



# Learning and Employment

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New Kids on the Block

## Shopping for skills



**A new Skills Shop has just opened in Wigan's Grand Arcade.**

Set up by the Learning and Employment Service, Wigan Council's skills shops are unique 'one stop shops' for jobs, education and training. They offer personal support to people who want to get back into work or change their chosen career.

There is a very wide range of training opportunities available such as: interview skills, IT for Work, numeracy, literacy, first aid, food safety etc. Funding is also available for specific job related training such as Fork Lift Truck, Gas Safety, 17<sup>th</sup> Edition Electrical.

The new shop is open Monday-Saturday 9-5 pm, and until 8pm on Thursdays. This new approach is built on the success of the Leigh and Marsh Green skills shops which have given new hope to hundreds of people.

Lynne Davison, Assistant Service Manager said: "There's no quick fix, no 'one size fits

all' to supporting people into work and training. We offer a personalised service, that works with people on a one-to-one basis, to give them the skills and confidence to progress and achieve their aspirations."

Another part of the service offered by the Learning and Employment team is to work with local employers facing workforce redundancies. This is through supporting employees with advice about training, new skills and job opportunities.

Lynne has observed that low self-esteem and depression are getting worse for people out of work. "We have to support people and help them to address their needs - these may not be skills or training, sometimes it's debt and benefit advice, housing, childcare and/or health matters."

**You can contact the new skills shop on 01942 827826 or simply drop in - no appointment is needed.**

**Other skills shop contact details are: Marsh Green - 01942 705067; Leigh - 01942 404456; Westleigh - 01942 487343.**

## Teacher of the Year

**A Wigan teacher has won a top award for her inspirational work with deaf people.**

Melanie Potts, who works at Westleigh High's Adult Education Department, scooped the award for her commitment to teaching sign language. The 36-year-old was nominated by her pupils and received the North West Teacher of the Year 2009 award at London's Crowne Plaza Hotel.



A spokesman for Signature, an organisation that promotes excellence in deaf communications, said: "Melanie is an outstanding sign language teacher and is passionate about what she teaches."  
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## Barry's new course!



**Barry Cross has introduced many new courses during his 6 years as Head of the Shevington Centre. However, it's the golf course where he's heading when he retires at the end of this term.**

Barry, who is also Assistant Headteacher at the High School says: "There have been a lot of changes at Shevington in the 38 years since I joined the staff. In that time, Adult and Community Learning has been managed by five different people."

Kath Firth is currently teaching Floral Art and Design and has been working at the Shevington Centre for over 15 years. She fondly remembers her time as a Geology student at the school, being taught by Barry in the 1970s. Kath is the owner of Garlands Florist in Market Street Standish and is pictured, with Barry, displaying an Autumn Table Arrangement.

Barry is full of praise for the tutors: "It has been a pleasure to work with and support the current Evening Centre tutors. There have been a lot more demands placed on tutors in recent years and people have responded well to these changes."

Barry also singled out Wendy Dickinson who deals with all aspects of the Centre administration. "Wendy is the unsung hero of the friendly atmosphere created in this warm and friendly Learning Centre".

In retirement, Barry looks forward to spending more time playing golf at Ashton-in-Makerfield Golf Club where he is a member. "I started to play golf about 25 years ago, attending Shevington Evening Centre classes where Dave Clarke, the Gathurst Golf Professional, was a tutor."

We wish Barry every success in his retirement. He will be missed by everyone at the Shevington Adult Centre and by his colleagues in the Adult and Community Learning teams throughout the Local Authority.

# Community courses in life skills



Feeling good about yourself and improving your self-esteem are just two of the outcomes of a new Confidence Building course at Higher Folds Community Centre.

Working in partnership with Bedford High School, the Centre offers many opportunities for the community and a group of local people have already completed the first and second steps of the course.

The sessions include looking at personality profiles, writing personal mission statements, public speaking, confidence building and dealing with life's ups and downs. They have provided local people with better access to training and development in order to improve their life skills.

