

Thursday 28 May 2015

Chaplains devoted to giving kids a healthy start

YouthCARE chaplain Heather Hams and her team of volunteers serve more than 450 breakfasts to students from Safety Bay Senior High School every week.

The Breakfast Club, run out of the school kitchen, was started by the YouthCARE school chaplain Ms Hams at the start of last year after identifying a need for it within the school community. Her research has been backed by a report by Foodbank Australia.

In the *Hunger in the Classroom report* released by Foodbank Australia today, it found that on average, three students per classroom were regularly arriving hungry in the morning. Ms Hams said those findings is what made her continue to run the Breakfast Club and said she already noticed the difference.

"The purpose is two-fold," she said. "Eating a healthy breakfast gives young people the fuel they need to be productive and helps improve their eating habits. Everyone deserves to have this opportunity."

"As well, the Breakfast Club encourages community within the school, develops a sense of belonging and ensures that they receive a healthy breakfast in a safe non-judgmental forum."

Last year Ms Hams and her team of volunteers from the school, the Salvation Army and the Generation Church provided more than 19,500 breakfast servings over 150 days.

"Breakfast Club runs three mornings a week and is open to all members of the school community with Friday being our major pancake morning," she said.

"Every Friday, since the introduction of the Breakfast Club, a group of five volunteers from Generation Church provide the ingredients and serve more than 250 students pancakes from 7am to 8.30am.

The team that comes in on our Friday slots are great mentors and bring a sense of fun and vitality to the program."

Ms Hams said that on the other two days, a few students and staff members helped serve toast and products to about 100 students.

This year Generation Church, Foodbank and a donation from the local IGA have funded the Safety Bay SHS breakfast program, however Ms Hams is still more donations and sponsorship to keep the program running throughout the year.

Ms Hams is one of hundreds of YouthCARE chaplains running the breakfast clubs across WA public schools. Last year YouthCARE chaplains ran 2873 breakfast programs (ranging from one to five per week), 1340 volunteers supported the running of the program and 32,898 students attended a breakfast club.

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