



*Helping Hands*  
by UPS Power Solutions



## Helping Hands: Ambury Park Centre

**N**estled in the beautiful pastures of Ambury Regional Park in Auckland's Mangere Bridge, there is an organisation that has delivered essential support, education and therapy for kiwis with difficulties or disabilities for over thirty years.

Officially opened in 1983, Ambury Park Centre began as a riding school for the disabled and has grown with the help of sponsorships, donations and funding to positively influence the lives of many thousands of New Zealanders.

Ambury Park's Principal Director, Vicky Cox, says that the process of caring for and riding horses provides hugely effective therapy and personal growth.

"Horses are extremely intelligent animals with recognisable moods and a similar social and trust process as ourselves. Through riding and caring for horses and establishing a bond of mutual respect, the people who participate in our programmes can recognise standards of trust and care that they should give and receive in their own lives," says Cox.

The original Riding for the Disabled programme continues to deliver remedial riding in the centre's indoor arena along with a physiotherapy programme that's enjoyed by over 80 people every week.

Through the long-term success of this programme, the Centre was registered as a secondary school that provides a second chance for 13 to 18-year olds who fell out of the conventional school system.

"The school's 30 students are the kids who have fallen through the

cracks and were unable to exist in the mainstream educational system. Many come under the Ministry of Education's definition of 'Special Needs' whilst others have experienced trauma or had a really tough time through mental health challenges or a difficult home-life. The value they get from caring for and interacting with the horses has a powerful effect on their ability to rebuild trust and confidence.

"Success for the school is seeing our students build the life skills and character to go on to further education or confidently enter the workforce as many have done," says Cox.

Despite excellent community support and a healthy stream of funding, maintaining the Centre and its 25 horses involves a lot of work from paid staff and an army of volunteers. This prompted the creation of the third vocational programme.

The vocational programme caters mostly for adults with intellectual disabilities and delivers essential life-skills that they might not receive in other types of institutions. There are currently 27 people benefiting from this involvement.

"Our vocational clients participate throughout the centre in activities such as gardening, shopping and of course everything to do with the horses. We arrange frequent field trips to the library, shopping malls or to enjoy swimming or dancing and see a valuable improvement in their confidence and capabilities over time," says Cox.



## The Right Horse

One long-term participant in Ambury Park's vocational programme is Tony Lingman who has been with the Centre for 32 years. Tony's mother Claire is on the board and his brother is a Senior Engineer at UPS Power Solutions.

A well-built young man, Tony is an enormous help around the Centre and knows the ropes especially when it comes to caring for and maintaining the horses. But when it comes to riding it takes a similarly well-built steed to take Tony around the paddocks – this is where Tommy comes in.

Tommy is a 15-year-old Clydesdale horse measuring 17 hands-high (or HH in the equine world) and is precisely the type of mount suitable for Tony and the centre's heavier participants. Vicky Cox and her team found that Tommy had been offered for sale by a family in Tauranga who were emigrating to Australia.

"The moment we saw Tommy we knew we had to have him. We have a careful and meticulous approach to choosing the right horses for the centre, with the primary factors being personality. Tommy was a trekking horse and had been with a lovely family that included new riders, so we knew he'd have comfort with less experienced riders and an obliging temperament. He's now our biggest horse and a perfect fit for the Centre," says Vicky Cox.

Once Vicky's team identifies a horse that would be a good fit for the centre, Ambury Park's board works with them to find the funding, and it wasn't just buying Tommy. Every horse requires its own unique set of riding equipment and given the riders Tommy would be carrying, custom-made specialist equipment is not cheap.

## A Helping Hand

Sam Lingman says that Tommy came up during a family dinner conversation and how the board was trying to figure out a funding solution for the perfect horse for Tony.

"I immediately realised that this was a perfect fit for our Helping Hands Initiative. One of the really valuable aspects of working for UPS Power Solution is Helping Hands, that encourages myself and other staff members to identify causes that will add value in our own communities," says Lingman.

UPS Power Solution's General Manager, Nicky Blackmore, is also the founder of the company's Helping Hands Initiative. She recognised that helping Ambury Park purchase Tommy was a great example of what the Helping Hands Initiative was established for.

"The best thing about helping Tommy become part of the Ambury Park family is that he will add tremendous value to lives of so many people in the community. The fact that the proposal was delivered by one of our own is an encouraging reminder that we can all make a difference in our own communities and we should be on the look out for the right opportunities," says Blackmore.

Tommy is now happily working at the Ambury Park Centre. Vicky Cox and her team welcome everyone to come and meet him, the other horses and the dedicated staff who deliver such valuable services for kiwis.

You can read more about Ambury Park Centre and arrange a visit or find out more about any of the programmes at

[www.amburyparkcentre.org.nz](http://www.amburyparkcentre.org.nz)

