

Young Saxon's brave journey

By WILL HUNTER

TRINETTE Holman initially just wanted to hear her son say he loved her.

Six years after his autism diagnosis, 10-year-old Saxon is learning in a mainstream Year 5 class at Dalby South State School.

Saxon was violent and still could not speak when he was diagnosed at age four.

Trinette and her husband Nick sent their son to early intervention program AEIOU, hoping he would one day talk and start school.

"There's no limit for Saxon anymore. Whatever he shows us he can do, we will go for that," she said.

"If you believe in these kids, I think the sky is the limit."

April marks autism awareness month.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

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MAKING PROGRESS: Saxon Holman, the 10-year-old Dalby South State School student diagnosed with autism when he was four, with loving mum Trinette.

PHOTO: WILL HUNTER

'Loud and proud' of Saxon

By WILL HUNTER

FOR Trinette and Nick Holman, their brave son Saxon is a blessing.

When the 10-year-old was diagnosed with autism at age four, he could not speak and was often violent.

Trinette and Nick set two goals for their son – to speak, and to one day start school.

“One of the goals was if he could just say to Trinny ‘I love you mum’. We didn’t think that would ever happen,” Nick said.

The couple engaged early intervention program AEIOU in Brisbane, where Saxon remained for 14 months.

“They said they couldn’t guarantee they could help him. At that stage he was non-verbal and very violent... he had a lot of issues,” Trinette said.

“Because of his severity they moved us up the waiting list.”

Within six months at AEIOU, Saxon started speaking.

“As he moved on, he improved and improved... I’m so thankful,” Trinette said.

The Holman family moved west in 2010 in search of a school which could meet all of Saxon’s needs.

He began his schooling in the Special Education Unit at Dalby South State School.

Saxon is now fully verbal, sings in the school choir and participates in swimming lessons.

He entered a mainstream Year 5 classroom at the school this year.

“Within one week of being in the class he got an achiever of the week. He was the only kid in the class who wanted to learn from day one,” Trinette said.

“They are so task orientated and they know right from wrong.”

Saxon’s sister Lily has also supported her little brother by helping him discover new foods.

Trinette said the two secrets to Saxon’s success were loving him and

developing trust.

“He is such a blessing for us. I think ‘what a brave little person’,” she said.

“It’s the scariest journey... but it’s not the most devastating. The outcomes and rewards you get are 50 times more exciting for us.”

Nick and Trinette said they had always treated Saxon like a regular child.

“They are a child first. People don’t acknowledge that,” Nick said.

Trinette said believing in children like Saxon was vital for their development.

“We’re not ashamed. We don’t want to not do anything,” she said.

“We’re loud and proud.”

WHAT IS AUTISM?

- According to Autism Queensland, people with Autism Spectrum Disorder find it difficult to interact socially and communicate with others
- Every person with ASD has their own unique way of seeing the world

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FAMILY JOURNEY: The Holman family – Trinette, Lily, Saxon and Nick – moved to the country to support Saxon, who was diagnosed with autism.

PHOTO: WILL HUNTER

Saxon's story one of many

AEIOU Foundation CEO Alan Smith said stories like Saxon's were a testament to the work of the full-time early intervention program.

The organisation focuses on autistic children's behaviour and skills so they can enter a school environment.

Mr Smith said it was a pleasure to hear success stories like Saxon's.

"The story doesn't surprise me. We work so hard with these children," he said.

"We must be doing something right."

Mr Smith said about 70% of the children entered into AEIOU would transition into mainstream schooling.

"Not every child will be a successful as Saxon," he said.

Children with autism could lead normal lives if they received early intervention, he said.

"Children with autism are quite unique and they are special," he said.

To receive assistance from AEIOU, children can wait as long as 18 months.

Mr Smith said there was far greater public awareness about autism, but still not enough support.

"There should be more services out there. Our long waiting lists are a testament to that," he said.

Although AEIOU was partnered with the Queensland Government, Mr Smith said the organisation did not rely on government funding.