

AMAZING ANIMALS

Hanging out
with flipped friends
helps kids feel better.

DOLPHIN KISSES



PLAYING WITH A DOLPHIN is serious fun. Just ask Nicole Coombs, 10, shown above with Fonzie, a 625-pound Atlantic bottlenose dolphin. Fonzie is one of 11 dolphins who help emotionally, mentally, and physically challenged children at Island Dolphin Care in **Key Largo, Florida**.

"Dolphins don't heal kids, but they can help them find the willpower to improve and raise their self-esteem," says Deena Hoagland, who started Island Dolphin Care. More than 200 kids a year get to spend personal time with a dolphin, as Désirée Brück, 12, did (small picture). With help from a therapist, children can hold a hoop for a dolphin to swim through or toss a ball for a dolphin to retrieve. Tasks like these help

develop the kids' motor skills and hand-eye coordination. No one makes the dolphins work, says their trainer Art Cooper. They do it because humans interest them as much as they interest us. And they hate being bored. Each of the dolphins has a unique personality. Dinghy shows a sense of humor. Fonzie and Squirt clown around. Because these dolphins love to play, they make perfect therapy animals. "They know they're helping people," says Hoagland. "And they like to have fun, too."



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