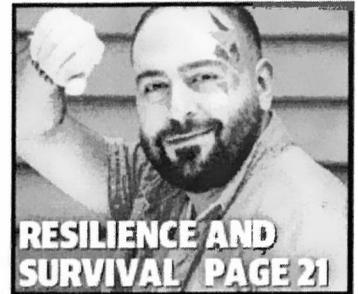


Albert & Logan News

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020



questnews.com.au



PCYC Beenleigh Sergeant Mark Haestler with Landan Hasenkam, 9, and Myamie Turner, 11, in the new boxing gym which runs a youth program

Picture: AAP/Sarah Marshall

Boxing centre opens

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A SUBURB south of Brisbane, which experienced its highest number of reported crimes in 10 years, is taking a novel approach to keeping youth off the streets.

Police officers and community minded civilians at the Beenleigh

PCYC are offering boxing training to children over the age of eight.

And they have put their money upfront — all \$354,000 of it — to build a stylised boxing ring and training centre.

The concept was designed six years ago in a bid to get more youth off the streets and out of trouble and into the club. It was the club's master

plan well before the historic Jeff Horn and Manny Pacquiao fight at Suncorp Stadium in 2017 shone the spotlight on the sport.

That fight, won by the Logan teacher, put boxing in the centre ring as the sport kids could use to build self-confidence, improve fitness, social interaction, and help anger management, stress and anxi-

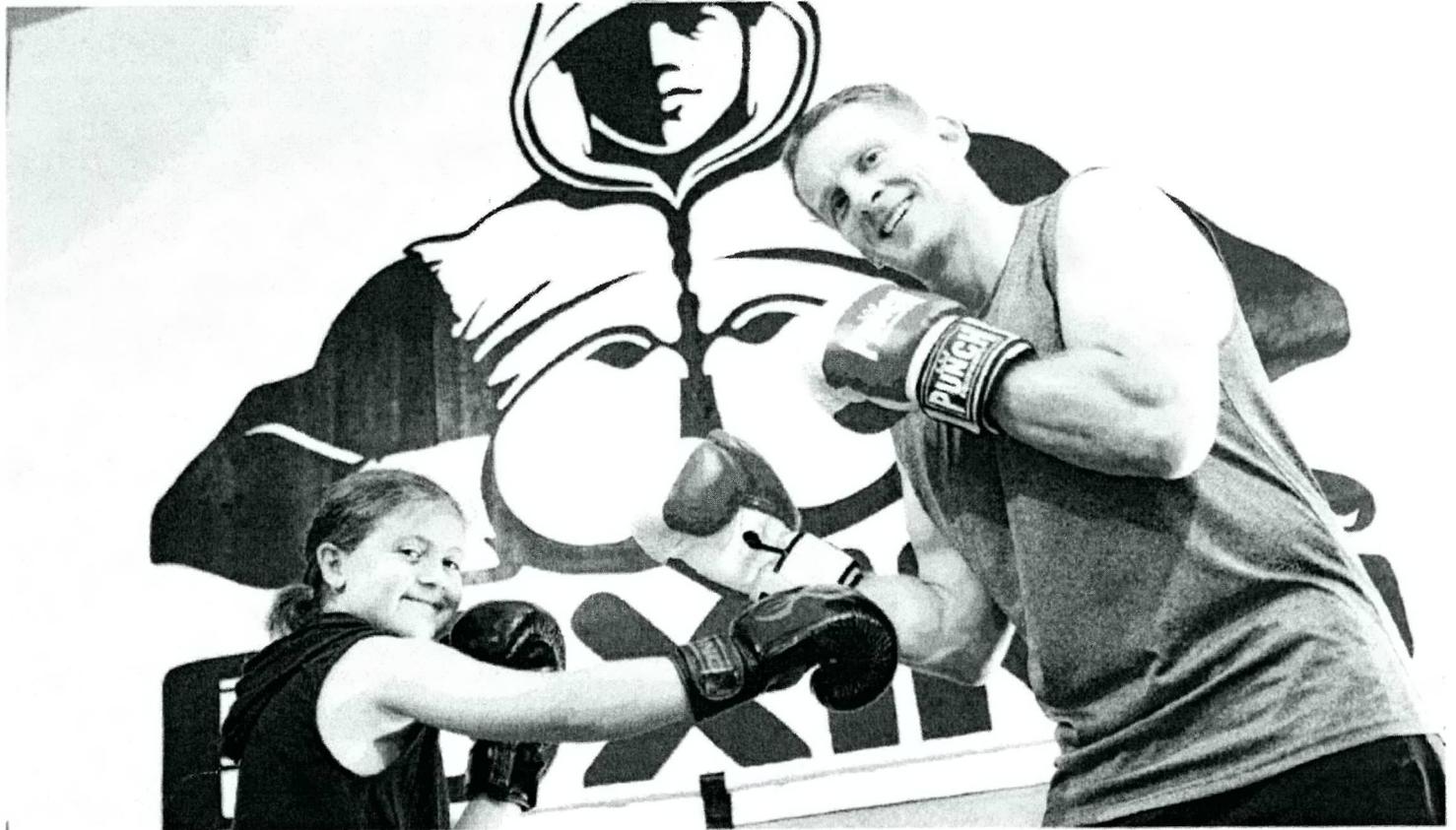
ety. Horn, a former teacher at Springwood State High, took up the sport after being tormented as a teenager and has advocated boxing for teens.

