

Standing out from the crowd - an educational tool

Melanie Sanders, Community Safety Officer, City of Casey¹

Abstract

The City of Casey's Road Safety Officer and Community Safety Officer are frequently found on weekends staffing information displays at community events promoting various safety messages. Standing out from the other exhibitors requires creativity. The arts can be successfully utilised to address Community Safety, and foster community ownership of crime and injury prevention.

During the past 18 months, Caseyville - The Community Safety Game, has evolved into its current, 5 metre by 5 metre, giant game format that participants literally play on and over, with giant dice, question cards and physical challenges to engage them. It is an education resource, intended for use at a variety of events - both indoor and outdoor - for a variety of age groups and target audiences, including educational environments. The combined resources - finances, creativity, knowledge, networks and energy - of the Road Safety Officer and Community Safety Officer, have made this ambitious project a reality.

Caseyville - The Community Safety Game provides an educational opportunity for communicating with cross sections of the community - children, families, the elderly and to businesses and community planners. It creates an enjoyable learning activity that is a 'draw card' complementing relevant static display material, and providing a means of engaging the community in road and community safety issues.

Welcome to Caseyville

Community and road safety are identified in corporate documents as priorities for City of Casey residents, with education and promotion activities undertaken by the Community and Road Safety Officers at various Casey events.

Education and promotion of safety messages at community events and the need to stand out from other exhibitors requires creativity. *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game*, is an education resource developed recognising the value of using the arts as a successful tool for addressing community safety in Casey, fostering community responsibility towards crime and injury prevention.

The format for this presentation is structured as a cooking class - how to make an educational tool that stands out from the crowd.

City of Casey: Context

The City of Casey is a large municipality on the outer south-eastern fringe of Melbourne. It has a current population in excess of 190,000 people. It is expected to grow to 320,000 by 2020 - the size of Canberra!

There are 35,000 school-aged students residing in the municipality, with some 45 primary schools. This provides a significant target audience for the delivery of community and road safety education programs in school and other community settings.

Ingredients - aims

Caseyville, The Community Safety Game fulfils a need for an attractive education resource for use at community events and in school and other community organisation settings. The resource needs to be:

- fun and colourful,
- encourage movement and learning,
- flexible surface for indoor and outdoor use, and
- relevant to community safety.

¹ Co-author, Robin Tiffany, Road Safety Officer is now employed by Mornington Peninsula Shire Council.

Recipe - converting ideas to action

In the kitchen of community safety, we had a list of ingredients (aims), a sketchy recipe to follow, plenty of cooking time and a pinch of creative flair!

Our ingredient list to make *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* includes:

- Money - significant contribution and commitment from various Council budgets;
- Ideas - loads of them;
- Appetite - we were keen to have an engaging tool to help do our jobs;
- Strategic and corporate plans recognise road and community safety; and
- A 'hot pot' of familiar game concepts that are displayed in how the game is now played.

Recognising that both of us are 'artistically challenged' the initial sketches and materials for production have evolved considerably from December 2000 when the concept of a giant size game first emerged. The appointment of Chimera Design, graphic design artists to convert our ideas into action was a significant step in achieving our goal of an educational tool that stands out in the crowd. Key aspects of the game design (recipe) include:

- Scale of the game - if one item is giant sized, then everything else must be too;
- Game surface - flexible rubber matting suitable for indoor-outdoor use, non-slip, low maintenance and long life;
- Cartoon style - need for an image that was appealing to both children and adults that was flexible across core and varying themes; and
- Functionality versus playability - while an educational resource, it needed to be played as a game and still be fun.

Cooking time - refinements

The sheer scale of the game poses problems - it's 5m x 5m across, weighs 10kg per piece (250kg - ¼ tonne!) and is bulky to transport. Other considerations arose from these specifications - the need for a trailer and trolley and Occupational Health and Safety guidelines for transporting the game.

Many modifications to the actual game layout, icons and image occurred over time - definitely a slow bake cake! Some examples include:

- Loop of bonus/danger questions - one step forward, two back - square dancing in *Caseyville* - the need to rearrange the order of squares;
- Question development - questions around 4 themes - fire, play, water and road safety appropriate to middle primary school and link to Curriculum Standards Framework; and
- Icons and images of the game board - need for fun, attraction, easy recognition e.g. danger - not too scary or pirate-like.

