

Leading by EXAMPLE

JANE THOMPSON meets Queenstown couple Andrew Froggatt and Sam Glazebrook, whose business Lead the Way utilises horses to help teach troubled teenagers and corporate leaders alike

We often like to think that we can teach horses a bit. And maybe we can. Although perhaps we need to pause for a moment and reflect on how much horses can teach us.

Andrew Froggatt has chosen to be involved with horses since he was a very young boy. He can teach horses how to overcome their fear of getting on a float, he can teach horses how they can enjoy being ridden. He's sorted out some ratbag horses, he's broken in countless horses, he's got a reputation for understanding horses and has often been the last resort for troubled horses. And now he is turning the picture around and using horses to teach people. He has less focus on troubled horses and more on horses helping him with troubled youth, and it is working.

His partner Samantha Glazebrook has also had a lifelong involvement with horses and the mother-of-three has a very gentle way with her as well. Not only is she a great cook and organiser, she also has a flair for turning a house into a welcoming and comfortable home. Their Central Otago base is an oasis of tranquillity with the most spectacular views.

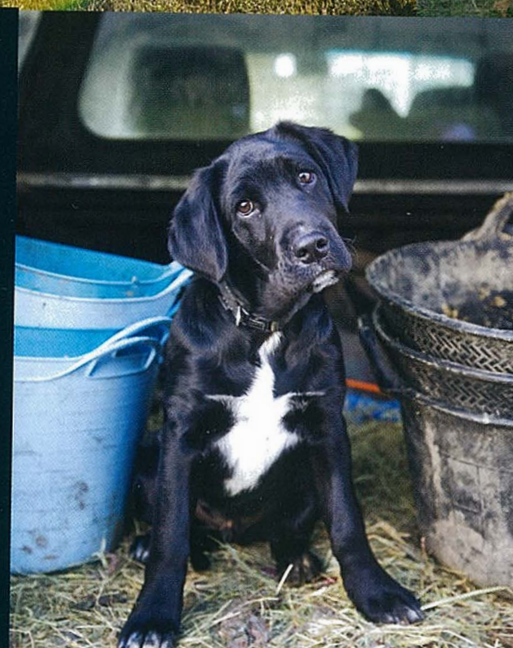
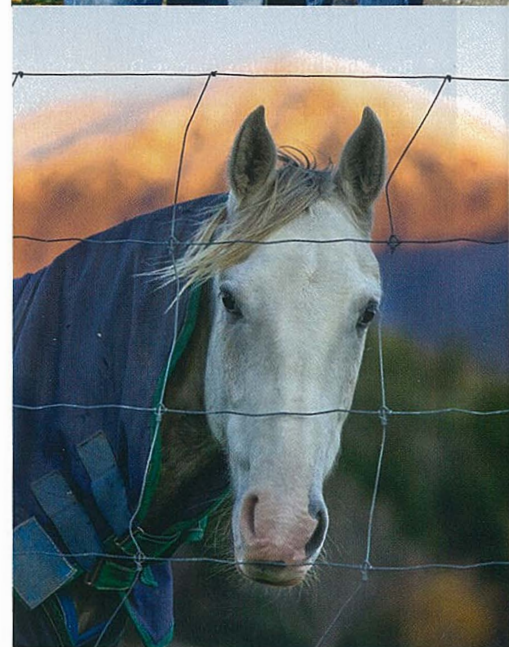
Together the couple have built their business, Lead the Way, into one that has horses right in its centre. Their methods can be used on any horse, anywhere, although any opportunity to visit their base just out of Queenstown shouldn't be turned down.

Andrew and Sam use horses to teach people about leadership, coaching and management, and to teach troubled teens to develop empathy and understand the consequences of their behaviour. They have worked with high flying executives, and top sports coaches, including All Black Coach Steve Hansen and ESNZ's High Performance Coach, Erik Duvander.

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“When someone is one-to-one with a horse, there is nowhere to hide,” says Andrew. “The horse acts as an emotional mirror, giving honest and immediate feedback on how people are communicating, how their leadership style is being received, and how they go about building relationships.”