PCYC Beenleigh branch manager sergeant Mark Haestler was hooked on the youth boxing program idea from the start.

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Queensland Legislative Assembly
 Number: 56207298
 19 FEB 2020 Tabled
 By Leave
 MP: Mrs Lushby
 Clerk's Signature:

Youth boxing packs a punch



Brad Speer and Myamie Turner, 11, in PCYC Beenleigh's new ring, being used for youth boxing sessions.

Picture: AAP/Sarah Marshall

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Over the six years, Sergeant Haestier, staff and volunteers oversaw hundreds of raffles, door prizes, golf days, donations and fight nights.

He even ran in the 2018 Gold Coast marathon to raise \$18,000 for the boxing ring.

The community's efforts paid off and last month, the club opened the PCYC Beenleigh Boxing Centre and stylised boxing ring.

The training facilities include 22 bags, large wrestling mat area, a cardio studio, weights, dumbbells, benches and lifting platforms.

The addition to the club came at the right time.

In November, the Beenleigh area recorded 704 reported offences, the highest since 705 offences were recorded in April 2016.

Although that figure slid to 690 recorded offences in December, crime was still of concern to local authorities who were aware of the ramifications for affected young people.

"Unfortunately PCYC Beenleigh has seen an increase (in issues affecting youth), as has the community of young people suffering mental health and suicidal thoughts and tendencies," Sergeant Haestier said.

"So much so that a new training course and program is going to be undertaken by

PCYC Beenleigh staff and young people to better equip, educate and enable staff and youth to assist further.

"This is an entirely community-funded venue which is now open to the community and is one we are all proud of.

"The aim for us is to promote self confidence and the belief of a kid that they can go on and rise to make something out of themselves."

Already the junior boxing program, specially designed for those aged between 8 and 13, has proved a hit.

Juniors including 11-year-old Myamie Turner and Landen Hasenkam, 9, have enrolled in the program and even gone a round in the new ring.

Sergeant Haestier who coaches the junior classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, said he was delighted with attendances.

"On average we have between 18 and 23 join the sessions — some youth have good technical ability and fitness levels and some with none at all — so it's a mixed bag," she said. But the community boxing concept is not just for kids.

On Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, adults glove up for sessions with more than 25 men and women attending with ages ranging from 14 to 55.

Most are there to improve fitness and mental health while others compete in the ring, Sgt Haestier said.

"The PCYC will continue to use boxing in our youth development because it helps activate positive endorphins in the brain and makes us feel better about ourselves," he said.

"Jeff Horn was right, it has been proven to assist with mental health, confidence and weight loss, and we know it relieves anxiety, depression and creates a social-inclusive and encouraging environment.

"For young people, it helps release any built-up frustration or anger and the kids can visualise targets on the bags and focus their minds even for 20 minutes so it becomes a major distraction.

"It is really working in Beenleigh."