



# Takitaki

## PRISM for Community Health

The PRISM Health Initiative, piloted through FRIEND, has been created to optimize the management of NCDs within the most underserved communities of Fiji. Thus far the initiative has incorporated seven communities into the program and should have a total of 16 by mid-June. Not only has the health initiative grown rapidly, it has rendered results possibly never seen before in the management of NCDs in Fiji. Here are just a couple of these mind-boggling results:

Of patients diagnosed with high blood pressure greater than 160/100, there has been an average drop of 27 points systolic (top number) and 13 points diastolic (bottom number) for those patients who have attended at least 3 appointments within 6 weeks of the program's inception.

81 % of the 412 community members screened within the first 5 pilot communities have been diagnosed as overweight, obese, or severely obese: 31% of the total population as overweight (Body mass index >25), 26 % as obese (BMI >30), and 24% as severely obese (BMI >35). Of those diagnosed with a BMI of 30 or greater, there has been an astounding average weight loss of 6.5 kilograms per person over a span of 4-6 weeks who have attended at least 3 appointments.

Subjectively speaking, patients are highly motivated. Communities have wholly committed to incorporating the expectations of the program into the everyday social structure of village life. People are taking their medications, eating better, exercising, gardening, and just feeling altogether better. One vibrant elderly woman from Vunato excitedly stated, "Oilei! Au rawa ni ciciva edua na delana oqo" (Woohoo! I can

run up a hill now!).

Outside of the medical outreach itself, this change can be linked, in no small part, to the FRIEND governance program which employs backyard gardening/composting, community exercise programs, and teaching modules which educate on nutrition and hygiene. Thus the combination of the PRISM Health Initiative and FRIEND governance program has certainly proven to be a potent partnership in the management of NCDs in the most underserved sectors of Fiji.



**Dr. Animesh Sinha, M.D. is the founder and Medical Director of the FRIEND PRISM Health Initiative. Dr. Sinha is a US-based general practitioner who has devoted his medical skills to serving the homeless and Native American population domestically and the underserved internationally. He volunteers approximately six-months out of every year in Fiji and India and is committed to efforts that restore balance through the redistribution of skills and resources to indigent communities. Over the past three years, he has given countless lectures and comprehensively evaluated roughly 3,000 patients in Fiji, with a primary emphasis on Women's Health, NCD management, and screening. Dr. Sinha plans to volunteer exclusively in Fiji for nine months out of every year from 2010 onwards in support of the PRISM Health Initiative.**



### Vacancy for Nurses

PRISM Health Initiative is looking for motivated nurses for assessment and management of non communicable diseases in underserved communities in the Western division.

#### **Formal Qualifications Required**

Diploma in Nursing

Apply with a detailed CV, 3 references, and a cover letter to PRISM, PO Box D623. Lautoka by 7<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

## YEN in North

**Youth Employment Network program has started offering services to the youths of Labasa.**

Youth officer Mili Tikoi says she had counselled the youths on what to expect and facilitated a week long course on what employers expect from their employees and preparing the youth for soft skills and new challenges at work place. She encouraged youths to identify their interest and found attachment for work accordingly.

Mili said corporate organisation have been supportive however approval for attachment takes awhile.

23 year old Mere is very interested in environmental management and she will be starting her attachment with the Ministry of Fisheries.

Anabella is wanting to volunteer with Old Peoples Home and Una who has been studying computers at APTECH will be learning work culture at LTA.

“We have youths coming and asking when the next training will be held. Once we have youths enrolled and we have found enough work place attachments we will be ready to start the next program.”

YEN is a mentorship training program that works with unemployed youths. It trains them in job skills and works with the corporate sector for attachment and mentorship with business leaders. The youths are encouraged to take volunteer positions to gain job experience.

## FOOD SECURITY Symposium

I remember the days, not too long ago, when I would be at a workshop, and an immediate response from other participants on knowing that I was from FRIEND would be, “Oh! The chutney women”! So it felt really good when FRIEND was acknowledged by a number of participants as an organization that is taking practical steps in regards to addressing food security issues in its communities, working towards import substitution as well as looking at potential export opportunities with value addition to local resources.