Andrew first got involved in utilising the wisdom of horses in this way when he was based in Wellington. He worked with a group of young men from a detention centre, using horses. One autistic boy hadn't spoken for years, but after the



FROM ABOVE Andrew and Sam have five horses on their property “at the moment” as Sam is quite fond of “rescuing” horses through Trade Me. “We also bring in other horses from the district, to keep our horses fresh.” There are also two semi-retired horses who “have a home for life” and do not often play an active part in the sessions
ABOVE RIGHT Sam shares tea with daughters Gwynie and Alie (front)
RIGHT Bobby the dog was named after Andrew's beloved childhood pony who was the catalyst for his life-long association with horses
BELOW RIGHT The homestead in the shadow of The Remarkables where the couple run their business; the home's traditional style provides a beautiful backdrop
LEFT Andrew and Sam with baby Tilly

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS

Most participants have no experience of horses, in fact horses are completely foreign to most of them. Andrew has seen all levels of confidence as people meet the horse they will be working with.

"Some are really afraid. Those with no confidence, we hold their hand and once their confidence develops and builds, then let go. Some of them we need to explain things in 10 different ways and break everything down and put it simply. Some get very frustrated; we have even had some shouting and losing their temper, but that is very rare."

There are many people who have to confront a deep-seated fear of horses through early experiences of them. Others have simply had no desire or opportunity to interact with a horse on such a level.

"People are always stunned by how kind the horses are, and taken aback that horses try so hard. Some expect battles and kicks but it is all about relationships."

There is a lot of consideration given to which horse goes with which person. "The quiet ones go to the ones with no horse experience or confidence. The bullying types get the stubborn ones."



CLOCKWISE Andrew's work has taken him all over the world, including stints training horses in Hong Kong, Singapore and Tonga. His training system has been refined from a mixtures of natural horsemanship methods and his own instincts, and always gets results. "I'm very, very confident I can get a result – it doesn't matter if it takes 30 minutes or four hours." The couple are looking at expanding into other areas such as sourcing and training horses for film and commercial work. They also hope to encourage corporates to sponsor the programmes for the troubled teenagers

BELOW RIGHT Sam's 10-year-old Gwynie trains her Welsh mountain pony Boo using Andrew's techniques



sessions with Andrew and the horses: "you couldn't shut him up!"

As well as discovering this young man had the most amazing knowledge of New Zealand music, there was a huge reduction in violent episodes from the boy after the sessions.

"Horses can make the troubled teens into children again. Some of them are in very dysfunctional families and have huge adult-like challenges just to exist. They all are desperate to come out to the horses again after the first day."

He has also worked with girls in their early teens through referrals from Youth Aid Officers. In a recent group, there

"Horses can make troubled teenagers into children again."

agencies to support it, let alone refreshers for the ones who have already had the experience. The couple's focus is therefore to work with corporates and organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce to not only earn an income for themselves, but to encourage the sponsorship of the programmes for the troubled kids. "It would be a nice way for it to go the full circle," says Andrew.

The corporate gigs have been very popular in New Zealand and recently the couple have started doing programmes in Singapore. "We can travel, and as long as there are horses there that we can use, the programme is very transferrable." The next venues could be Hong Kong, Brunei and Sydney.

The corporate programmes start off with a morning tea for the group,

although participants would have already filled out a questionnaire which gives Andrew and Sam some ideas on which horse to match to each person. Hardly any have had experience with horses, although there are always a few who have ridden as a child, fallen off and then avoided any more contact since.

The group then proceed to the arena, meet the horses and Andrew gives a demonstration of what he wants them to do. They are then matched up with their horse and shown the basic exercises which involve leading and stopping.

It is all based on groundwork, there is no riding involved. They try these basic exercises out with their horse, and it is all recorded on video. Back in the house an hour later, each video is analysed by the group. "People take the mickey out of

each other; there's always a lot of banter as we ask what is going on and what is the horse saying." But laughter aside, there are always 'ah-ha' moments as people clearly see how their behaviour is received by the horse, their levels of energy, and how they approach the task. There is nowhere to hide and self awareness grows. Tentative or confusing commands get no response, or a response they don't expect.

After lunch, there's a leadership discussion and then it is back out to the horses where each participant knows the things they have to change, and gets to put them in practice. Again it is recorded, followed by another analysis session with more honest and immediate feedback, this time over platters and drinks. The next day

were a few 'meltdowns' but all came back and not only enjoyed the experience, but made some dramatic improvements in the other parts of their lives. One even started back at school.

Andrew has also introduced a donkey into the mix. One young lad had got on really well with his pony the first day, but when working with the donkey on the second day, the donkey wasn't as compliant. "He started yelling at the donkey, and had a complete meltdown," Andrew recalls. "Once he was ready to

talk again, we asked him if being nice and kind to the pony had worked. He agreed. He then tried that with the donkey and it worked. We then finished off the discussion regarding how he communicated with his family and you could see the boy really take that on board. His mother reported his behaviour significantly improved."

