



# Nutritious connections

Supporting local refugees to live their best lives

SCARF Refugee Support has been creating connections and generating opportunities for Illawarra-based refugee families since 2005. Focusing on community, inclusivity and friendship, SCARF's programs are delivered by more than 250 volunteers and are all about helping local refugees successfully rebuild their lives in our region.

Through COORDINARE's 'Pitch Night' initiative in 2019, SCARF was awarded funding for a new program to connect socially and explore ways to improve school lunch box nutrition.

## 'Lunchbox for Learning' program

*Lunchbox for Learning* supports parents to build their food literacy and capacity to prepare healthy lunches and snacks for their school-aged children, as well as make better food choices at home.

While centred on education, *Lunchbox for Learning* provides far more than just knowledge – through community connection, sharing and encouragement, it contributes to positive health and wellbeing outcomes in more ways than one.

## Creating positive change

Delivered in 2019-2020 through a 10-week course at Kiama Community College, the initial round of *Lunchbox for Learning* involved refugees from Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Myanmar and Ethiopia. Those who completed the course received a nationally recognised statement of attainment, able to be counted towards a Certificate II in Hospitality.

Through the participation of their parents, 20 school aged children directly benefited from round one of the program, with an estimated 60 extended family members and friends indirectly impacted. The program is now set to achieve broader engagement through a new Facebook group, building an online healthy eating community network where knowledge, ideas and recipes can be freely shared.



*"As well as learning new information about healthy food preparation and food choices, several participants reported experiencing a growth of confidence through attending the course"*

*- SCARF Health Project Officer*

*“Lunchbox for Learning had a lasting impact on Rima and her family, and their relationship with healthy food.”*

*– SCARF Health Project Officer*



## A lasting impact

For Rima\*, a Syrian refugee who arrived in Wollongong with her husband and five daughters in 2014, the *Lunchbox for Learning* program has had far-reaching effects.

Although excited to be taking part in the program, she was nervous and concerned that her level of English was ‘not good enough’. With encouragement from SCARF volunteers, Rima began to feel more relaxed in the learning environment. As the course progressed, her confidence grew and she took great pride in achieving the set weekly tasks, producing some wonderful platters and sharing her knowledge of Syrian food with others.

By the end of the program, Rima had a far greater understanding of the types of food her daughters could be taking to school. She was spending time at home creating healthy treats with her children, and talking to them about the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods.

Rima was also able to put her new knowledge and skills to work when she started volunteering at her daughters’ school canteen.

\* not her real name

By supporting initiatives like *Lunchbox for Learning*,  
COORDINARE is empowering local communities to make  
positive change.