



Case Study – Leanne Johnson, Swansea NSW.

When Leanne Johnson’s oldest son became involved in surf lifesaving 13 years ago, she saw her role as “Mum’s taxi and cheer squad”. The 45-year-old never imagined that one day she would herself become a qualified surf lifesaver, an administrator and more recently, a coach of children starting out in the sport.

The Swansea-Belmont Surf Lifesaving Club secretary was content to continue her administrative role, keep cheering on sons Luke and Trent, and to do the occasional surf patrol on Blacksmith Beach at Lake Macquarie. Stepping up to coaching seemed “overwhelming”.

“I’d watch the coaches on the beach with the kids and not even think about being able to do something like that. I mean, I’m the Practice Manager at an Eye Doctor’s, what do I know about coaching?”

But when club president Jeff Mowbray approached Johnson to become involved in the Active After-School Communities program, an initially apprehensive Johnson agreed and as a first step, was directed to the Australian Sports Commission’s On-line Coaching Course.

“I didn’t know anything like that was out there and frankly, it was a relief,” Johnson said. “I can’t rave enough about this training and the Active After-School Communities Program. I love it.

“There’s nothing like seeing kids who haven’t even been near the water learn by the end of a day how to go under a big wave. I just can’t even explain the rewards of seeing that.”

Under the programme primary school aged children have access to free, structured physical activity programs after school. Johnson now coaches primary school children in basic surf lifesaving skills. She says the on-line training course helped her to understand how to structure activities that included everyone.

“You know when I was at school it was all about who was good at things and who wasn’t. With this course I can see how to do things that cater for everyone, so that every kid with different abilities and levels is involved and gets the most enjoyment out of it that they can.

“It’s really commonsense but you need to have the logic of it laid out for you and that’s what the course does. The course is probably the only way that I would have been able to get involved in coaching because of my time commitments.”

Johnson said she would continue with the training according to the seasonal demands of the sport and would encourage 19-year-old son Luke to take up the coaching challenge through the online course.