



Corporate Affairs Department

Team building through our local community

1. Introduction

The SQA's Corporate Affairs Department is a relatively new department and consists of 46 staff split across Glasgow, Dalkeith and Newtongrange sites. We wanted to hold a team building day but focus around helping in our local community in Glasgow.

We decided to participate in the *Rooting for you* experience developed by the North Glasgow Community Food Initiative based in Springburn – a socially deprived area of the city. NGCFI had never offered a team building experience before and put the programme together for us as we wanted to give something back to our community.

2. Objectives

Our main objectives were to:

- develop team working skills and get staff from 3 disparate operational sites to work together and to get to know each other.
- increase our physical fitness.
- support a local community initiative with our labour and financial resources.
- establish a lasting relationship with a community group.

3. What we did

44 staff were involved in the activity which involved us working on the Community Group's Springburn allotment during June/July 2009. NGCFI is a community health project run by volunteers and aims to 'engage people in practical and sustainable food related projects that inspire health and well-being'. They run various activities across the north of Glasgow, including developing skills for home-based food production, protecting the environment and improving local green spaces for people to enjoy. It owns two allotments in Springburn and Possil.

Our task was to work with their volunteers to remove the allotment fence and replace it with a rabbit-proof fence. Rabbits were causing problems by eating growing plants.

We spend a day a week for four weeks working on our task. Each group was a mixture of staff from our 3 sites. Staff were bussed to the allotment each morning.

We spent the entire day working with volunteers and qualified instructors learning to use tools and techniques to complete the work. Each day began with a safety briefing and all our staff were fully supervised when using tools and equipment. Lunch was prepared by volunteers and served in the open air.

After a hard day digging, pulling, hammering, cementing and sledge hammering in posts, we retreated for afternoon tea in the NGCFI offices and the opportunity for a 10 minute massage on our tired bodies!

The end result was a brand new fence that will enhance the productivity of the allotment. All SQA staff involved got together with the NGCFI Board and volunteers for a barbeque to celebrate the end of the project.

4. Evaluation

Detailed evaluation and comments from staff are attached. Overall we consider that our objectives were fully realised. Staff appreciated working in the local community and felt their input was making a real difference for local people. Two of our junior staff went along to the NGCFI AGM and gave a presentation on how the experience had been for them, and how we could help in the future. NGCFI have since supported our environmental day with a brilliant input on recycling food and served up really tasty dishes to our staff. The money we paid to take part in the activity was a fraction of the cost a corporate team building company would charge, and it has allowed the volunteers at NGCFI to keep moving forward their health agenda for local people.

All in all we were all winners!

5. Conclusion

This was a powerful community activity which produced real and tangible results for everyone involved. It far exceeded our expectations. The outcome is being considered by other SQA departments and our Organisational Development staff as a creative and productive way of team building. It will also be part of our corporate volunteering activities in our communities when this rolls out in 2010.

6. Appendices

- A – Information leaflet/sheet
- B – Safety guidelines
- C – Evaluation form
- D – Evaluation report
- E – Photographs

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