Inviting guests - collaboration

Caseyville, The Community Safety Game was developed to a pilot stage before inviting stakeholders input into the function, practicality and potential of the game. It was necessary to translate our ideas into a format that could be visualised by people before inviting their input.

Education representatives of the Country Fire Authority, Victoria Police and Royal Life Saving Society Australia were consulted directly. Information and ideas have been sought from a range of other community and road safety sources, in particular in the preparation of the education resource that complements the game.

Two school contacts have proved invaluable - a Traffic Safety Education Coordinator and principal of a local primary school. Each have provided feedback on appropriateness of questions for the age group and application of the game in the classroom. They are also assisting in the launch of *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game*.

Laying the table for tea - playing Caseyville

A brief synopsis of how to play *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* follows - as with other parts of this project, the rules are still in a piloting phase to ensure clarity and simplicity.

- Welcome to *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game*. This game is based on the features of your local community - houses, shops, a school, local park and road network.
- Around each side of the game matting you will see 4 colours. Each of these colours represents a team and a safety theme: red - fire safety; blue - water safety; yellow - road safety; and green - play safe. Please divide the class into 4 teams along each side.
- In each team, a 'game player' is nominated and will wear a coloured bib for visibility on the game mat - this person marks the team's progress around the mat. A 'game support' person is also nominated and will have a coloured bib - this person will read out the questions and roll the dice.
- Movement around the game mat is by rolling the dice, answering a question correctly and moving forward. One roll per team. General questions are placed in the middle and are purple with a large question mark. Questions are on each of the 4 safety themes.
- Questions are to be read out by a different colour team member. The team to your left (clockwise) will read out the question.
- You will also see two other card types - bonus and danger. Bonus questions describe safe situations and help you to move forward on the game mat. Danger questions describe dangerous situations and you must move back.
- There are also 2 physical challenges that can help you move forward on the mat. One is about water safety and the other road safety. Each has a box of items that your team of two representatives must use to demonstrate safe behaviour.
- If you find a question difficult, each team has two lifelines. One is hand shaped - this allows you to ask your team for advice on how to answer the question. The other is phone shaped and you can ask just one member of your team for advice. You can use each of these only once. Place them in the box when used.
- The first team to the finish square wins.

Decorating our cake - value adding

It is intended that *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* be used primarily in two settings - the school and at community events.

In the school setting, it is intended to provide a resource for classroom learning. Suggestions for using *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* include:

- Pre or post other safety studies and programs;
 - Eg. CFA or Police in Schools visit or Bike Education Program
- Stand-alone activity to explore community safety issues; and
- Reward for end of safety theme study.

Children will be given team stickers after playing the game to take home and hopefully stimulate conversations with parents about various safety themes. This will be prompted by newsletter items and display of the banner in the school foyer prior to and during the game's school visit.

To complement and assist schools to maximise their interaction with the game, an educational resource is being developed. This will be in the form of a CD-Rom with print out activity files, web site links, program contact details and sample newsletter items. This provides significant scope to extend community safety themes beyond the use of the game allowing for individual, group or whole class activities and learnings.

Tasting the cake - launch

Development of *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* as an idea commenced in December 2000. It is now July 2002 - some 18 months later. Students, teachers and community safety educators have been talking about

the game and eagerly awaiting the launch of this exciting resource and it's roll out for use in schools within the municipality over the coming year.

Already we have bookings for it's use during Community Safety Month, the annual Casey Kids Carnival, Berwick Show, Youth Week and Casey Environmental Expo. These events alone will see in excess of 20,000 residents of the City of Casey exposed to *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* in the coming year.

Having your cake and eating it too - learnings

Managing the evolution of *Caseyville, The Community Safety Game* into its' current format has provided many challenges for us. Some of the learnings of this process include:

- You enjoy the work more if you're having fun and, importantly, other people learn more from you if you are fun.
- Don't be scared by something new and different and big!
- Chasing enough money to finish the project can be hard work - don't be nervous about asking for sufficient resources to actually do the project justice.
- Letting an idea and others' excitement for it flow - the end product of the game is so much better because other people were willing to contribute to the project.
- Partnerships take time to develop and need to happen, not just be talked about.
- Ownership - don't be afraid to acknowledge your right to promote your input and innovation - you work for and are supported by an organisation.