SUE WILKS (Radovich) has been developing and running innovative school-based Speech Pathology programs through her private practice Educational Speech Pathology and Therapy Services Pty Ltd (ESP&TS) for more than 20 years. “Equity and access” is the focus of her school-based speech and occupational therapy services which now span over 47 Sydney and interstate schools. The ESP&TS Practice also forms the largest clinical education program for speech pathology students from the University of Sydney.

Many hundreds of University of Sydney students have benefited from Sue’s knowledge and commitment to language enrichment in the classroom. This body of work was first acknowledged when she was awarded the Deidre Russell Award in 2001. The recognition of her dedication to clinical education and services to children in schools was further highlighted when Sue was awarded the inaugural University of Sydney Alumni Award for Clinical Education in 2010, and then again last year when she was made an Adjunct Lecturer in the Discipline of Speech Pathology.

Amongst her team of 17 speech pathologists there are now 11 staff members who are dedicated clinical educators with the University of Sydney.

This year’s Faculty of Health Sciences Awards Night, held at University of Sydney Camperdown campus, featured some new awards. Final year speech pathology students received Educational Speech Pathology & Rotary Miranda Scholarship Awards for their contribution to the inaugural school-based clinical education program in Darwin.

The students spent four days a week for six weeks in two primary schools in Darwin. The program was designed to enrich the oral language skills of every child, but with a particular focus on a small group of Indigenous students. Lessons were conducted with whole classes, small withdrawal groups, and on an individual basis, and were designed with links to the school curriculum. Teachers and teacher aides were actively involved through observation, team teaching, specific training, and in-service. This ensured the sustainability of the model after the students had completed their placement.

The Sue Wilks Educational Speech Pathology Scholarship will be continued in semester 2 allowing a group of student speech pathologists from Macquarie University to complete a block placement in Darwin and remote schools.

Sue, who is an active member of the Rotary Club of Miranda, also recently accepted the District Award for Literacy Programs on behalf of the club for her ESP&TS work both in the IO classes at Miranda Public School and the Darwin project. This award was the culmination of a four-year partnership between ESP&TS and the Miranda Rotary Club, which began when the club agreed to sponsor the program at Miranda Public School.

The success of the pilot project in Darwin has led Sue to establish an independent ESP&TS Scholarship Trust. This Trust will allow speech pathology students from any university to apply directly to ESP&TS for financial support for rural placements where the ESP&TS programs are running. Sue is very excited about this prospect – “We want to expand the Darwin model to schools in other rural areas, and the independent ESP&TS scholarships will give us the flexibility that we need to attract students who demonstrate commitment to school-based intervention.”

For more information about ESP&TS, please see www.educationalspeechpathology.com.au or contact Sue directly at speechie@ezylink.net.au.

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