

Port Macquarie Express newspaper feature

College partnership

ACES has been working with Port Macquarie Community College on an extremely successful joint venture partnership.

Three years ago, College Program Co-ordinator Cheryl Eslick, liaised with Dawn Davies from ACES to design a program of both vocational and leisure courses.

"The courses were selected to suit to the interests of our clients," Dawn says.

The college tried to offer the students a sense of belonging by giving them student ID cards and creating a warm and welcoming environment.

"When they first started attending classes, the college also made name badges to assist the staff and tutors to get to know the students," Cheryl says.

"We encourage everyone to show off their work at the end of the day and have developed some wonderfully positive relationships with the students," she added. The college has purchased special equipment including an extra large computer mouse to assist students with co-ordination and large letter keyboards to assist students



Class act: James Kennedy, Carlie Culf and Josh Southgate with ACES Outreach & Service Development manager Dawn Davies (rear).

with sight issues.

"These special tools allow the students to really enjoy their computer classes," Cheryl says.

At the end of each year the college organises a special celebration for the students and their carers. Each student is presented with a certificate indicating the courses they have completed that year.

Last year one of the students showed a slide pres-

entation featuring the students and the activities they had undertaken during the year.

Classes include yoga, bellydancing, bead weaving, jewellery making, first aid, art, card making, cooking, taking food orders in preparation for working in a coffee shop, budgeting skills/working with money, living skills, computer skills, digital cameras and photography.

The digital photography course is one of the most popular. Photo albums created by students are proudly displayed in the ACES computer room.

"Every aspect of the albums has been created by our photography students, including the photography itself, arranging to have the photos printed, as well as creating the album itself," Dawn explains.

Colourful paintings and other works of art are also displayed on the computer room walls.

Dawn says working with the ACES students has taught the community college staff about the bigger picture issues concerning disability within the community.

"Only yesterday I was talking with a tutor from the college who commented on how lucky she felt to have been given the opportunity to work with our students," Dawn says.

"The community college courses provide some of the stepping stones needed to get our service users from where they are, to where they want to be," she adds.