

Wed. 7 July 2011

THE WEEKLY

Chris finds his voice

Max Potential student plans to mentor others

By ANIKA HUME

Whether it's executing a play on the rugby field or coaching his Mudgee Wombats Under 11s team from the sideline, Mudgee High School year 11 student Chris McColl is a vocal force.

But take him away from the fields, oval ball and goal posts, and you would hear little more than a peep from this quiet former New Zealander.

That is, until four months ago when he started Club Mudgee Max Potential.

"Before the program I was pretty shy, but in the past few months I've really learnt a lot about myself - the biggest improvement being my self-confidence," he said.

Thanks to leadership development program Club Mudgee Max Potential, Chris is finding his voice in a range of environments.

As part of his Max Potential community service project - a major component to the program - Chris intends to use this voice to mentor young Mudgee Public School students with their schoolwork.

Over five weeks, Chris plans to spend his Wednesday afternoons with the school's special education, prep and year one students guiding them to achieve their best in the classroom.

Chris, who benefited from similar coaching during his early schooling, said he believed it was important to instil good study habits from an early age.

"I think there's a need for programs like this one because if these students don't start focusing on their school work now, it's likely they still won't be focused on it when they're older, so it's all about getting them in line to achieve now," he said.

"I like working with young people - I really enjoy my rugby coaching - so I hope this project gives me a sense of self satisfaction from the knowledge that I am helping my community in another way."

Chris' mentor Ray Whitfield - the owner of two guesthouses, a board member for Pioneer House and a member of the Mudgee Region Tourism marketing committee among other pursuits - knows how important it is to be able to inject confidence into more than one environment.

"Max Potential has allowed Chris to demonstrate the confidence he shows when he coaches his under 11s into another aspect of his life," he said.

"Chris' project is good because the more that you can do to help kids get their habits right when they are younger the better and the concept of younger students looking up to older mentors draws a good parallel with what we are trying to achieve in the Max Potential program as a whole."

Chris hopes to use his newly acquired communication skills and confidence to gain work experience in the Navy - a career that he wishes to explore after school.



RUGBY STAR TURNED STUDY BUDDY: Club Mudgee Max Potential student Chris McColl will apply the communication skills he uses on the rugby sideline to the Mudgee Public School classrooms to help students with their schoolwork, under the guidance of his mentor Ray Whitfield.

040711-MAX POTENTIAL-013

Plant Art wants children to grow in trees