

Adult and Community Learning

NEWS

Summer -
Autumn 2007



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Bedford's new Centre

A state of the art £80,000 Adult Learning Centre has been officially opened by Leigh MP, Andy Burnham.

The Adult Skills for Life Development and Assessment Centre, funded by the Learning and Skills Council and managed by Working Wonders in partnership with Wigan Council's ACL Service, was opened at Bedford High School's Community Learning Centre.

Staff based there will teach the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages, to adults who live or work in the Wigan and Leigh areas.

Adults can work towards achieving a nationally recognised qualification at the Centre, in order to help gain employment or to progress at work. They can attend sessions which enable them to help their children with homework, or to gain confidence and skills for themselves. Working Wonders also offers adults free dyslexia screening and support at the Centre.

The learning sessions are friendly, informal and are highly effective in helping adults gain confidence and skills. In the words of one learner: "Poor spelling and writing knocked my confidence and this held me back all my life. I never believed I would be able to improve but I was wrong. Attending the Bedford Centre really has worked wonders for me! I'd say to anyone who is nervous about taking that first step - give it a go. It's really worth it."



From left to right: John Walters (Director, Working Wonders), Pauline Birchall (Community Learning Centre Manager), Bernard Murphy (Joint Adult and Community Learning Manager), Tom Hanlon (Director, Working Wonders), Beryl Colvin (Joint Adult and Community Learning Manager), Joyce Hanlon (Managing Director, Working Wonders), Andy Burnham MP.

Working Wonders' manager Joyce Hanlon, said: "This new Centre means that adults wishing to improve their skills will be able to do so in a Centre that boasts first class facilities and a warm and welcoming environment."

Bedford High's Community Learning Centre Manager, Pauline Birchall, said: "Once the learners have developed their confidence and competence in the basic skills, they are then encouraged to progress into our Learndirect Centre to further their qualifications."

For more information on free courses available at the Centre please ring (01257) 423366.

Helping and Working in School

Wigan ACL, in partnership with Wigan and Leigh College, has been running a popular course called *Helping and Working in School*.

The course enables anyone wishing to work or volunteer in schools, particularly in the classroom, to find out what the work entails and to gain necessary skills. Several courses have been run this year, involving well over 100 learners.

Many schools and other venues took hold of the spirit of the 'Extended School' by freely offering their facilities to enable this course to take place. These included: Hope School, Hindley All Saints CE Primary, Leigh Central Primary, Westleigh High, Newton Westpark Primary and other venues such as the Professional Development Centre in Hindley and Tyldesley Community Education Centre. These venues all hosted a daytime or an evening course, thus enabling a spread of provision across the Borough.

Particular commendation must be made to Pembec at Kingsdown High School, and in particular, Terry Redshaw, Community Education Officer. The school has hosted one daytime and four evening programmes this year, involving over 60 learners. Most will gain national qualifications in Adult Literacy and Numeracy by the end of their courses.

Terry has greeted these learners, made them feel welcome and has been a source of considerable support to tutors from the Family Learning team who have delivered the sessions.

More *Helping and Working in School* courses will be running from September. Anyone interested in joining or finding out more about this course please contact Pat Stancel on 01942 828911 for further details



Learner Sandra Foster presents Terry with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Team of the Year!

Wigan's Adult and Community Learning Service has been awarded first prize at the Council's annual 'Team of the Year' awards.

The celebration event, held at Wigan Investment Centre, awarded the prize to the ACL team, in the category *Focusing on Borough-wide Priorities*.

There are a number of categories which recognise the commitment and achievement of service delivery teams within the Council's various departments.

Pictured representing the team are joint ACL Managers Bernard Murphy and Beryl Colvin alongside Justine Silcock, Doreen Ellison, Kath Graham, Donna Clayton, Patricia Stancel, the MC Andrew Castle and Chief Executive Joyce Redfearn. Congratulations to all our Network Partners who contributed to this success!



Orrell's future plans

Orrell Community Education Centre is attempting to enhance its links within the local community by investing in an Adult Education Centre in Winstanley.

At this Centre, adults will be able to partake in either leisure or ICT based courses.

The building on the Winstanley estate is all but complete and, with gratitude to the ACL management for their investment, we are placing computers to the value of £1,000 in the Centre, to match the 5 that the Winstanley community already have, allowing residents access to a number of free computer courses. It is hoped that learners will be able to do tai chi, painting, and yoga type courses as well as the more academic ones during the day. The planned start date for these courses will be September 2007.

Following a series of successful meetings, arranged by the ACL Service with Open University personnel, it has been agreed that Orrell Community Education Centre will act as one of the pilot centres for 'Opening Courses'. The particular course, 'Exploring Sport Online' will highlight the school's specialist status as a Sports College and also result in the Evening Centre offering courses to learners, from 'first step' taster ones, through to university degree courses.

