



North West

**Adult
Learners'
Week** Awards 2010

Programme

Welcome to the North West Adult Learners' Week Awards

Adult Learners' Week is the largest festival of learning in Europe. It provides a dynamic platform to celebrate, promote and advance all kinds of learning. The week provides countless opportunities for adults to explore and experience hands-on activity during hundreds of free workshops and taster sessions.

Driven nationally by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the week is rolled out regionally through a series of partnerships. Stockport Arts and Cultural Events Team coordinate North West activity on behalf of NIACE, NHS North West and Stockport Council. This work revolves around an award ceremony and an arts festival – Culturefeast – which provides an opportunity to see jaw-dropping performances and to get involved.

The regional award ceremony celebrates the achievements of 'ordinary people who do extraordinary things'; people who find the time and creativity to learn something new each year, and whose stories provide the inspiration to encourage others to try learning for themselves. The Culturefeast launch weekend also marks National Cultural Diversity Weekend. So, be prepared to witness the wonderful, the weird and the downright bizarre.

The Culturefeast 2010 web pages are now live and if you follow the link you can explore the fantastic programme.

www.visit-stockport.com/stockport_festivals_culturefeast_2010.asp

We will be adding further details for events that didn't quite make it into the printed festival brochure and more images too, so watch this space.

Programme for the day

- 6.15pm** **Registration (Lower Gallery)** Networking and Refreshments
- 7.25pm** **Master of Ceremonies, Lorraine Worsley MBE DL and Welcome from Stockport Council**
(Upper Gallery)
- 7.35pm** **North West Adult Learners' Week Regional and National Awards**
Presented By Marie Kerwin (NIACE)
ESF North West Regional Award Winner:
Michelle Walsh
Individual North West Regional Award
Winners: Louise Critchley, Simon Gilkes,
Shiraz, Sarah Needham
North West Outstanding Learner of the Year:
Julie Davies
North West Regional Senior Learner of the Year:
Alan Armstrong
MLA Intergenerational Learning Award
Winner: Chester Lane Library
Intergenerational Knitting Group
ESF Group Award Winner: Tesco Old Swan
Group Award Winner: Oakfield Science Group

8.10pm **NHS North West Regional Awards**

Presented by Chris Jeffries, Director of Commissioning and Professional Education, NHS North West

First Steps to Employment in Health and Social Care Award Winner: William Matthews

Skills For Life in Health and Social Care Award Winner: Janet Worthington

Career Progression in Health and Social Care Award Winner: Paul Lashford

Supporting The Learner in Practice in Health and Social Care Award Winners: Anthony Fulop and Valerie Whitehead

8.25pm **Stockport Council Inspiring North West Partnership Award**

Presented by the Leader of Stockport Council

Personal Development Award Winner: Des Gibbons

8.35pm **Photographs and ceremony close**

**"My confidence about
learning in college has
risen to an all-time high."
Michelle**

Michelle Walsh

Age 29. Accrington, Lancashire

Nominated by Joanne Calvert, Accrington and Rossendale College

Having worked in retail for ten years, Michelle wanted to complete a customer service course, but apprehension meant she felt most comfortable starting slowly with a taster course. Michelle's confidence quickly grew and she progressed onto a maths and English course, as well as NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service. "Since doing the Foundations in Customer Service course, my confidence about learning in college has risen to an all-time high. I would never have thought about going to college to get my GCSE/NVQs which I did not get at school, as I left aged 14," said Michelle. Her hard work has paid off and Michelle has recently left the world of retail and started a new job with the CVS as a Positive Steps Development Officer. She is also continuing her learning and recently passed her Literacy Level 2.

"Michelle feels that although it was a big step, returning to education has made a large impact on her life as well as her future career plans," said nominator Joanne. Michelle ended, "My employability skills have improved somewhat since attending this first course and I hope they will only rise."

Louise Critchley

Age 28. Warrington, Cheshire

Nominated by Mandy Roberts, MRHMC Ltd, Wennington, Lancashire

Mother of two Louise loved family life, but was frustrated knowing she had more to give, so on impulse she attended Dallam's Sure Start centre and enrolled on a first aid course. She attended the course on her own, putting her daughters into the crèche, and after a few weeks started to relax, enjoy herself and make friends. Following the first aid course Louise started Life Skills which was when she realised that she'd like to become a midwife and within a week she'd researched how to reach her goal.

Since February 2009 Louise has been studying Level 2 maths, GCSE Maths and an Access to Health course, as well as doing volunteer work at St Rocco's Hospice and Liverpool Women's Hospital Delivery Suite, to add to her qualifications. Just 10 months on, Louise secured a place at Liverpool John Moore's University to start Midwifery training in September 2010.

