



Dads and kids love science

Saturday mornings were a hive of activity when dads and kids got together to do fun science experiments.



The sessions, at Douglas Valley Children's Centre, used everyday household materials. They were co-ordinated by Centre development worker, Pam Waterworth and were designed and delivered by Family Learning tutor, Mark Perks.



Pam said: "The science programme was a fantastic hit with the dads". Because the last course was full, Pam is hoping to organise another one for all those dads and kids who missed out.



The dads said their children had learnt a lot and enjoyed attending. Doing the activities together had helped them bond. They appreciated that the activities could be done with ordinary items - so they have been able to carry on experimenting together at home. One dad summed up the sessions: "Wish there were more such courses as it brings a fun aspect into the children's learning arena."



Why should I enrol?

Marion Coupe gives a tutor's view

Some go down the pub for a quick drink with their friends, some go to bingo, others play golf, go shopping, do lunch - the list goes on.

Lots of people attend evening classes which is a fabulous way of learning a skill as well as meeting new friends. More often than not, a consequence of attending regularly is gaining confidence and self-esteem, something we often overlook.

For many, this can lead to success in the jobs market, ability to help with their children's homework or the confidence to deal with a difficult situation. It is well known that adults often find it difficult to re-enter the education system after many years of working, bringing up a family or many years of being within the benefits system.

They may think they are not good enough or they need qualifications to go to an evening class, or it's for those who are 'clever'. They may have partners or a family who think they shouldn't attend - all pressures to put them off. Adults in this situation are the ones who usually benefit the most. They soon find that learning a new skill is interesting and they meet other people who they can relate to.

As a craft teacher, I have seen many people, particularly women, positively glow with pride at achieving something they previously thought impossible. They have progressed to other classes such as computing, gaining yet more confidence. They get a thirst for more learning and knowledge and, eventually, an unexpected outcome can be a job or the possibility of setting up their own business!

My plea to the Government, who fund the majority of these introductory courses, is to recognise the value of adult and community learning at all levels. In particular, for those people whose need to feel part of their community is paramount.

Nominated for award

Two learners have been nominated for the Adult Learners' Week Awards.

Bedford High School Centre Manager, Pauline Birchall, nominated both Jimmy and Sui King who started on a Computer Course for Beginners in November 2007. Jimmy had undergone a hip operation, which affected his mobility. He had led an active life socially and always had a physical job. At 56 he faced an uncertain future and decided to retrain. Sui King, having four children, felt left behind by technology and unable to support her children on the computer.

Last summer, Jimmy and Sui King achieved a Clait qualification and, through partnership working with Working Wonders, they gained an Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualification at Level 2.

This inspired them to sign up for courses through Wigan and Leigh College - Jimmy is completing his Certificate in Education while Sui King is on the NVQ Level 2 Business Administration course. She is on work placement at the Community Learning Centre as part of her course.

Jimmy said: "All the help, support and encouragement I received from the Community Learning Centre has given me the momentum and determination to move forward into employment".

Pauline added: "They deserve to be awarded for their hard work and enthusiasm and they are proof that starting to learn, initially to build confidence, can bring opportunities". To receive details of future course programmes, contact Pauline on 01942 486379 or e-mail: adultlearning@bedford.wigan.sch.uk

Ladder to success!



Michael Clarke has just been voted Support Worker of the Month for the company he works for - IAS Care Services.

The Working Wonders' learner clearly illustrates how a highly supportive service is essential in helping people to take that first step on the ladder to success. Michael was a carer for 10 years, looking after his wife who was terminally ill. After she died, he found that lack of literacy, numeracy skills and qualifications were preventing him from finding work. Being at home for so long, his confidence levels were low and he doubted finding a suitable job.

Many former and current Working Wonders learners act as Learning Champions, promoting the service to family, friends and acquaintances. After being told about the support and excellent standard of teaching he would receive, Michael decided to enrol on a course at a community venue near his home.

His confidence grew - he worked as a volunteer for Age Concern, achieved Level 1 qualifications in Numeracy and Literacy and gained paid employment as a carer. He thoroughly enjoys his job - the people he cares for and the social side. With his employer, he is working on Level 2 NVQ in Health and Social Care as well as Level 2 Literacy and Numeracy with Working Wonders. Michael says: "Without Working Wonders giving me the confidence and skills to get ahead I don't think I would ever have done it. The sky's the limit!"

***Pictured are Michael and Working Wonders Manager, Joyce Hanlon.**