

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
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Press Release
5th May 2009
PR41f/09

DORCHESTER WOMAN GAINS FULFILLING CAREER AND WINS AWARD

Chrissy Jane Hedge, aged 35, from Dorchester, felt unfulfilled with her job in design so decided to go back to learning and is now involved in teaching and voluntary work. Her dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with a Regional Individual Award – sponsored by the European Social Fund (ESF) - as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

Chrissy was bullied at school and even though she has dyslexia, she did well in her GCSEs, "I got one of the highest marks in my year, which gave me tremendous self esteem and the realisation that I could achieve no matter what people said."

When she left school she did a National and Higher Diploma in Art, and got a job in design, but felt unfulfilled. Chrissy then travelled around the world, even having time to complete a three-year Dive Master course at the Red Sea resorts.

When she returned to the UK, she worked with adults with physical and learning disabilities and encouraged them to learn. Chrissy herself has recently taken OCR Level 2 Certificate in Numeracy, a City & Guilds Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and a Specialist Diploma in Nutrition, "to find non-surgical ways of reducing my cancer and to learn how to advise and support others."

She is now involved in teaching, voluntary work, running her own beauty business and organising a project helping young people use recycling to make musical instruments.

Chrissy is an active member of Kushti Bok – an advocacy group representing the voice of Gypsies and Travellers in Dorset – and is a member of the Dorset Police Independent Advisory Group.

Chrissy said, "Learning means that I can gain knowledge to share and teach people the things I have learned. Without learning I wouldn't be the person I am and I am

proud of who I am. Learning stimulated me and is exciting, it makes me feel alive as it always leads to better things.”

Tony McNulty MP, Minister of State at the Department for Work and Pensions, said, “I am pleased that the ESF is again sponsoring Adult Learners’ Week this year. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of people like Chrissy and to show how it can help improve their job prospects. All the winners’ stories will undoubtedly inspire even more people to engage in learning.”

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE, said, “The outstanding adult learning we celebrate during Adult Learners’ Week shows the range and breadth of adults’ enthusiasms, skills and determination to succeed, often against the odds. Our winners are remarkable – for their energy, commitment and talent – and each and every one should be extremely proud of what they’ve achieved.”

Ends

To contact Chrissy Jane Hedge please phone Ken Onions at Kingston Maurward College on 01305 215 065.

For further information on Adult Learners’ Week please contact:

Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248 or 07795 358 870.

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Notes to Editors

1. Chrissy Jane Hedge will be presented with a Regional Individual Learner Award – sponsored by the European Social Fund - at the South West Adult Learners’ Week Regional Award Ceremony at Westlands Leisure Complex on Tuesday 12th May 2009. Journalists and photographers are invited to attend the event. More information is available from Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248 or 07795 358 870 or ed.melia@niace.org.uk
2. Adult Learners’ Week, 9th–15th May 2009, is the largest annual celebration of adult learning in the UK. It is supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the European Social Fund, Careers Advice, the National Learning and Skills Council, Ofcom - the Office of Communications, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, the Learning and Skills Council, Booktrust, Ufi/learndirect, Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, National Open College Network, BECTA, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and City and Guilds. More details at: www.alw.org.uk
3. The European Social Fund is investing £2.3 billion in employment and skills projects across England in 2007-2013. The programme supports two key

priorities: extending employment opportunities to unemployed and disadvantaged people; and developing a skilled and adaptable workforce. Further information on ESF is available at www.esf.gov.uk

4. Adult Learners' Week 2009 will include the following national events:
 - Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th May: **Cultural Diversity Weekend.**
 - Monday 11th May: **Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn** Joint NIACE, NRDC, UCU Conference at the Institute of Education, London.
 - Tuesday 12th May: **National Policy Conference *Beyond the Recession: Adult Learning in Changing Times*** at the Mermaid Theatre, Blackfriars, London, sponsored by the QCA; and
 - **Adult Learners' Week Parliamentary Reception**, at the House of Commons, sponsored by City and Guilds.
 - Wednesday 13th May: **Quick Reads Learners' Favourite Award**, at the British Library.
 - Thursday 14th May: **Learning at Work Day.**
 - Friday 15th May: **Adult Learners' Week National Award Ceremony** - QEII Conference Centre, London, sponsored by BECTA; and
 - **Silver Surfers Day.**
5. A national helpline – **Careers Advice** - is available year-round for confidential advice and information about careers and courses. The call handlers will have access to the NIACE website and can give information about local activities during Adult Learners' Week. Calls are free on 0800 100 900.
6. Events for Adult Learners' Week 2009 are listed in the interactive online calendar at www.alw.org.uk/calendar where you can search by keyword, your preferred date and by the region you live in. Or call **Careers Advice** free on 0800 100 900 to find Adult Learners' Week events local to you.
7. The themes for Adult Learners' Week 2009 are:
 1. Prosperity, employment and work
 2. Sustainable development
 3. Technological Change
 4. Demography and social structure
 5. Poverty reduction
 6. The roles of the public, private and voluntary sectors
 7. Well-being and happiness
 8. Crime and social exclusion
8. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the leading non-government organisation for lifelong learning in England, and exists to encourage more and different adults to engage in better-quality learning of all kinds. It campaigns for, and celebrates the achievements of, all adult learners.