

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
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ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK AWARD WINNER

Lynne Baker, aged 50, from Crawley, has won an Individual Learner Award, sponsored by the European Social Fund, as part of this year's Adult Learners' Week (19th – 25th May 2007). Lynne has been recognised for her outstanding enthusiasm and commitment to learning by the organisers of the UK's largest festival of learning, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

Lynne has had a visual impairment since birth and was registered blind in 2000. Yet despite her disability, Lynne is now a qualified counsellor and promotes disability awareness to local schools. Lynne says, "I wanted a purpose to my life, other than being just a parent to my 14 year old son...To get rid of a sense of inadequacy and feel useful".

Her learning journey began with two personal development courses at Level 2: 'Building confidence', and 'Making choices managing change'. This inspired her to undertake further study. Due to her disability, Lynne took on a Learning Support Assistant to help her with her written work. Despite negativity towards this from some fellow students, Lynne persevered and undertook an Introduction to Counselling course.

Lynne faced various difficulties, including having to use an old version of the course text because it was not available as a listening book. However, this did not deter her in successfully completing her Level 1 and 2 in Counselling. Her new-found confidence has led her to take on various voluntary projects. She works with the Surrey Association for the Visually Impaired as a phone buddy to others who are blind and housebound. She also works with Saturday Venture Association, visiting schools to talk about disability awareness.

She has found new friendships and is proud to have inspired her son to challenge obstacles and value learning.

Lynne says, "Learning is a doorway to a purposeful life. It allows you to change direction and have a chance to improve yourself."

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE, said, “What is without question is the remarkable dedication, enthusiasm and energy that every single one of this year’s Adult Learners’ Week Award winners have shown. Learning transforms lives but that transformation can not happen without the commitment, creativity and vigour adults – of every age and stage – carry throughout their learning journeys. The winners have discovered new-found talents and confidence and are eager to learn more. They will continue to enhance their own lives and those of their families, friends and communities.”

Gordon Pursglove, Head of European Social Fund (ESF) Division, at the Department for Work and Pensions, said, “I am delighted that this is the sixteenth year European Social Fund money will be used to support Adult Learners’ Week. Since 2000 ESF has supported around 4 million unemployed and disadvantaged people, equipping them with skills they need to find jobs and to make progress at work. Adult Learners’ Week provides an excellent opportunity to recognise people’s learning achievements and I hope that the success of all of this year’s winners will inspire many more people to develop their true potential.”

For further information please contact:

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