Louise reflected, "I feel so happy that I can provide for my family and know we will have a happy life without major money worries. I would have never of thought of this without the journey with lifelong learning."

**North West
Regional Award Winner**

"I feel so happy that I can provide for my family and know we will have a happy life without major money worries. I would have never of thought of this without the journey with lifelong learning."

Louise

North West Regional Award Winner



Simon Gilkes

Age 43. Bolton, Lancashire

Nominated by Gay Ryder, Bolton College (Deane/Derby Community Learning Centre)

As part of his treatment for anxiety and depression, Simon was referred to Bolton College and reluctantly agreed to enrol on a literacy course for students with mental health issues. At first Simon didn't think the course would make any difference to his well-being, but he gradually began to talk to other students and started to act as a mentor. Since starting at college 18 months ago, Simon has achieved passes in English and maths Levels 1 and 2, and Level 2 in advocacy, volunteering and disability awareness. He has also completed other courses including first aid, computer skills, outdoor activities and art.

Simon is now a volunteer at the college and helps a small group of learners with learning difficulties and mental ill health. He said, "I enjoy learning new things. It gives me a sense of achievement when I pass a course... I hope to continue learning at college with a view to getting a job... I can now see that there is a future for me."

Shiraz

Age 32. Burnley, Lancashire

Nominated by Tracey Whittle, National Probation Trust, Blackburn

Shiraz first started learning in prison and passed certificates in Health & Hygiene, First Aid and Heart Start. On his release he completed Levels 1 and 2 in English and Level 1 in Maths. However, he found himself in trouble with the law again and was given a suspended sentence and probation order. Shiraz saw the probation order as an opportunity to continue the learning he had started as he wanted to provide a better future for his wife and four children. Shiraz completed two courses in construction, juggling it with family life and 100 hours of unpaid work for his probation order. He is now studying full-time to complete a plumbing course and a Level 2 in maths.

“As an adult learner I have felt very at ease with my learning experience,” said Shiraz, “I am looking to the future and can see the positive outcomes for myself and my family. My goal is to be employed”.

**North West Regional
Award Winner**



North West Regional Award Winner

Sarah Needham

Age 23. Burnley, Lancashire

Nominated by Yasmeen Ali, University of Central Lancashire

Throughout childhood Sarah – one of the Needham Quintuplets - cared for her ill mother and education took second place. On leaving school Sarah looked after her mother full-time and joined Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale's Young Carers' Project which helped her to consider her own future. She decided to volunteer with the group and developed a real passion for helping others, so she began volunteering for other organisations looking after children and young people.

Sarah soon realised she'd like a career working with young people, but thought it was impossible as she lacked qualifications. However, she was accepted onto a degree course in Active Citizenship and Volunteer Development at University of Central Lancashire – which required no academic background, but a passion for volunteering – and is now in her third year having also been awarded the University's Community Hero Award 2009. Sarah said, "It has completely changed my life. It has seriously helped boost my self-confidence and self-esteem... I have been able to continue working on what I feel so passionate about as well as gaining a qualification." Nominator Yasmeen ended, "Sarah believes volunteering is her key to gaining skills, knowledge and confidence."



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Julie Davies

Age 39. Warrington

Nominated by Glennis Hassall, Priestley College, Cheshire

When progressive heart disease forced Julie Davies out of her job with the Royal Mail, she decided, aged 30, to get her life back on track by signing up for an adult learner programme at Priestley College, which has led her on a journey to winning a British Psychological Society Prize.

Ten years on from the initial Level 2 Literacy, Numeracy and CLAIT courses, Julie has gained a First Class Honours BSc in Applied Psychology from Liverpool John Moores University – studying part-time while bringing up two children – and aims to become a clinical psychologist.

Glennis Hassall, her nominator and first tutor all those years ago, said: “Julie felt she was on the scrapheap. She has a huge personality, which I believe to some extent masked her lack of self-confidence.” But the keys to success were her ‘have a go’ mentality. “She also has a generosity to contribute time and effort to others who find themselves in the same boat as herself, and to the local community.”

Julie said hard work and determination helped her excel at her studies and win the British Psychological Society Prize as the outstanding graduate at her university.

“My learning journey has made an incredible difference to my life and, as an advocate of lifelong learning, I expect it will continue to do so.”



