

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
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Press Release
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CORNISH COUNSELLOR WINS NATIONAL LEARNING AWARD

Ross Dunstan, aged 31, from Hayle, left school with few qualifications and after getting in trouble with the police, he decided to turn his life around by becoming a Rehabilitation Therapist. His dedication and commitment to learning is being recognised with an Outstanding Regional Individual Award as part of Adult Learners' Week 9 – 15 May 2009.

Ross left school disaffected and with minimal qualifications. He went on what he calls "a bit of a bender" and got into trouble with the police. Following one of his court appearance he decided to turn his life around.

"I enrolled on a financial advice course", Ross said, "but I failed and gave up. A year later I enrolled on a counselling course at Cornwall College, passed it and enjoyed it so much that I gained confidence in myself."

After completing the Certificate in Counselling Studies, Ross was disappointed not to gain a place on the diploma in 2002 – but he studied psychology and sociology, and did voluntary work with the Youth Service.

The following year, he was offered a place on the Diploma in Counselling Skills course and in 2006 became one of the youngest qualified counsellors in Cornwall. Throughout his studies, Ross supported his family through working full-time, for up to six days a week, at a meat factory and a food processing factory.

Ross then enrolled on the BA (Hons) Counselling Studies course gaining a 2.2 grade, and has achieved his dream, being employed as a Rehabilitation Therapist, working with people who have addiction problems.

He said, "Through learning I have picked myself up from rock bottom to the dizzy heights of degree level resulting in full-time employment in something that I

thoroughly enjoy. Without the opportunities to learn that I had, I hate to think where I would be now”.

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 Ross Dunstan please phone Ruth Sparkes on 01726 226463 or 07760 490 980.

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. Ross Dunstan will be presented with an Outstanding Regional Learner of the Year Award at the Adult Learners’ Week National Awards Ceremony at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, London on Friday 15th May 2009. He will also receive an 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 both events. 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.