



Fylde Coast Health Mela

Lytham St Annes – 3rd October 2015

Summary

The Rotary Club of St Annes on the Sea, along with other Rotary clubs from the Fylde Coast in partnership with the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing (NFHW), held the Third Health Mela on Saturday 3rd October 2015 at Lytham St Annes Technology and Performing Arts College. Mr Adrian Leather, Chief Executive of Lancashire Sport Partnership opened the event. With this third, vibrant, family focused Fair the annual Health Mela successfully completed its round of Fylde Coast destinations.

The day commenced with a breakfast meeting. The Mayor of Fylde, Cllr. Peter Hardy, welcoming the Health Mela to the Borough, acknowledged the importance of the event and wished the organisers well in their concern to promote the health and wellbeing of local citizens.

In his opening address, Adrian Leather congratulated NFHW, and Rotary Cumbria and Lancashire District for their initiative in bringing Health Melas to the community. He made a powerful case for the importance of physical activity, not only in the

promotion of personal health and wellbeing, but also because of its potential to reduce the demands on our increasingly stretched NHS. He praised the commitment of the very many organisations actively involved in supporting the event and drew attention to the significant role that engaging in sports and physical activity can have on improving health and wellbeing for all members of the community.

Also taking part in the opening of the Mela was Rotarian Arthur Jones, District 1190 Governor of Rotary International. Arthur expressed his wish to encourage the development of similar Health Melas across the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria.



Tony Berwick (Rotarian - St Annes on the Sea) served as Master of Ceremonies and Officers of Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside, provided the efficient and creative administrative support essential for the success of the event.

A brief history of the Health Mela project

In the Indian sub-continent the Mela is a festive get-together involving the populations of entire villages or wider areas. It has long had a role in promoting community well-being.

This is a model that found traction in the north of England some fifteen years ago. Under the leadership of Professor Romesh Gupta OBE and with the active support of Mr Ishwer Tailor MBE then president of the Gujarat Hindu Society, Preston. Together they conceived, planned and organised the very first event in Preston in 2001 aimed at promoting healthy living. The Mela format was used to mobilise the community to take an active and enjoyable part in securing its own health and well-being.



The immediate success of the first Health Mela provided a solid foundation for what was to become a popular multicultural, annual fixture in the city and it soon became a model for similar events in other communities including those of the Fylde Coast.

A recent development has seen the involvement of local Rotary Clubs working in collaboration with NFHW to promote health Melas in their own areas. This exciting partnership has grown apace and Rotary International is now acting as a conductor, transmitting the ideals of the Health Mela throughout the North West and beyond.

The Venue for 2015

This year's Health Mela was held in the Lytham St Annes Technology and Performing Arts College. The organisers record their gratitude to Mr Philip Wood the Head Teacher, the Site Manager Yvonne Kitchen, the Catering Manager Linda Dickinson and all the other staff involved in supporting the event.

The Main Hall of the College provided space for around 50 exhibitors together with areas to accommodate the wide range of health checks on offer (see below). Free on site car parking facilities were kindly provided by the School. The musical entertainment provided by pianist, Georgia Rodwell, a student of the college was very much appreciated.

THE KEY FEATURES OF THE HEALTH MELA

The health MOT

The central component of the Health Mela is a range of health checks, the "Health MOT" offered to visitors in a friendly non-threatening environment. These checks were conducted by volunteers - the Health Olympics Team from the University of Manchester, partnered with the blood drop team from the Biochemistry Departments of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. and Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

The stallholders

In addition to the Health MOT, a wide range of stallholders provided

information and advice on a variety of health related topics both traditional and alternative. There was also an opportunity to enjoy the entertainment provided by LSA students and join in a range of health related activities such as a much appreciated Reiki taster session and an informative and eye opening workshop on 'Cyber Bullying' delivered by Lionel Vinyl a well-known local DJ, who is an expert in the subject.

Publicity

As this was the first event of its kind to take place in Lytham St Annes, effective publicity was seen to be very important to secure its success. An extensive campaign was conducted in the weeks preceding the event particularly by John Flanagan and his Rotarian colleagues and LSA school staff. This included an comprehensive leaflet drop and News Releases to the local media.

Results from the health checks and counselling

Of the 200+ visitors to the event 70 chose to have checks on cholesterol and blood glucose levels. As a result of these checks: Total referred to GP; around 30% of those tested. **Reasons for referrals:**

Raised cholesterol.....	17	Raised Glucose.....	5
High Blood Pressure.....	3	Combinations of above.....	2



Attendance

Around two hundred members of the public were registered as visitors to the Health Mela. The attendance was somewhat lower than expected. Based on the experience of previous Health Melas this can be expected to increase at any future local event, as the concept of the event becomes more familiar.

