

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
www.niace.org.uk

Press Release
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TAUNTON EX-PRISONER WINS LEARNING AWARD

Jason Thorne, aged 33, from Taunton, transformed his life by seizing the chance to learn while in prison and he now has a career, a home and makes a positive contribution to his community. His dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with a Regional Individual Award as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

Starting with Basic Maths, English, Key and Communication skills, Jason continued his learning by taking a pre-release course in Budgeting, Social Living and Problem Solving. Determined to find a skill he could use outside of prison, he completed Forklift Training and achieved a cleaning certificate, as well as attending an Enhanced Thinking course.

Leaving prison five years ago with a criminal record meant getting paid work would be a challenge, so Jason carried out voluntary work at Six Acres and the Albemarle Centre - a home for the elderly. To support this, he completed courses in Sign Language, Somerset Total Communication and Counselling Skills as well as a Community Involvement Skills course.

His volunteering led to a job with the Albemarle Centre, where he has taken advantage of work-based training and been awarded an NVQ Level 2 in Health and Social Care.

Jason said, "I have been clean from drugs for seven years and out of prison for five. This is amazing as most of my life has been in some sort of institution. My life has transformed since I started educating myself. I find it rewarding taking what I've learnt and applying it to my job role. Making positive changes in my life and learning different things have made me a more confident and positive person."

Further Education Minister Sion Simon said, "The Adult Learners' Week Awards are a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievements of learners around

the country. As the awards show, learning in all its many forms leads to a host of benefits not only for the individual learner, but also for their families and the wider community.”

He continued, “I hope the award winners will inspire others to rediscover learning. Whether your goal is to be able to help your children with their homework, realise a career aspiration or simply learn for pleasure, brushing up on existing skills or learning new ones can transform your life.”

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 Jason Thorne please phone Joanne Newman on 01823 256 004 or 07793 305 220.

For further information on Adult Learners’ Week please contact:

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

Marie Koupparis, NIACE Assistant Press Officer on 0116 204 4279 or 07824 481 499 or email: marie.koupparis@niace.org.uk

Notes to Editors

1. Jason Thorne will be presented with a Regional Individual Award 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. 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; 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.**
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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
7. 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.