

**National Institute of Adult Continuing Education**  
[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

**Press Release**  
**5<sup>th</sup> May 2009**  
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**YEOVIL DAD OVERCOMES INJURY AND WINS LEARNING AWARD**

Paul Parker, aged 34, from Yeovil, left his job as a Silicone Mouldings Engineer after being diagnosed with degenerative disc disease and has since become a volunteer Teaching Assistant. His dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with a Regional Individual Award as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

When Paul, a Silicone Mouldings Engineer injured his back he was signed off work for a few months. To aid his recovery Paul volunteered at his daughter's Primary School which he found so rewarding, he enrolled on a childcare course, became a volunteer Teaching Assistant and left his job. However, over the next few years Paul's back needed further treatment and surgery. He even had to use a wheelchair as he couldn't walk further than the end of his drive.

Despite this, Paul has successfully completed his NVQ Level 2 Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD), he also took the Technical Certificate and for his three assignments and exam he gained distinctions. Paul is currently taking his NVQ Level 3 in CCLD which will help him progress to Higher Education. He is now working at Parcroft Pre-School in Yeovil as a Key Worker and a much needed and much appreciated male role model.

Paul said, "Through a strange twist of fate I found myself retraining for a job that I should have been doing years ago. Being told I have degenerative disc disease was not a curse...but a blessing, an opportunity to make something of myself."

He continued, "I can't describe the feeling I get from being part of the children's lives, helping them to prepare for school and...life. Helping them to develop self-esteem, resilience and confidence in everything they do...giving them the best start in life. Being part of that is overwhelming, an honour and a privilege."

He ended, "Learning to me means hope, a future, a purpose. I was very worried about what the future held for me and my family. My options seemed limited because of my condition. Going back to learning...has given me the opportunity to retrain for a job I love. I have achieved beyond my expectations."

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 Paul Parker** please phone Janice Smith on 01935 845 406.

**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. Paul Parker will be presented with a Regional Individual Award at the South West Adult Learners' Week Regional Award Ceremony at Westlands Leisure Complex on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:ed.melia@niace.org.uk)
2. Adult Learners' Week, 9<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.alw.org.uk)

3. Adult Learners' Week 2009 will include the following national events:
  - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May: **Cultural Diversity Weekend.**
  - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May: **Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn** Joint NIACE, NRDC, UCU Conference at the Institute of Education, London.
  - Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> May: **Quick Reads Learners' Favourite Award**, at the British Library.
  - Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May: **Learning at Work Day.**
  - Friday 15<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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.