

Troubled youth and police bridge the gulf through activities

Building trust

Police | Tessa Hoffman

A PILOT program in Coburg aims to improve the relationship between at-risk youth and police.

The Challenge aims to promote positive communication between youth and police through team-building activities.

Nine students from The Island – a Coburg school for children with a troubled past or who failed to fit into the mainstream education system – and several police officers from Moreland, Moonee Valley and Hume are taking part.

Moreland youth resource officer Leading Sen-Constable Di Cambridge, who designed the program with Maria Palazzolo, a youth worker at The Island, said The Challenge was about build-

ing mutual understanding. "We want the police to understand where the young people are coming from ... they're out there looking for some help," she said.

"And we want young people to understand where the police are coming from. We're not all here to give them a hard time, we're here to help them."

The course appears to be yielding positive results: no participant had been caught offending since it began six weeks ago.

"Their attitudes have changed completely from the start. The first day I went in, there was a lot of negativity towards police but now they're great," Leading Sen-Constable Cambridge said.

"We've got 90 per cent attendance, which is huge, because

their attendance level (at school) isn't fantastic."

During the course, police spend the day with the youths doing team-building activities including ten-pin bowling and ball games. The teens have also ridden go-carts and horses and visited the Victorian Police Academy.

In coming weeks, a professional street artist will teach them how to paint a legal graffiti mural.

Glenroy's Lee, 17, said spending time playing games and bowling with police led to him now feeling they "aren't that bad".

"Getting to know them better changes the way you react if they do pull you up, like not swearing at them," he said. "Just calm down and just talk to them."

In Brief

FOOD FOR FAMILIES APPEAL 2010



Help the poor

CHRISTMAS is when the annual Food for Families appeal provides a practical way to help those in need. Through the appeal, run by Wesley Mission Victoria and supported by Leader Community Newspapers, you can donate non-perishable items of food at participating Safeway/Woolworths supermarkets. The food goes to those use Wesley's crisis and homelessness services. Details: leadernews.com.au

Honour roll restored

THE Somerton State School Honour Roll was restored and returned to Craigieburn Primary School in time for Remembrance Day last fortnight. The honour roll was made by Somerton State School to honour students who went on to serve in Australia's armed forces. It had become worn and was restored by the Nar Nar Goon Light Horse and Field Artillery Museum with a \$1500 state grant. Yuroke state Labor MP Liz Beattie presented the restored honour roll to Craigieburn Primary School on Remembrance Day.

Youth team grant

THE Hume Youth Assistance and Referral Team has received \$140,000 of federal funding. The team is an early intervention, crime prevention and referral initiative for young offenders and youth at risk in Hume. Calwell federal Labor MP Maria Vamvakinou said the project would help steer young people away from crime by improving life skills, education, employment and community engagement. The funding is through the Proceeds of Crime Act under which money from confiscated assets of crime is returned to the community.

Finally, disabled get screen time

SIX short films about, by and with people with a disability will be screened in Broadmeadows next week to mark International Day of People with Disability.

The films from this year's The Other Film Festival will be shown by Hume Council and the National Disability Co-ordination Officer Program.

Festival director Rick Randall said the films offered insight to those without a disability and a chance for people with a disability to see their lives reflected on screen, something largely absent in mainstream film and TV.

"The great thing about films is they have the ability to open a door into other people's experiences," Mr Randall said.

The festival, which has been running since 2004, provides opportunities for filmmakers and actors with a disability as well as viewers with a disability who may not be able to access films.

The screening, like the film festival, offers captioned films with audio description and wheelchair access.

The Other Film Festival screening will be held at the Hume Global Learning Centre, Seminar Room 4, 1093 Pascoe Vale Rd, Broadmeadows, next Tuesday, November 30, 6.30-8.30pm.

Bookings required on 9686 2354 or email ekapsalos@imvc.com.au



Emma Norton (left), director Rick Randall and Thearsea Le Guier.

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