



## “Herman the Worm”

How can REDUCING WASTE become fun?

Alpine Children’s Services (ACS) is a proud not-for-profit organisation that provides quality early childhood education and care throughout the Alpine Shire. In 2008, a small group of educators, management and parents came together to form the ‘Green Team’. The Green Team was established to advocate for the environment and implement sustainable practices for our children, families and our organisation.

Did you know a worm has five hearts? The children at Mountain View Children’s Centre in Myrtleford do.

The introduction of two worm farms in 2010 as part of the centre’s “green” initiatives has led to a whole education on worms, thanks to “Herman the worm”. Children are learning all about the dynamics and importance of a worm including: their body parts, what they eat, where and how they live and their importance in the composting cycle.

In 2009 the service had a strong focus on the reduction of waste. Before we could begin to reduce it we needed to measure how much waste we actually generated. The first simple exercise was carried out to determine the size of the composting solution to be implemented. All food scraps were weighed and measured by our kitchen staff for a period of one week. The second exercise was an easy one of counting the number of waste bins for a period of one week. It was calculated that 25kg of compostable waste was created and 16 garbage bins were rolled out for collection per week.

With our waste audit complete, we could now implement a solution. The priority for our Sustainability Officer was how to engage the children in the process. Paula Miotto commented, “I wanted to make sure the children were involved in the solution of reducing waste and I wanted it to be fun for them. I began to research information from the internet sourcing information on worms; how they live, why they are such good recyclers; how to provide them with a good home and keep them happy; how their bodies work and finally how do they recycle all our fruit and vegetable scraps. This was found on a website called “Herman the Worm”. ”

Large poster boards were created to illustrate where Herman the Worm lives, what he eats and a monitoring board was implemented.

HERMAN AND HIS FAMILY'S CARE CHART

I NEED TO.....	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
 GIVE ME MY FOOD	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
CHECK IF MY DIRT IS DAMP AND SPRAY ME WITH WATER IF I'M TOO DRY					
TURN OVER MY DIRT					
TOP UP MY BEDDING WITH SHREDDED PAPER					



Each week two children are nominated to be the 'worm monitors'. They assist in the important task of feeding and nurturing the worms and end up with a certificate for their efforts at the close of the week.



Craft activities of making worms out of stockings and worm colour-ins have all aided the understanding and awareness of worms and their importance in the composting cycle. This has given the children a sense of being connected with and contributing to the children's centre. The children have also shown growing appreciation and care for their natural environment.

Within a matter of weeks with the introduction of Herman the Worm and two working worm farms, backed up with a strong focus on recycling there was a 50% reduction of weekly waste at Mountain View Children's Centre. Sixteen green garbage bins have been slashed to eight per week thanks to staff and children focussing on recycling. Herman the Worm is credited for gobbling up over 25kg of food scrap per week, that's the equivalent of 25 one litre containers of milk!

For a little fella '*Herman the worm*' has become a big personality at the centre.

### Links to the National Early Years Learning Framework

**Community** Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

**Learning** Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.

### Links to the National Quality Standard

#### Element 1.1.2

Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.

#### Element 1.1.3

The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

#### Element 1.1.6

Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and to influence events and their world.

#### Element 3.3.1

Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.

#### Element 3.3.2

Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

### References

The Adventures of Herman the Worm <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/worms/>

Alpine Children's Services

[http://www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au/documents/newsletters/alpinegreengums\\_July10.pdf](http://www.alpinechildrensservices.asn.au/documents/newsletters/alpinegreengums_July10.pdf)