North West Senior Learner of the Year



Alan Armstrong

Age 56. Preston, Lancashire

Nominated by Heather Hopkinson, Developing Initiatives, Supporting Communities (DISC)

In 2007, having reached rock bottom and finding himself sleeping on a park bench, Alan got in touch with Developing Initiatives, Supporting Communities (DISC) who helped him to reach his goal to learn to read and write. Alan completed City & Guilds Levels 1 and 2 in English and Levels 1, 2 and 3 in Maths. **“I have been classed as a dunce and backward all of my life,”** said Alan. **“Learning to read and write and learn maths has given me confidence and independence.”** With his new-found confidence and skills, Alan now sits on the board of various community groups and is the chairperson for DISC service users.

He has also completed NVQ Level 1 in Stewarding, which he hopes will help him find employment.

Having never been in employment and with a history of offending, Alan is happy to have a more positive future ahead. **“I am now part of the community and I can give something to it instead of taking from it,”** Alan ended.

Intergenerational Knitting Group

St Helens, Merseyside

Nominated by Kathryn Boothroyd, Chester Lane Library, St Helens

A group of carers from St Helens reached out with their wartime reminiscences and craft skills to bring a new zest for learning to primary school children. The cross-generational project was part of a library-led series of events commemorating the 70th anniversary of the beginning of World War Two. Focusing on the 'Home Front', the project objectives were to teach children about wartime crafts like knitting and about childhood during the Second World War. The schoolchildren got a great boost from the experience with schoolboy James, aged 10 from St Helens saying:

"Thank you for our fantastic knitting lesson at Parr Library. I learned dead fast. I am still knitting at home. I have made a scarf and a phone sock. Thank you again."

As the women worked with the children teaching the lost skills of knitting and other crafts, one woman remarked, **"we learned what it was like to be a child growing up today."** Another said working on the project had **"increased our self-esteem and feelings of self-worth."**

Kathryn Boothroyd, Community Development Manager for the Library Service, said, **"This project was a wonderful way to enhance children's learning. Over 100 children have taken part so far. The carers have been great to work with and they have got as much out of the project as the children have."**



Tesco Old Swan



Nominated by Julia Baldwin, Lifelong Learning Project Worker, Usdaw

Five women shop workers who demanded the right to learn at work have not only succeeded, but also helped create a model union learning initiative that gives opportunities to thousands of other staff in the retail trade.

When their union, Usdaw, offered help finding basic skills courses at local colleges in 2007, through the Check-out Learning campaign, the five staff at Tesco, Old Swan, Liverpool, instead negotiated space in the store's training room and had tutors brought in to teach them.

"We didn't think it would work," said Julia Baldwin, their nominator and union lifelong learning project worker, **"but it did, and now we are using it across the sector. It shows that when you listen to the learners you get the best ideas."** The five managed to fit in their ESF funded learning around shifts and busy lives and have gained

qualifications ranging from Entry Level Numeracy and Literacy to basic Spanish, IT and sign language certificates.

Helen Scahill, one of the five, said: **"If I had to go to college I would be nervous working with new people, but I find that working with my colleagues as classmates, you settle a lot easier."** Numerous other Tesco staff have now followed their example and signed up.

Oakfield Science Group

North West Group
Award Winner

Nominated by Irene Hampson, Oakfield Day Centre, Liverpool

When adults with learning difficulties showed a keen interest in science, staff at Oakfield Day Centre in Liverpool saw the perfect opportunity to use it and help build their skills, independence and self-confidence.

Over three years 11 adults were involved in investigations, including topics such as magnetism and chromatography, and even testing the claims kitchen roll manufacturers made for their products. **“Emphasis was on fun and practical activity,”** said the tutor Irene Hampson, from Liverpool Adult Learning Service, **“they learned how parachutes work using parachuting teddies.”**

They each take great pride in their folders of work and their literacy and numeracy skills developed rapidly through recording observations and presenting results for assessment.

The learners now do their own research at home, often with their families, and present their findings to the others. They have also developed their group-working skills – at first the tutor would decide on the curriculum, but now the group suggest and agree topics.

“I enjoy working with my group as it teaches us to work together and we learn from each other. We talk about the things we want to study and know about, like space and building, and make a list of places we want to visit. I and my group feel more confident asking questions,” said Keith Cosgrove, one of the 11 members of the group.



William Matthews

Sponsored by NHS North West

Nominated by Shirley Cunliffe, Manager

"[William] has a friendly, helpful and professional manner. It is difficult to believe that he has no previous office experience, as he is a natural."

Shirley

William has worked relentlessly to get mobile after being involved in a serious road accident. He hardly ever left his house for six years. During his rehabilitation he then attended a Positive Steps Programme, which allowed him to gain new experiences in a modern office environment and to grow in confidence. It also provided an insight into health and social care as a work environment.

The Positive Steps Programme spurred him on to apply for a highly competitive, permanent administrative post in NHS Blackpool. He beat off 50 other applicants.