The project has made a significant difference to the lives of the learners. Initially, when they enrolled, many of the group said they wanted to be more confident, to be happy with who they were and to get some direction in life. Others said they wanted to get over the fear of speaking in public, to learn how to express their opinions and to value themselves and others.

Course tutor Jan Harney said: "It has been a joy working with the group and watching them progress and make their personal journey. They now have a

better chance in life, can tackle personal problems and become more active individuals."

By the end of the programme individuals said:  
*I have learned to feel good about myself and express my own opinion.*  
*I feel a lot more confident and understand myself.*  
*I have found ways to make goals a reality with simple steps.*  
*My team building skills are enhanced.*  
*I am now dressing better and my confidence has increased.*

Classes continue to run throughout the year. For more information please call Jayne Kumah at Higher Folds Community Centre tel: 01942 674548 email: jayne@higherfolds.org or Pauline Birchall tel: 01942 486379 email:adultlearning@bedford.wigan.sch.uk  
**\* Pictured are some of the successful learners.**

## LEARNING and EMPLOYMENT CENTRES

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## Storybook dads

The course is run in conjunction with Wigan's library service and a national organisation - Storybook Dads - that records the dads reading stories. The recordings are turned into high-quality compact discs which are sent, with the addition of sound effects, to their children.

My role is to help the dads make a book from these recordings which is then sent out to their families. Current studies show that half of all prisoners lose contact with their families while they are in custody. Prisoners who maintain family ties are six times less likely to re-offend.

I was a little apprehensive of the task in hand especially after the prison's security induction which stressed 'no scissors or sellotape allowed.' However, I went in with

an open mind, not knowing what to expect. I found a group of eager young dads (about the same age as my own teenage son) desperate to keep the links with their very young or even unborn children.

I have now helped to make nine books and I am constantly surprised at the ideas and results created. The dads have composed their own stories and re-written traditional tales and nursery rhymes.

I hope that the books and discs we have helped to create will assist in keeping the bond between father and child. They will also provide the skills and understanding to give their children a good start to reading.  
**\* Pictured are some of the books made by the dads.**



By Ruth Asson

**HMP Hindley is the country's largest centre for under 18 offenders and I have been running a course there, just for dads.**

## Teacher of the Year

*Continued from page 1*

Jackie Latu, Centre Manager at Westleigh High said: "Melanie is a very dedicated tutor, her classes are over subscribed due to her relaxed classroom attitude which makes the students feel comfortable in their learning environment. I am proud to have Melanie on board as one of my team."

One of her students, Samantha Green, said: "Melanie is both supportive and amusing, and an inspiration to learners with her down-to-earth approach."

The award winning teacher, who lives in Leigh, runs Tutors Direct, a team of tutors who provide British Sign Language courses across the North West.

Melanie has also been commended for setting up a club for deaf and hearing people. It runs most Tuesday evenings from 8pm at the Fishergate Pub on Orrell Road. She said: "Unlike many deaf clubs we invite both deaf and hearing people who are learning to sign and everybody helps one another out."

# John's hidden talents are revealed!

When John Turkington enrolled on a jewellery making course at Lowton High School in September, no one could have imagined just how talented he was.

His talents lie not with jewellery making - as this is a new skill that he is trying to acquire - but with artistic illustrations. Born in 1962, John has led an interesting life during which time he has travelled the world in the merchant navy. When it was time to settle down, he worked at Port Lympne Wild Animal and Safari Park in Kent - taking on the role of an elephant keeper!

More recently, John has been supporting Rob 'Fostie' Frost in the British Super Bike Championship, as a member of the pit

crew. It is John's love of wildlife and motor sport that continues to inspire his artwork.

He uses a dot making technique which involves making a matrix of dots using a 0.1 technical drawing pen over a watercolour wash. In the areas of deep tone and shadow there can be up to eight layers of black ink dots.

As the image builds from a 2D wash, John works with the black ink, pushing and pulling it, to create the subtle changes required to give the final artwork its 3D effect. Each piece of artwork can take anywhere from 100 to 180 hours to complete!