The 'Exploring Sport Online' course, as the name suggests, is online and covers areas of sport from the perspectives of the individual and the team, as well as global perspectives such as nutrition, simple physiology, coaching and motivation.

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Successful sessions

John Derbyshire, an employee at Metrolite Industries, has successfully completed the OCR Adult Literacy course.

Working Wonders has been holding literacy sessions for employees at the company's factory in Ince.

Manager, Tom Milner, said: "The literacy sessions have played an important role in helping to give employees like John, the skills and confidence they need to move on at work.

We congratulate John on his hard work and determination. He certainly deserves the success he's had."



John receives his certificate from Tom Milner and Working Wonders' tutor, Clare Unsworth.



Supermum

Karen Rudd's first venture towards learning new skills was to embark on an ACL Introduction to IT course at Platt Bridge Community Centre.

This learning experience spurred her on to enrol on an IT course at Wigan and Leigh College and she has never looked back!

She enrolled on the NVQ Level 2 *Business and Administration* course in September, having successfully achieved the OCR CLAIT qualification on a part-time basis earlier in the year. She has also studied for text and word processing examinations and has gained further IT qualifications as well as certificates in Literacy and Numeracy.

Married for 10 years and living in Bickershaw, Karen is currently working as a domestic at Wigan Hospital.

She joined the course so that she could achieve qualifications that would give her a career in the world of business and she intends to actively seek employment in this field when she achieves the full award in July.

Karen has successfully juggled the demands of her course with that of a young family.

Victim of success

Mother of three Joanne is a very busy mum, but still manages to schedule her busy lifestyle around an afternoon Cake Decorating Course at Westleigh High School.

The keen amateur dramatic actress is a member of the New Garrett Theatre Company in Tyldesley. Alongside the rehearsals and sorting out her young family, Joanne's free time can be very limited. However, it was whilst reading one of Westleigh High School's ACL brochures that the course in Cake Decoration caught her eye.

Joanne says that when she and her sister saw that the course was available during the day, they didn't hesitate to enrol. It meant that they could drop the children off, carry out family commitments in the morning and attend the course during the afternoon. This left her with just enough time afterwards to collect her children.

So, now that the ten week course has finished what did she think of it?

Joanne said that with quite a large family it's not long before a family member has a birthday or anniversary to celebrate. This course is great in making those celebrations just that little bit more individual. Although Joanne has only had one opportunity before to do a course - Basic Sign Language - her present course has made her want to attend others and move to the next level.

Unfortunately, Joanne is a victim of a catch-22 situation. This is because when she heard there was a part-time vacancy at a local cake shop, she applied and got the job. She is now using her experiences of the course, along with some ideas of her own, for the benefit of her family and the wider community.

Although she has caught the learning bug and is keen to do a further cake decorating course or another daytime class, her job means that her hours may clash.

Joanne says: "I'll just have to wait and see what courses are available and when. It would be a pity not to move onto another level in cake decoration theory, even though I'm putting the skills I learned into practice."

New year, new career

By Louise Kenny-Banks

When my eldest child, Dylan, attended Douglas Valley Early Years Centre in 2005, I had the opportunity to enrol on Family Learning Foundation Literacy and Numeracy classes.

This was only possible because I received free childcare for Lucy, my younger child. Dylan looked forward to doing the activities which I had been shown, to help with his learning.

When he started at St Catharine's, I discovered that the same Douglas Valley tutor, Ruth Asson, would also be teaching Family Learning courses at the school.

I completed Key Stage 1 Literacy, Numeracy and Science and the classes were an inspiration. Having worked in an office for 12 years, I decided I would need a new career when my children started school.

Ruth was great - she encouraged me to do voluntary work in the school and gave me all the information I needed to enrol on a Teaching Assistant course.



I completed my Adult Numeracy and Literacy Level 2 qualifications and have almost finished my Level 2 NCFE Teaching Assistant course at college.

On my first day back at school, I was offered a job assisting in Year 1 and it is fabulous! I have recently completed the VQ2 in Teaching Assistants and I have been offered full-time work for next year.

I have to thank Ruth for being so helpful and giving me the confidence to do this, and also Adult and Community Learning for giving me and everyone else this opportunity. It's great!

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Theatre trip

Learning doesn't have to be desk-bound and Working Wonders uses its minibus to provide 'enriched learning' activities for learners. It is considered a necessary and positive part of the service provided.

Working Wonders tutor, Lilian Wickstead, used the minibus to take her learners to the theatre in Manchester. It was a highly enriching and motivating experience.

Lilian reports: "We went to see Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers* at the Opera House, starring Linda Nolan as Mrs Johnstone and Keith Burns as the narrator. All the cast were superb and received a standing ovation at the end of the performance.

