



Dancing the sweet dance of success



Dance Ability students performing at last week's fundraising concert.

Jennifer Bennett

WHEN Dance Ability Australia opened at the start of this year, it had 10 students. Now it has 36, with enrolments constantly rising.

Dance Ability is no ordinary dance school. It caters for students with disabilities.

Last year the dance school's owner, Lucy Ricardo, watched an episode of Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope* that featured the Merry Makers, the dance troupe that caters for people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Her son, Patrick, now nine, has Down syndrome. "I became aware of the need for him to explore opportunities like his younger sister had through her dance classes," Ms Ricardo said.

"My goal was to create a non-profit organisation providing relief from disabilities via structured and educational dance and movement classes for disabled people of all ages."

She said the growth of the classes, run

with the assistance of volunteers, demonstrated a demand in the community. The school has since received grants from the Woolworths Fresh Food Kids program and Waverley Council.

"It has been wonderful to see the students grow with the program, learn various dance routines and improve their physical fitness. But most importantly, they are having fun and enjoying themselves," she said.

Last week Dance Ability held a fundraising concert, with performances by students. "There was a lot of emotion, tears, standing ovations and cheers from the audience."

Next year, Ms Ricardo hopes to extend classes and increase enrolments to 70 students. "In life anything and everything is possible and at Dance Ability there is not one star that is brighter than the other. They all shine with their own brilliance."

Dance Ability is now accepting enrolments for 2010. Classes are free. For more information, visit www.danceability.com.au.