*\* John is pictured with some examples of his work.*



## Sweet success story



**This term's success story at the Shevington Centre is the Cake Decoration and Sugarcraft evening class.**

Numbers are up on last year due to the high reputation that local tutor, Tracy Barlow, has earned amongst her students.

Tracy (pictured with her students) attended adult education classes at Shevington for several years and was a former student of Kath Firth in Floral Art. Prior to taking

up the post at Shevington, she attended a cake decoration and sugarcraft course at Ormskirk St Bede's Adult Education Centre.

After completing the PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) course at the Abraham Guest Centre, Tracy progressed into her current post at Shevington where she has been teaching since September 2008. She is an excellent advertisement for progression in Adult Education provision!



## Underground art

**Tina Martin is an artist and art tutor at Tyldesley Community Education Centre and is also a curriculum team leader for Adult and Community Learning.**

She submitted one of her paintings to an agency, Art Below, which creates opportunities for artists to showcase their work in public spaces both at home and abroad. Tina's painting was chosen to be shown on the London Underground and, since the painting featured an angel, she requested that it be displayed at the Angel tube station!

The painting, called The Presence, was composed using a glazing technique similar to that used in Titian's paintings. Tina has taught this technique to her oil painting class - it has completely altered the way she uses oils in her own work. The paintings take months to complete, relying on glaze over glaze to create a rich and glowing effect.

One of Tina's students, who attends courses at the Centre, has designed her website

[www.tinamartinart.co.uk](http://www.tinamartinart.co.uk). It was created to coincide with her first poster display and also shows her current work.

Tina went to London to see her poster on display and the Islington Tribune newspaper reported that the painting "...aroused sufficient interest from commuters that some suggested it should become a permanent feature on the northbound platform. Tina, a professional artist and writer who has a personal interest in sacred images, said she was pleased passengers seemed to enjoy her work."

Tina also submitted a large watercolour to Art Below and was delighted that it was recently on display at Shibuya Station in Tokyo. She started learning Japanese five years ago but, unfortunately, she was unable to see her latest submission on display!



## Learning skills for employment

**It used to be called unemployment. These days it is known as 'worklessness'. But whatever you call it, helping those who are not working to find jobs and/or new skills is now the number one challenge for the borough.**

A major conference in Wigan recently highlighted two key tasks for the borough - removing the barriers to work or training and encouraging more people to set up their own businesses.

The conference took place against the backdrop of a warts and all survey of the borough's economy by economic forecasters Experian.

They predicted that Wigan, because of its manufacturing and construction traditions, would fare worse than places like Salford and Manchester which have a more varied economy.

In the medium term there will be modest growth - but not before a dip this year and next which will continue to have a big impact on jobs until 2014. The survey showed Wigan has lower levels of self-employment than the UK average and apprenticeship take-up is less positive.

For help and support in starting your own business contact Blue Orchid on 08450 170896

# New Kids on the block!



**Grange Community Complex, on Highfield Grange Ave in Marus Bridge, is one of the newest community centres in Wigan.**

It has rapidly become a vibrant and dynamic community hub, working with a wide range of partners. These include: Hope Special School, Hope Children's Centre, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust, AGHS Outreach Centre, the local Police Team and the Council.

The Grange Café is operated by 18 and 19 year old students from Hawkey Brook College (Hope School). The complex serves not only the surrounding private housing estate (the eighth largest in Europe!) but, due to its excellent communication links, a much larger catchment area than might be expected.

There are two buildings; the Upper Building contains Hope Community Library, the Computer Suite and a variety of meeting rooms and activity spaces. The Lower Building houses Highfield Grange Pre-School, the Wigan Branch of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, the MB Well-being and Cancer Centre and the Guides and Scouts. A Targeted Support Fund Grant of £30,070 from the Government is enabling

free courses to be offered in English and Maths, EDCL, Working in Schools, Child-minding, Relaxation and alternative therapy courses. These are in addition to the daytime courses in French, Japanese, Spanish, Computer, Painting, Yoga, Tai-chi and Dancing.

