



Sarah Sandy, Taneashah Le and Phoebe Page and the horses they worked with in Evolve Queensland's equine program.

Horses help keep youth on track

FOR 13-year-old Phoebe Page working with horses for the past eight weeks has been a challenging but rewarding experience.

This week, Phoebe, along with five other young people from the Logan and Beaudesert area, will graduate from Evolve Queensland's equine program.

The program helps disadvantaged, disengaged and at risk young people build trust, communication and confidence.

First started as a trial by Griffith University, this latest program is the first run solely by Evolve Queensland at its grounds at Tamborine. It is one state manager Graham Pringle hopes to continue to run throughout the year.

The program helps young people build a relationship of trust with their horse by teaching them how to take their horse through a series of moves without force or dominance.

Mr Pringle said the positive outcomes for the young people in the trial were evident, which was why he was determined to keep it going.

"The kids in the program have had, as a lot of teenagers do, quite bleak experiences which may have gone on for a while and what we do is give them a positive, hopeful and happy experience," he said.

"The program teaches them confidence, assertiveness and they learn to be calm when things are going badly.

"It is a unique activity and something that is a bit intimidating which requires the kids to have a high level of skill.

"At the end of the program the kids realise they can do things that are difficult, that are different and scary and they ask themselves 'what else can I do'. And that is our goal - to open up hope and possibilities for their future."

Phoebe said it was hard at the start of the pro-

gram because she had not been around horses before.

"We taught them to walk sideways and backwards. I had a stubborn horse that would try to push me over and head butt me," she said.

"I was scared of him at the start but I grew more confident and started showing him who was the boss. I have enjoyed working with my horse and am looking forward to riding it at graduation."

Evolve - Keeping Kids on Track is a non-profit organisation which provides mental health and educational reengagement programs for young people.

Mr Pringle said the equine program would not be possible without Tamborine Mountain Trail Rides, which provided horses, a head coach and volunteers free of charge.

>> *Evolve could use a hand, p14*

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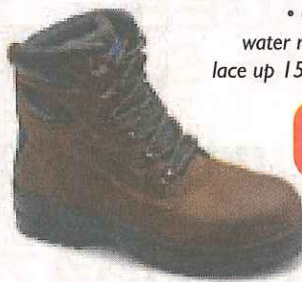
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