

## **Raising Depression Awareness and in Older People.**

In 2006, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* and Council on the Ageing South Australia conducted a pilot program aimed at older people to increase their awareness of depression.

This twelve month pilot project examined the effectiveness of using existing peer support networks to deliver specific depression-awareness education to older people.

Using four key messages, the South Australian Peer Educators delivered 171 sessions to over 3,500 people throughout South Australia.

1. Depression is not a normal part of ageing.
2. Depression is a health problem, not a weakness.
3. Depression is a treatable illness.
4. Information and support is available.

*beyondblue's* evaluation showed the effectiveness of this program.

The percentage of people who could correctly identify the incidence of depression as one in five rose dramatically from 28.4 per cent prior to the Peer Education-awareness sessions to 70.7 per cent after the presentation.

After the sessions, negative stigmatising attitudes decreased and knowledge of where to receive appropriate help increased.

There has been widespread interest in the project and many organisations involved with older people have been waiting to hear the results of the pilot program.

The program is now being rolled out nationally through COTA in every state and territory in Australia. COTA WA staff members Jane Newsome and Marlene Robins attended a training session in Adelaide in March this year and they will be training a group of peer educators who will present talks to groups of seniors over the next 18 months.

For more information on the project, contact Jane or Marlene on 93212133.