Carol Watson, Managing Director, says: "This is the facility that I would have liked when my family was growing up and my husband and I were still working. We have all worked hard to make this a flagship of good practice and partnership working. Our aim is to serve our community and to meet their needs."

For further information please contact Carol on 01942 777548 or 777545.

***Pictured are residents enjoying the Grange Café and Hawkey Brook College students on work experience. Besides being firm favourites with the residents, the students help to generate funds for the complex and raise money for charity.***



## News in brief

### Painting the Art rooms

Tyldesley CEC has secured a grant from Biffa to upgrade and modernise the Art room, install some new windows and make the building watertight through new pointing.

The upgrading of the art room means that ACL courses will take place in an improved environment with better facilities. The internal walls will be made brighter and fresher through painting and decorating.

### Video feedback

Learners on Lowton High School's adult education programme are being invited to tell others what they think of the services provided.

From January, their comments will be displayed on the school's website [www.lowtonhighschool.co.uk](http://www.lowtonhighschool.co.uk). Thanks to a grant from Wigan Council's Learning and Employment Service, mobile video/audio equipment has been purchased to support the courses.

## Book your place now!

**Painting and Drawing, Sign Language, Assertiveness, Counselling and Personal Development – are some of the new courses at Bedford High School's Adult Learning Centre.**

There are other exciting developments, such as a new community allotment and garden where, in the Spring, gardening and art classes will be held.

The school has a brand new website with a page dedicated to Adult Learning. Why not take a look to

see what courses are available now and also from January? No need to wait for enrolment - book your place now!

We also provide outreach activities at Hope Carr Community Centre and Higher Folds Community Centre - please ring for details of courses being held at these centres.

**\*Contact details:  
[www.bedfordhighschool.co.uk](http://www.bedfordhighschool.co.uk)  
Direct line: 01942 486379**

*Rita Lees, Adviser for the Bickershaw Family and Employment programme, provides a learner's case study.*

## A refreshing course

**Angela came to the Westwell Street Centre after being referred from Leigh Job Centre.**

She had not been in paid employment since 1998, due to bringing up five children. Now they were growing up, she wanted to resume her career in admin/reception.

Being out of the job scene for so long meant that Angela needed to refresh her existing admin skills. We discussed enrolling at college on a Business Admin Level 1 or 2 course. She was also interested in a voluntary placement where she could brush-up her skills, as her long-term goal was to enter paid employment.

I gave Angela a list of voluntary organisations and I approached the Community Co-ordinator of the Westwell Street Centre, Sheila Derby, as they were looking for help with admin duties. Angela called for an informal chat with Sheila, with a view to a voluntary placement.

Everything went well as Angela possessed all the necessary skills such as computing, taking minutes and typing them up, producing leaflets and other tasks related to the efficient running of a community centre. She started her placement alongside a Business Admin taster course at Westleigh High School.

### NVQ Level 2

She learned Excel and the placement helped her to prepare for NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration. This began in September at Wigan and Leigh College and it runs Mondays and Wednesdays 9.30 - 2.30pm.

Angela is going from strength to strength and the Westwell Centre hope to fund a permanent part-time position for her, based on her invaluable contribution to running admin tasks and duties. She has learned a great deal, from taking minutes at network meetings to applying for charitable status for the Centre. The variety of admin duties has improved her knowledge, confidence and employability opportunities.

I printed off various admin jobs through the Jobcentre Plus website, to show that she is equipped to apply. After completing NVQ2, Angela is thinking about enrolling on the NVQ3 in Business Admin. Meanwhile, the offer of a job with the community team at Westwell Street is still pending and is subject to available funding.

**\* If you want support in finding a job, please contact the team on 01942 487343. The team work in venues such as: Jubilee House, Plank Lane; Wigan Road Labour Club; Westwell Street Community Centre, Westleigh.**

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