While Andrew and Sam would like to do more with children who could benefit from these programmes, there just isn't the money available from the various



BECOMING PARTNERS

Sam and Andrew met when Sam bought a horse on one of Andrew's courses "to be fixed."

Andrew breaks into a big smile when recalling that. "Yes, I fixed the horse and got the girl."

The course was seen as the "last resort" for the difficult horse Sam had at that point. There had been work done by the chiropractor, saddle fitter and horse dentist and while that had helped, there were still some ongoing issues.

Sam believes she had a responsibility to work through the issues, even if it was the wrong horse for her. She had got to the point where she didn't know what to do. Andrew did indeed help Sam to fix the horse's attitude.

"He's really quiet when he works with horses," Sam says. "While they can be frustrating at times, he just has this quiet confidence and is always convinced he will get there, it simply takes time. Some trainers get strong, but I liked how Andrew explained what he was doing and how patient he was. He has a gentle and quiet personality, and is a peaceful person to be around and hang out with. He also has a wicked smile and sense of humour."

Both Sam and Andrew have children from previous relationships and they now also have a daughter together, Tilly, who is horse-mad too!



FROM ABOVE This grey Arab quarter-horse cross has only just had a saddle on recently but has done a lot of ground work and is very laid back; the seven-year-old pony Boo can be quite dominant, so those handling him need to be confident; the palomino mare Yella is part quarter horse and has a lovely kind nature



COACHING THE COACHES

Andrew's course has been part of the Coach Accelerator Course run by Sport NZ for many years. Two equestrian coaches have been part of that programme, Penny Castle and Erik Duvander. For Penny, it was "unbelievable." While it was some time ago, she is still raving about her experience. "Amongst all the coaches, this one was the most talked about session we did. We had to apply many leadership principles, especially clear communication."

Penny found the course very challenging, and that surprised her, as she thought she would have the advantage, having so much equestrian experience. "I learned that I wasn't giving the horse (and my pupils) enough time to process things. I was a bit intense, because I wanted it so much. I had the power,

plenty of that, but needed to harness it. I learned I needed a harmony pill."

Penny also really appreciated the amount of fun they had while they were learning.

"I highly recommend this course, it was unbelievable, really just amazing."

Andrew said that Penny was an interesting student. "You are not there to train the horse, this is about you," Andrew told her as she started to put pressure on the horse.

Erik Duvander, the ESNZ's High Performance manager, also struggled on the first day for similar reasons. "Put aside what you know and do it my way," was the best advice Andrew could give him. Erik took this approach the next day and "blitzed it". Andrew did confess to giving him a tough horse.

everyone is asked to describe their horse as if it was a person. Then horses are swapped. A new exercise is demonstrated and the group goes to work.

Andrew says every group he has taught makes the same mistake at this point, and he lets them make it, as that is how learning happens.

"They don't set up the basic boundaries with their new horse. Their confidence is high and they assume the horse knows them and knows what to do. They don't take the time to get to know who their horse is."

"When things don't work out and we talk about it, they put their hand up and say, yes, good point and take it on the chin." The same thing happens with new employees in organisations and this point is often made by participants.

"Everyone gets caught up in the big picture, but if the basics are crap, you'll never get there. It's the same for people, it's the same for horses."

The day concludes with an obstacle course where the basic exercises taught previously are put into practice.

Sam takes photos aiming for "the money shot" of their achievements, and these are prized amongst participants.

Many are extremely proud of their photo and can't wait to show it to their friends and family.

Not all complete all the obstacle course, but there is no pass or fail. There is also considerable discussion on how the things they have learned will be translated back into the workplace. "Horsetalk is introduced to meetings back at work. Words that we use a lot here, such as energy, relationships and praise, all find their way back to the corporate world."

There is a lovely touch Sam and Andrew use to follow up. "We send them an email from their horse which reminds them of the goals they set here," Sam explains. "I write them as if it was the horse talking."

Sam and Andrew's business continues to evolve as they too learn from their horses, and learn from the people who come on their course. It can be a hard concept to sell to corporates, but those who have attended a programme all become raving exponents.

It is a real opportunity for people to try out leadership and coaching challenges that are not covered in a textbook or in any classroom. ■

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