

Katie's feeling just beautiful

Ten-week program helping Coast's young women shake the blues and be happy again

Caloundra's Katie Tidswell's story is one many girls her age will be familiar with.

A teenage girl struggling to find an identity feels like an outcast at school and finds her confidence at rock bottom.

It's a story played out on a daily basis across the Coast and Australia, but the difference with Katie's tale is that it has taken a positive turn which has resulted in a happy ending for the Year 12 student.

When she was 16, the Kawana Waters State College student felt she wasn't part of the "cool" set and, as a result, her confidence was at an all-time low.

"I always felt like an outcast at school," she said.

"I didn't have the right clothes and the right look so I felt I didn't fit in."

With the pressures of Year 12 on her daughter, Katie's mother, Robyn, was keen to offer as much support as she could to make Katie's life as easy as possible.

And when an opportunity in the form of the Beautiful Minds program presented itself to Katie, at her school, she jumped at it.

The first and only course of its kind, Beautiful Minds, is specifically aimed at girls aged 12-18, which teaches them valuable

self-improvement and life skills mixed in with fashion, hair styling and make-up advice.

What Katie took from the 10-week course was a major boost in her self-confidence.

So much so that by the time she started Year 12 she had gone from feeling like an outcast among her peers, to choosing to become a student leader.

"Before the course I thought 'there's no way I'm going to be a student leader'," Katie said.

"But then after the course I just thought 'alright, now I'm ready to be a student leader in Year 12'."

According to the founder and principal of Beautiful Minds, Marina Passalaris, it's all about moulding young minds in a positive mentoring environment.

"A lot of girls are really nervous when they first start the course; they have a real fear factor," Marina said.

"However, we push them outside their comfort zone.

"What we find is, after the course girls have better relationships and boundaries, and a stronger map on what to do in life."

Starting with an introduction to public speaking, which focuses on the importance of a first

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Beautiful Minds founder Marina Passalaris with Caloundra's Katie Tidswell.

impression, poise, posture and body language, the program leaves no stone unturned.

There are lessons in make-up artistry, the art of self promotion, dress sense, goal setting, positive thinking, relationship issues, conflict resolution, social etiquette and much more.

It teaches girls how to apply for jobs, how to deal with hurdles in life such as drug and alcohol addiction and eating disorders.

There are even lessons in how to express emotions in a positive way.

All the while the course, instils

positive thinking among the girls with mantras such as "we teach people how to treat us" and "value what you have and have only things in your life you value".

"I think it was about the third or fourth class where I started noticing a difference and thinking 'wow'," Katie said.

"I was very self-conscious but then Marina taught us to believe in ourselves."

The courses, which are held in Maroochydore, end with a photo shoot. But, unlike other courses, for the shoot the girls are expected to do their own make-up, hair and

THE PROGRAM

- Public speaking.
- Poise, posture and body language.
- Make-up artistry.
- Social and business skills when dining.
- Mobile phone etiquette.
- How to dress like a goddess on a budget.
- How to apply for jobs – including a class on resume-writing sponsored by East Coast Human Resource Group.
- How to dress for success.
- How to deal with hurdles in life such as drug and alcohol addiction and eating disorders.
- Discussions about skin cancer and education on tanning, anorexia, bulimia, self-harm and relationship building.
- How to express emotions in a positive way.

wardrobe styling as one final indication they are ready to take on the world with a new positive outlook and self-assurance.

"After the course I felt like a new person. I now walk around with my head held high. I am me," Katie said.

"My confidence has risen so much and I feel I can take what the world throws at me."

Beautiful Minds has a few places left in the upcoming course. Call Marina on 0410 424 701 or 5493 2463 or visit www.beautifulminds.com.au.

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