My group works well together and has shown great interest in the poetry, prose and drama extracts used in class. They were keen to experience the theatre as several had never been to a live show.

I chose *Blood Brothers* because the storyline is very accessible and the music appeals to any age group. I thought the Opera House would be a memorable setting for a first visit and everyone was impressed with the wonderful ornate decor.

In addition to it being an enjoyable and companionable night out, the play proved to be a great talking point for several weeks after our visit, generating discussion of the issues in the play - poverty, superstition, class divisions.

The learners also wrote reviews of the production, which is quite an advanced skill, requiring good literacy skills, expression and organisation. The class is keen to see another production, perhaps a non-musical drama. We are considering *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The experience was summed up by one of the learners as we were leaving the theatre: "Well, that was better than the telly!" We were humming the tunes for days!



Left to right: Tony Farrar, Lilian Wickstead (tutor), Sue Colwill, Sherelee Farrar, Rachael Wooton, John Porter, Teresa Sharpe, Gemma Bridge, John Derbyshire. Thanks to Julie Bevan who took the photo and drove the minibus, sacrificing a boozy interval drink!

Super Silver Surfer

Born in 1921, James Farrington attended Lowton St Luke's Primary School before going on to complete his education at Leigh Boys' Grammar School.

In 1941 he joined the army and served in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. On leaving in 1946, James started a career in Local Government, attaining the post of Principal Officer. But, like many others, he could not forget the bravery and comradeship of those he had fought alongside.

Since 1947, James has been writing articles for the *Milestone Magazine*, the regimental publication of the 141 Regiment RAC (The Buffs) in order to commemorate the supreme sacrifice made by those who, in the words of Rupert Brooke, found "Some corner of a foreign field that is forever England."

Last September, James signed up for an introductory computer course at Lowton Community Sports College, with a view to improving his basic computer skills. Such has been his progress that he now word processes his magazine articles and has created a spreadsheet for his financial affairs.

James' enthusiasm for learning is exceptional and, when mixed with his engaging personality, it is no wonder that he has become the life and soul of the class. James has been known to ask his tutor to "Keep up!" as he continues to push back the boundaries of his knowledge and skills. He has already signed up to continue his studies in the next academic year, cheekily stating that his desire to learn more is driven by his wish to become a computer tutor himself at the age of 86!



James recently commented: "I would encourage anyone to attend one of the many courses available at Lowton Community Sports College. The tutors and staff are incredibly helpful and supportive, which is extremely important when providing courses for beginners."

If you would like to find out more about the courses available at Lowton Community Sports College during the next academic year please contact: Stephen Toole, Director of Community at the school on 01942 767040 (Option 4) or by email at Stephen@lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk

Dancing the night away

One of the many successes of Shevington's ACL programme this year has been the introduction of Ballroom Dancing and Salsa Dancing classes.

These are held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings in the Centre.

At one point it looked as if this Healthy Living Course would not get off the ground. There was a demand in the area for the classes but finding a teacher was becoming a problem for the Centre Management Team.

Then along came dance teacher, Louisa Edwards, responding to our advertisement. The infectious enthusiasm of Louisa and her partner Andy (pictured) soon rubbed off on the students. The classes have gone from strength to strength.

"Enjoyable, friendly and relaxing," was how one student described the lessons. There are now plans to develop the classes for the next academic year to include Ballroom Dancing for Beginners, an Intermediate class and Salsa Classes.



Lee's central role

By Working Wonders Director, Joyce Hanlon

Every year, Working Wonders elects a Learner Representative.

Many hundreds of adults use our service to gain qualifications and skills and it is vital that we listen carefully to their opinions and ideas so that we can keep delivering the best possible service.

With over 750 learners registering on our sessions last year, the role of Learner Representative is an important one in helping to ensure that our learners are at the centre of everything we do.

This year, Lee Parker, has taken on this important, voluntary role. Lee said: "The support of Working Wonders has been invaluable in helping me prepare for and succeed in my examinations for Police Inspector."



Lee meets MP Andy Burnham at the opening of the new Learning Centre at Bedford High School.

Mother and daughter gain qualifications at Hesketh Fletcher.

A family affair

ACL courses at Hesketh Fletcher Community College have encouraged many students to further their careers.

A series of one day taster courses have been held in conjunction with Sure Start. They included; Pilates; Mothers' Day Crafts; Top Tots; Family Fun Day; Family Environment.

Learners could enrol on several different courses, with the aim of encouraging them into a learning environment, leading to progression and qualifications that could be used in the world of work.

Julie Crook is a volunteer with Sure Start and became involved in the ACL courses, encouraging her daughter Amanda Thompson to accompany her. Since completing a series of courses, Julie has now extended her education by taking a Level 2 Child Care course at Douglas Valley Nursery.