Opening the symposium Prime Minister Commodore Frank Bainimarama said, “ *The purpose is not to simply talk about the potential, which has happened on many occasions, but to develop the synergies between the respective stakeholders and develop practical solutions to practical problems.*”

More than 300 stakeholders gathered in Lami to map out key policies and directions for the future.

Meanwhile FRIEND forges ahead in its work to build happier, healthier communities with its integrated approach towards social and economic empowerment.

By Arti Mala

## Handmade Recycled Paper

Friend's Fiji Style Recycled Paper has now passed its initial trial stages and is now in full production. The high quality handmade paper is also being used by the creative team to produce photo frames, notebooks and handmade cards. The handmade paper project was initiated following paper making training at SPC CETC in 2007. Initial trials were conducted using basic equipment such as a kitchen blender and concrete blocks. With the potential of the project being converted into an income generation opportunity, a proposal was submitted to Canada Fund for equipment and material to start the project. The equipment was sourced from New Zealand and the training was started with a group of unemployed youths. The team produces paper using cut offs from a printing press as well as natural fibres, a mix of paper and fibre and decorative paper using flower petals and ferns.



The new buzz word at FRIEND is ‘soft skills’. This follows a visit this month by a guest speaker to FRIEND whose presentation on the importance of soft skills for success has left most people thinking Rajneesh Charan, the IT Manager at FSC and a board member of FRIEND empha-

### ***Soft Skills for Success***

sized that if one does not have the soft skills than no matter how well qualified a person is, it will become very difficult for them to succeed in life. And at the heart of all the soft skills lies

the attitude of a person on how he or she communicates with others and how they approach their work. In human resources terms they are called behavioral competencies or “unteachables”. Without a doubt, people must have the necessary qualifications, knowledge and skills, but it is characteristics such as a positive attitude, high energy levels, flexibility and tenacity that make a great employee and a real asset.



## Friend's Fiji Style® Marmalade with just the right tang for marmalade lovers



The kitchen is filled with the sweet smell of hot marmalade as the pot bubbles away.

FRIEND Quality Control supervisor Mohinesh Reddy has been working away frantically over the last few weeks to ensure that enough Meyer Lemons are available for daily production needs. The production team is striving to make the most of the fruit in season and build up stocks to last until the next season. Reddy admits that this has been a struggle as the quality of fruits this season has been affected by the unsteady weather conditions of the last few months. Reddy says most of the lemons used by the production team have been sourced through three different suppliers, who have been collecting the lemons from around Lautoka area to make sure that the production progresses without any hiccups.

Friend's Fiji Style® Marmalade has steadily been gaining popularity since its launch in August last year. Friend's Fiji Style® Marmalade is available at Friend's Fiji Style Shop at Garden City, Raiwai and at selected outlets in Suva, Nadi and Lautoka including Prouds, Tappoos and MH outlets.

Meanwhile the kitchen is also preparing to churn out its supply of Friends Fiji Style® Guava Jam. This has also proved a hit. Reddy says they are only accepting the red variety which are firm to the touch. While FRIEND sources guava through its suppliers, it also takes products from individuals

## TASTE of Friend's Fiji Style at JACKS restaurants.

Three of Fiji's top rated restaurants, Saffron, Indigo and Seafront are now serving Friend's Fiji Style® Tamarind Chutney as an accompanying condiment to their meals. The three restaurants belong to Jacks of Fiji.

FRIEND salesperson Dhaman Narshea says it has been a struggle to break into this market as the professional chefs of all Jacks restaurants only go for the best of the best. And until now they were only serving what they were preparing in their kitchen themselves.

Narshea says this is another vote of confidence for the high quality of products brought to you by the Friend's Fiji Style® range. Friend's Fiji Style® Tamarind Chutney was one of the first Friend's Fiji Style® products launched in the market in 2003. Since then it has seen steady sales and is regarded as a flagship product of the Friend's Fiji Style® range.

Other top ranking restaurants that serve Friend's Fiji Style range of condiments in their esteemed establishments include Outrigger of Fiji, Sheraton Fiji, Holiday Inn and Fijian Shangri La resort. Friend's Fiji Style® range of products can be found at selected MH outlets, Prouds, Tappoos and high end supermarkets like Cost U Less, Joes Farm, and Anandas Supermarkets on Musket Cove and Plantation Island Resort.

who may have fruit trees around their homes and communities, providing an opportunity for additional income to these individuals and their families.