William's manager and nominator, Shirley, says of him: "he has a friendly, helpful and professional manner. It is difficult to believe that he has no previous office experience as he is such a natural".

Janet Worthington



North West Skills for
Life Award Winner

Sponsored by NHS North West

Nominated by Renee Steward, work colleague

At the age of 17 Janet was told that she was a 'silly girl', so on leaving school when Janet was required to contribute to the family income she never really aspired to gain further qualifications.

Many years later, whilst working as a receptionist at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, Janet was presented with the opportunity to complete a Level 2 Skills for Life Development Council in Literacy and Numeracy. With this certificate under her belt Janet has clearly caught the 'learning bug' and she now intends to start studying for an NVQ in Administration in May and her ultimate goal is a degree.

Janet is always keen to encourage and support other staff. She has the confidence to persuade others of the positive impact that learning can have on their lives and the achievements that they can attain. Her key message is: "I did it and so can you".

"I did it and so
can you."

Janet

Paul Lashford

Sponsored by NHS North West

Nominated by Rachel Rump, work colleague

Paul has had an interesting journey both personally and professionally to obtain his current post as an HR Officer at Lancashire County Council, leaving school with few academic qualifications.

In order to be able to apply for his current post he completed a course to achieve a Level 4 Registered Managers Award in Social Care in just three weeks!

Paul is passionate about his career and wants to act as an ambassador for Lancashire County Council to bring about change through innovation and make a really positive contribution to developing care services.

In his words, **“If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got”**.

Paul is regarded highly for his tireless work in supporting appropriate, relevant and high-quality learning and development, whilst striving to ensure all activity adds value to the individual, the team, the organisation and ultimately the customers.

His work also provides a platform for him to inspire and support other members of staff on their journey of development.

“If you always do what
you have always done,
you will always get what
you have always got.”

Paul

Anthony Fulop



North West Supporting
the Learner in Practice
Award Winner

Sponsored by NHS North West

Nominated by Sonja Brine, Manager

Tony left school with three CSEs and spent many years working in manual, hard labouring jobs in both the private and public sector. He went back into adult learning achieving various qualifications which inspired him to want to encourage others to get into learning.

Tony took up the role of Facilities Training and Development Officer in 2008, where he has the task of looking after over 300 employees, working in support roles such as portering, domestic services and catering at Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust.

His manager says that Tony, "has shared his can-do approach to training with all staff; he has eliminated all excuses and created an open and honest atmosphere in which staff feel able to come forward and ask for help. Due to this, Salford Royal has the highest level of trained support staff nationally and possibly the best facilities trainer in the NHS."

"[Tony] has shared his can-do approach to training with all staff; he has eliminated all excuses and created an open and honest atmosphere in which staff feel able to come forward and ask for help."

Sonja

Valerie Whitehead

Sponsored by NHS North West

Nominated by Sarah Atcha, Manager

"Val has frequently been contacted by members of staff who have had bad experiences with learning previously and she gently supports and encourages them."

Sarah

Valerie left school with no qualifications, but was later given the opportunity to learn more and gain qualifications. She is now a union learning representative and an A1 assessor. She is totally committed to supporting workplace learning.

Valerie's manager states that, "Val is frequently contacted by staff who have had negative experiences of learning and she always gently supports and encourages them. A number of staff in NHS Salford have progressed from having no qualifications to achieving a full Level 3 qualification with Valerie's support."

Valerie has co-ordinated a Celebration of Learning event which highlights learners' achievements. She promotes Adult Learners' Week and has been involved in setting up a Dyslexia Information Service.

Val says that it is important to her to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities when it comes to accessing information, advice and guidance and development. Her team regard her highly and are certainly proud of her drive and commitment and that is why they nominated her for this award.

Des Gibbons

Age 53. Stockport

Sponsored by Stockport Council

Nominated by Stockport Council

Due to health problems, Des's first ever paid employment started in 2008 at the age of 52, through the Stockport into Work Scheme. Des has had to overcome many hurdles that others would shy away from.

Having previously volunteered on a local Sure Start initiative, Des was ideally suited to working in the community to support others in their search for work. His role as community assistant requires him to engage with those local residents who are unemployed or low skilled in Stockport's priority areas and help them improve their life chances.

Des is employed on a part-time basis, but also works many hours on a voluntary basis. He has undertaken a wide range of personal development activities, including ICT, English, Learning Advisers Level 1, Neighbourhood Working Level 2 and Interventions for Mental Health in Everyday Practice.

**Stockport Council
Personal Development
Award Winner**

**"If I can change my life
through learning,
anyone can."**

Des



Pictured above: Winning learners from the North West Adult Learners' Week Award Ceremony 2009 celebrate their achievements



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