



Artist Maureen Cook with some of the artwork.

An AlzNSW art program is giving those with dementia a creative and social outlet.

In its fourth year, the Creative Connections Art Program at AlzNSW's Dementia and Memory Community Centre at Port Macquarie continues to grow and is reaping great rewards for all involved.

The collaborative program is run by AlzNSW and the Port Macquarie Art Society and culminates, at the end of each year, in an exhibition of the art created.

AlzNSW Dementia Advisor and Port Macquarie Regional Manager Margaret Allen said the successful program aims to develop creativity and expression and provide a social outlet for people living with dementia.

"This [program] is important because it contributes to self-esteem

and provides opportunities to remain engaged with others – new friendships have been formed and creative skills discovered," says Margaret. She adds: "The art created is remarkable and indicates the level of artistic ability that would otherwise remain hidden."

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Pamela and John's story

For Pamela and John, the Creative Connections Art Program remains one of the best activities they have been involved in since John was diagnosed with dementia.

"My partner had never participated in any artistic endeavours during his life," Pamela said. "The Creative Connections Art Program has opened up a new chapter for him.

"He was a little reluctant on the

first day. But the happy, friendly environment and encouragement from teachers and AlzNSW staff soon made him feel comfortable – laughter plays a big role during the classes."

Pamela said the friendships formed during the classes have also proved to be of great importance.

"You can see the enthusiasm of each student growing as they realise that they have creative skills, and each one has an individual way of expressing themselves in their paintings.

"They are proud to have their work displayed. The program is something new to stimulate their thinking."

Pamela says she would like to thank everyone who runs the program.

"I don't think the AlzNSW staff and the art teachers realise just how wonderful and beneficial this program is," she said. "We think the art program, as well as the Living with Memory Loss program, are two of the best things we have been involved in since John was diagnosed."

AD-HOC Group anniversary

The AD-HOC Group (which stands for Alzheimer's Disease Help Our Carers) is celebrating 15 years of providing support and enjoyment to people with dementia and their carers. The group is made up of past carers and friends who arrange monthly social outings and provide a space for those who attend to relax and meet other people.

Generally, family carers and the person they care for attend. However, people with dementia from nursing homes and day care centres sometimes go along.

'Piano Pat' is a regular at the gatherings, welcoming attendees with renditions of popular tunes from the 1940s and beyond.

The AD-HOC 2010 events

calendar is now available and includes a garden party on 27 March, cocktails on 24 April and a barbecue on 29 May. Each event costs \$10.

All events are at the Vincent Fairfax Family Resource Centre, North Ryde and are open to all AlzNSW members and their friends. For reservations or more information, please call Christine Bauer on (02) 9805 0100.