### Recipe Corner— Guava Jam Shake

#### Ingredients

- One litre of milk (Makes six glasses)
- One tray of ice cubes
- 2 tablespoons of Friend's Fiji Style® Guava Jam

#### Utensils

- Electrical blender/food processor
- Drinking glasses

#### Method

- Put milk, ice cubes and jam into the blender.
- Run through until the ice is crushed finely
- Pour into glasses and serve chilled.



#### GUAVA Health

*Guava is high in fibre. Fibre has the health benefit of lowering cholesterol and blood pressure. Guava helps to lower cholesterol in the blood, while increasing good cholesterol or lipoprotein. Lowering cholesterol in the blood in turn lowers blood pressure.*

[www.bukisa.com](http://www.bukisa.com)

## ***Hanging Gardens Inspire Communities.***

The laments from squatter residents of having no land to create a garden, or of having seawater seeping through and destroying their attempts at planting backyard gardens are now over, as FRIEND works with its target communities to look at solutions to issues identified as hindrances in pursuit of a healthier lifestyle.

Programs Officer Vive Liutaki says, "At the moment, we have about 10 hanging gardens and 15 square foot gardens in a squatter near the sea. The normal garden plots are introduced to people in some communities who have access to land. The unavailability of land has not stopped the communities from moving forward in constructing their hanging gardens, square foot gardens and doing vegetable gardens in old fridges, washing machines, etc."

### **What vegetables can be grown upside down?**

Tomatoes, cucumbers and eggplants. To plant your hanging garden, fill up a container with soil. Hang it off a roof or beam. Poke a hole at the bottom of the container and plant your seedling into this gap. Water your plant from the top and watch your garden grow!!!



*An upside-down tomato plant in a bucket*



*Recycling a thrown out fridge as a garden plot*

## **Community Development**

### *Excerpts from field reports*

Labasa Team led by Sunita Sunder has been taking the governance program to the community. As a first step to planning and execution of development plans, various communities identify their issues of concern that affect the general quality of life for residents.

**Lack of Unity** "There is lack of trust and unity amongst the community members, as identified by the groups. People gossip a lot and because there is no unity, there is no progress in the community."

**Unemployment** "Unemployment is a major cause of social problems and people are struggling to find jobs. Men and youths are mostly casual workers."

**Road conditions and Transportation** "The road condition is such that buses can't service rural areas. Because of that, residents have to walk long distances with their shopping and it's very difficult."

**Stray Dogs** "Dogs are left to wander and owners do not take responsibility for them. These dogs destroy flower gardens, pose a threat to other community members, especially children, and dirty most areas with their droppings. This causes a lot of dispute and fights amongst residents."

**Litter Bugs** "There is a creek flowing in the area and the water is supposed to be clean because it comes from a waterfall nearby. Instead of keeping it clean, people are dumping all their rubbish in the creek. Lots of bottles and cans are dumped in it and people are not even bothered about the impact. When there are water cuts in the area, some people use the same creek water to have their bath and even for drinking. Again, no one is taking responsibility for their actions."

**Water problems** "The community has a water supply from the local Public Works Department. However, there are frequent water cuts which causes disruption in the daily chores."

The FRIEND Governance program encourages community members to identify issues such as these and then work together to come up with strategies to improve their daily lives. Each of the community undergo different training modules from the recently launched manual. These modules include governance, food security, health & hygiene, disaster awareness & management, participatory budgeting and backyard gardening and composting.

Each community identifies its resources and develops income generating projects for sustained livelihoods.



*Men, women, young and old get together to plan for a better future*

## **NCD Theatre**

FRIEND Youth teamed up with Suva based NGO Women's Action for Change to spread awareness on lifestyle diseases affecting our communities.

'No Escape' theatre Was performed in each of the community where PRISM medical team has been

screening the community for non communicable diseases. "No Escape" emphasizes the importance of having a healthy lifestyle, eating wisely and exercising.

