

# UNE Students help bring Armidale Markets online



(from left) Rick Hatch, Emma Falkenmire, Peter McClenaghan (the students' academic mentor), Benita Wolfenden (President of SIFE UNE), and Grant Johnston.

University of New England students are working with stall-holders at Armidale's monthly Markets in the Mall, helping them create a 'virtual market' on the Internet.

The UNE project, called 'Armidale Markets Online', has won support from the markets' organisers as well as from stall-holders, and already has a presence (in draft form) on the Internet.

Twelve students from UNE's New England Business School are collaborating on the project, which they have entered in the national Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) competition for 2004. In last year's competition, a team from UNE was named 'Most Outstanding Rookie Team' for developing a program (the 'Graduate Aware Outreach Program') that encourages less-threatening recruitment meetings between university students and potential employers.

"Our aim is to extend the stall-holders' access to their customers (and, therefore, potential sales) beyond the one-day-a-month of the Markets," said one of the UNE team members, Grant Johnston. "The Web site will allow people to 'go to the Markets' whenever they like."

The team leader, Emma Falkenmire, said she and others had been talking to stall-holders at the Markets for almost a year, and had stimulated considerable interest. She said the project had received enthusiastic support from Armidale Dumaesq Council through its Armidale Visitor Information Centre. "The Manager of the Information Centre, Stuart Allardice, has been very helpful," Emma said. "We're exploring links between 'Armidale Markets Online' and the Council's 'Thrive in Armidale' promotion pro-

gram."

"One of our team, Andrew Kapinga, has developed the Web site, which should soon be fully functional," she continued. "We've had to find out a lot about information technology along the way. On June 27 we'll be holding seminars at UNE for the stall-holders, discussing the Web site itself (<http://www.akraweb.com.au/markets>) and the marketing strategies it could support. We'll hand the project over to them when they're ready."

Rick Hatch and Suzanne Forsyth Hatch, from Armidale's Weemala Pottery, are among the stall-holders who are taking advantage of the 'Markets Online' Web site. "The Web site communicates and promotes, on a continuous basis, the high quality of art works, craft works and other products sold at Armidale's Markets in the Mall," Mr Hatch said. "At

the same time, it allows potential customers to glimpse a little of the rich cultural life of Armidale."

Emma Falkenmire and several other members of the team will travel to Melbourne to present 'Armidale Markets Online' at the national SIFE competition on July 9-11. Other members of SIFE UNE will present a progress report on the 'Graduate Aware Outreach Program'. The mission of SIFE, which was established in the United States in 1975, is to challenge university students to make a difference to their communities through learning, practising and teaching the principles of free enterprise. SIFE Australia was established in 2000, and UNE entered the competition for the first time in 2003.