Amanda has taken a Play School certificate at Shackerley Sure Start Centre and has obtained a new position as *Before and After School Club Supervisor* at Hesketh Fletcher High School. The College sends both of them congratulations for being part of our success story.



Justine discusses Family Learning with members of her team and partners from Extended Learning

A Dream Come True

The Westleigh Vision of a Learning Village became a reality at the Open Day for the new Community and Children's Centre, which bridges Westleigh Methodist Primary School and Westleigh High School.

An open invitation was issued to the community residents to check out the facilities and services on offer.

Visitors were able to:

- Tour the Children's Centre and the refurbished Primary School Nursery to which it is linked
- Seek information, advice and guidance from the Community Centre's various service providers
- Enrol on courses funded by the Adult and Community Learning Service and organised by Westleigh High School
- Enjoy the freshly-baked biscuits and freshly-brewed beverages made and served by pupils of Westleigh High School



Fully booked after today!



Doreen and Colette arranging Step in to Learning at the Children's Centres



Partners from the Leisure and Culture Trust's Active Living Team



Partner from Bolton Business Ventures offering self-employment advice and training



Deborah and Sheila working together to grow big oaks from little acorns and a stronger community from Little Blossoms and Little Branches



Paul and Jackie recruiting onto adult learning activities organised by Westleigh High School

A learner who is working wonders

Last year, over 700 adults living in the Borough of Wigan registered with Working Wonders for help with literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Many of these learners went on to gain confidence, skills, qualifications, and to find employment. One of our learners would like to tell us about her experiences.

Lynne is 47, married, and has lived in Wigan all her life. She is currently working full-time for a local company. Her job requires lifting heavy items and, as she suffers with arthritis, it is even more difficult.

She left school with no qualifications and had to rely on a family member for help with reading and writing. Her aim was to improve her literacy so that she could get a less physically demanding job.

She thought about applying for a job in a local café but realised she might be asked to write on the sign outside the shop. Because of her difficulty with spelling, she didn't apply. In addition to improving her job prospects, she also wanted to be able to read stories to her grandchildren.

Lynne was very low in self-confidence and wouldn't go to college for help with literacy. She was referred to Working Wonders by Next Steps. At the initial interview she was very nervous and tearful. Her assessment showed low reading and spelling levels.

She started attending Working Wonders sessions at a local community centre. Her tutor worked on a multi-sensory programme with her and in just 3 months her reading age had increased by 1.4 years and spelling by 2.6 years.

Lynne's goal now is to gain a Level 2 qualification, equivalent to a GCSE A-C grade. She is much more confident with reading, spelling and writing and is particularly delighted that she can now read to her grandchildren. She has discovered that she loves writing and has submitted stories to be entered on the BBC website.

Gaining new skills has made a huge difference to Lynne's life. She enjoys learning and feels a much happier person. She is confident in speaking at interviews and is optimistic about finding that perfect job - one that really suits her. That means one where she can use her new skills!

Shevington's recipe for success

Learner Tom Miller was looking for a basic cookery course at Shevington ACL Centre.

The Centre did not have a tutor for that particular course but was able to offer *Italian Cookery for Beginners* on Tuesday evenings.



Tom with his Italian Cookery teacher.

Tom joined the class and he is thoroughly enjoying cooking the variety of recipes which he is able to reproduce at home and share with his family.

In January, a new Chinese Cookery class was introduced at Shevington and Tom joined this course as well! He no longer requires a basic cookery course!

Career in counselling

One of Westleigh High School's Community Learning students, Paul Leonard, has had a checkered career in public relations.

So, one would think that 24 years in the Merseyside Police Force would provide him with enough knowledge to become a successful counsellor.

Well, as Paul discovered, you're never too experienced to hone the skills you possess already or even to learn something new.

Paul has recently started working at Leigh's Citizens Advice Bureau and says that the skills he has learned from the counselling course have improved his abilities immensely.

When asked how the course specifically helped him, he said it developed his interviewing technique and it helped him to learn to gain people's trust. It gave him confidence to draw more information from people.

This in turn helped people in need of his counselling advice, to get the right advice themselves.

As with all ACL courses, the camaraderie is second to none. People not only learn new things but they also meet new friends.

On receiving their certificates, Paul and the entire class went with their ACL lecturer, Sue Williamson, for a celebratory end of course meal.

Paul can't speak highly enough of the way the course was helpful to his latest role in life. He said that the support from tutors and Westleigh High School's Community Development Manager and his staff was crucial to his present and future development.

ACL has, through its learning opportunities, allowed a person, crucial to the well-being of the great Leigh community, to develop skills that will be beneficial to people from all walks of life.

This includes anyone who may need advice or counselling at specific times in their life.