst unsustainable food systems make a significant contribution to climate change". Through this project we will attempt to demonstrate the far reaching social benefits that a wider understanding of the production of food and healthy produce poses. Our team will attend Council Sustainability Workshops to further our knowledge and learn from other members involved in community gardens.

2. Allowing International House residents to engage with the wider community, in particular youth organisations within our local area through their involvement in community garden programs, the distribution of a 'garden pack' and a booklet resource.

It is said that one of the best ways to learn and understand is to teach and demonstrate. Through the compilation of a guidebook of methods to begin gardening endeavours and suggestions for the creation of healthy, cheap and easy meals to be distributed to each individual involved in community groups, residents will be given the chance to be the cause of positive change. In addition, local community groups such as the local youth PCYC will be given the opportunity to discuss their own experiences with disadvantage. We will conduct workshops with them, teaching them how to plant seeds and other fruits and vegetables including how to look after these for long periods of time. We will give them a small garden resource pack to kick start their gardening adventures. In the guidebook to be distributed will be information on all different types of fruits and vegetables and the conditions under which to care for each for optimum growth. Also included will be healthy, cheap and easy recipe ideas to use the fresh produce in productive ways. The diverse community at International House will be able to contribute unique and exciting recipes from all over the globe.

International House Wollongong has a long-standing relationship with surrounding community groups. We have previously interacted with local schools, youth organisations and charities. Through this project, International House aims to broaden the knowledge of partnering community groups by exposing them to new perspectives in the growth of food. This project will help those involved to create positive relationships and to be the cause of their own change.

Planning and Collaboration:

Each year International House Wollongong boasts up to 35 different nationalities and our residents are always enthusiastic in becoming involved in our local community. Through events held at International House we will be able to facilitate positive dialogue regarding perspectives on the growth of food and recipes to be made from such produce in interesting and exciting ways. In order to complete and meet the objectives outlined above we will contact local community groups to seek their involvement and similarly we will need to seek approval from Wollongong City Council in order to become involved in community garden programs.

Expected outcome and sustainability:

By giving International House residents the opportunity to interact with the wider community, this project enables the participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of paramount issues in our local community as well as attaining a sense of inner enrichment with the knowledge that they have contributed to assisting this issue. Through the distribution of a garden pack, which will include seeds, soil, pots, and other equipment and the distribution of a guidebook, this project will certainly be able to sustain the interest of and give local groups the tools to enrich their lifestyles. We aim for this interest to result in longstanding commitment to and involvement in local community gardens with the International House Community, which will allow for meaningful relationships to be nurtured in the years to come, and for knowledge to constantly grow. It is our hope that by educating local youth centres in the growth of sustainable produce, that we will in some way be able to improve their lifestyles for years to come. Through engagement with local community garden programs we aim to bring about social objectives such as the promotion of health and welfare, community development and education.