Comments from visitors

All visitors were invited to provide written feedback on their visit. They were almost unanimous in judging the Health Mela to be informative (99%), well organised (97%) and representing time well spent (99%).

Feedback from exhibitors

50 completed feedback forms were received from exhibitors and the comments received were overwhelmingly positive.

- 49(98%) rated the venue as excellent.
- 49(98%) stated that the number of visitors to their stand made attendance at the Health Mela worthwhile.
- 50 (100%) indicated their intention to participate in future Melas

The organisers are very grateful to visitors and exhibitors for their helpful detailed feedback.

There were many positive individual comments made with particular reference to the friendly atmosphere, good venue and the extensive, helpful information available.

Exhibitors and supporters

Over 50 exhibitors attended or provided material support for the event. As a result of the interest shown all the available space available in the venue was utilised. Those involved represented local voluntary organisations, local government, health trusts, pharmaceutical and medical diagnostic companies and Rotarians. Visitors to the stalls were offered information and active support. The organisers gratefully acknowledge the support of all the organisations taking part.



Joint chairs

Comments and messages of support - Lytham Health Mela - 2015

'It was a great honour to be involved in this great event. I feel passionately that if more and more people regularly engage in sporting and physical activity, we will achieve great advances in health and wellbeing.' **Adrian Leather, Chief Guest and Chief Executive - Lancashire Sport Partnership.**

'Rotarians are leaders in their communities, exchanging ideas as to the best ways to serve their communities. Health Melas are a very positive way to take action and help those that need support. Rotarians in Cumbria and Lancashire are delighted to support these events and work with a whole community of health professionals. The service provides a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of many people.' **Arthur Jones, Governor – District 1190 Rotary Cumbria and Lancashire.**





'Best wishes all visitors and thanks for the effort by all the organisations supporting this event, particularly the innovative approach to health and Wellbeing in the community by NFHW and the Fylde Coast Health MELA.' **Brian Nicholson, President - Rotary Club St Annes on the Sea.**

'I am delighted to have secured the global funding from Rotary international to drive this Health Mela movement forward in other areas of Lancashire and Cumbria.' **Rotarian Kevin Walsh, Immediate past Governor - District 1190 Lancashire and Cumbria Rotary International.**

'Five years ago we set out an ambitious programme to bring the Health Mela to all parts of the Fylde Coast. I am so pleased that we have today achieved this goal and that so many people have engaged with us in the promotion of the health and wellbeing of our communities.' **Ramesh Gandhi, OBE, JP, DL, FRCS. Chair - Fylde Coast Health Mela Steering Group.**

'Many congratulations to all who have helped reach the objective of extending

Acknowledgement of support received in planning and staging the event

The organisers gratefully acknowledge the substantial and enthusiastic assistance in planning, resourcing and providing volunteers on the day of the event which was provided by the organisations listed below. Without their unstinting support the event could not have taken place.

- The Rotary Club of St Annes on the Sea
- Rotary Clubs of the Fylde Coast
- The Fylde Coast Hindu Society
- Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside
- Roche and the scientific staff of the pathology departments of Blackpool Victoria (Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) and Royal Preston (Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) hospitals
- The Health Olympics Team University of Manchester Medical School
- The Universities of Central Lancashire and Bolton

the opportunities provided by the Health Mela to all the communities of the Fylde Coast. They have successfully demonstrated the many benefits to be gained by actively engaging with local people to promote health and wellbeing.' **Professor Romesh Gupta, OBE, FRCP, MBA. Chair - National Forum for Health and Wellbeing.**

Future plans

Experience over the last three years has demonstrated that, by providing an appropriate organisational framework, it is possible to bring together the many players concerned with the promotion of health and wellbeing on the Fylde Coast to exploit the synergies available through joint endeavour. Much has been learned about issues of venue, management, promotion and not least resourcing.

This is perhaps a good time to pause and reflect on the lessons learned with an intention to use the experiences gained to plan for similar events in the future. The National Forum for Health and Wellbeing would be happy to offer support in this planning cycle if helpful.

The organisers would be delighted to have your comments and suggestions to help form future plans. Please let us know what you think by contacting: Ramesh Gandhi, OBE JP DL FRCS., or Romesh Gupta, OBE MD FRCP MBA.

You can also contact the secretary Mrs Sarifa Kabir NFHW Gujarat Hindu Society Centre, South Meadow Lane, Preston, PR1 8JN. Email: sarifa.kabir@btinternet.com

www.nfhw.org.uk

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