2) Neighbourhood Stories by Penrith City Council and Curious Works:

About

Neighbourhood Stories is an initiative led by Penrith City Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Program, which is enabling innovative and creative engagement with local residents across the established areas of Penrith.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Program is a multi disciplinary team spanning community cultural development, community engagement and economic development. The program is focused on developing positive relationships with local communities, working with residents to enhance community strengths.

Background

Neighbourhood Stories emerged in January 2008 with the highly successful Parkour + Krump Summer Series at Kingswood Park. This first project featured artists Ali Kadhim and Darrio Philips using their creative skills to activate local meeting places and engage young people in “the art of overcoming obstacles through movement “(Ali Kadhim, 2009).

This project was presented in association with Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) Suburban Layerz Project, (an Epic 07 Project assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts).

- This project was part of an overall initiative Creative Community Engagement in Kingswood Park which won a Local Government Cultural Award for Integrated Cultural Policy Implementation in 2009.

The Story Exchange was the next project in Neighbourhood Stories delivered in association with Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) in early 2009. This creative engagement project aimed at consulting children and young people about the strengths and needs of their neighbourhoods through digital media and storytelling. The stories told by participants were used to inform the development of Neighbourhood Action Plans for Londonderry and Oxley Park. Over 60 children and young people participated in three creative workshops throughout April and May 2009 which were facilitated by professional artists. Workshops
included digital photography and photo composition, use of Photoshop, animation and story development.

In a second series of workshops young people from Cranebrook and St Marys, guided by a professional film maker and a photographer, created short digital stories about their neighbourhoods. Further information about this project is available at:


Neighbourhood Stories St Marys

In 2010 Neighbourhood Stories has emerged in St Marys with an exciting collaboration between Penrith City Council and the arts and new media company Curious Works working alongside a team of local residents. This project has delivered a creative engagement process with positive outcomes for residents of St Marys South and St Marys. St Marys Senior High School has also been a key community partner in the delivery of this process.

Neighbourhood Stories St Marys is supporting residents to tell their stories and make positive contributions in their neighbourhood. A resident team made up of diverse cultural and social backgrounds as well as a range of ages have participated in training in multimedia development, editing and online publishing. These skills have enabled them to interview other residents and make digital media works which have been linked to maps on the Neighbourhood Stories website. Staff from Penrith Council’s Neighbourhood Renewal Program have participated and collaborated both in the design and also on the ground in this process. The website has been built by Curious Works in direct consultation with the Neighbourhood Renewal Program and the Neighbourhood Stories Resident Project Team.

The workshops have been running since April this year and were held at St Marys Senior High School and Penrith City Library. In the process the resident team have developed creative skills, made new friends, connections and had the opportunity to share their stories of being part of the community of St Marys. The information the resident team has gathered along with other information from local community engagement will inform the development of a Neighbourhood Action Plan for St Marys.

More about the process.....

The workshops led by Elias and Denise from Curious Works have covered filming, digital photography, interview skills, editing and online publishing. These workshops were held in the computer training rooms at St Marys Senior High School, Penrith Library and on a laptop at St Marys library. The focus has been on using locally available, low cost resources to support the sustainability of the process.

Six residents make up the Neighbourhood Stories Resident Project Team and they have conducted interviews with residents in St Marys about their local neighbourhood. Over the last few months the resident team have been active filming, taking photo’s and uploading content to the website to tell the many diverse experiences and stories about the place where they live.
The Neighbourhood Stories Resident Project Team conducted interviews with residents living and/or working in St Marys and St Marys South exploring four core questions:

· What do you like most about your neighbourhood?

· What do you like least about your neighbourhood?

· What is unique about the neighbourhood which should be preserved?

· What would improve the neighbourhood?

· The final question asked people to share their stories and experiences of living or working in St Marys.

In this process a whole range of stories, experiences and pictures of St Marys have been collected.

**Neighbourhood Stories** in collaboration with artists and communities continues to explore a successful framework for local residents to creatively collaborate with Penrith City Council in the renewal of the neighbourhoods where they live.