

Work Experience Newsletter

Issue 1 2010

Welcome

West Lothian Council would like to thank you for supporting our Work Experience Programme. Your partnership is truly valued.

"We are delighted to work with local businesses to provide real encouragement for young people as they prepare for the world of work. For many pupils, the Work Experience Programme can increase motivation and inspire them for the future, and it gives employers an opportunity to influence schools and ensure potential employees are better ready to join the work force."

Chief Executive Mr Alex Linkston

Work Experience Celebrated

A special breakfast event celebrated the role of employers in giving young people an introduction to the world of work.

The fifth annual Big Business Breakfast was held on Friday, 20 November, at Howden Park Centre in Livingston. The morning recognised those firms who support the Council's Work Experience Programme.

Thousands of young people in West Lothian learn through activities such as work placements, mentoring schemes, enterprise events and interview workshops, and this event celebrated the strong partnerships already in place between employers and Education Services. The event also encouraged local businesses who may not be already involved to develop links with schools.

The exciting event had a 'Homecoming' theme, and provided the opportunity for businessmen and women to network with each other, as well as local teachers and pupils. All secondary schools were represented at the event and pupils played leading roles in the organisation of the morning. Attendees were piped into the event by Mairi Connor of Linlithgow Academy and enjoyed a Scottish poem from Ashley Nelson and Rachel Grimley of Bathgate Academy. Shannon McGovern of St Margaret's

Academy delighted everyone with music from the fiddle, her first performance in front of an audience, before dashing off to sit a prelim!



Speakers included: pupils on the positive impact work experience had on them, personally and professionally; landscape architect Joanne Brindley on how she has grown her Brindley Associates business in West Lothian; and Colin Temple from footwear firm SCHUH on the annual SCHUH Challenge to encourage entrepreneurship.

As in previous years pupils and school coordinators had nominated companies for awards.

This year the awards were as follows:

Xcite Bathgate - Most Loyal Provider 2009

Heriot-Watt University – Dedication to the Work Experience Programme 2009



ASDA Walmart - Commitment to the Work Experience Programme 2009

Beattie School - Most Rewarding Placement 2009

W.L. Gore - Most Desirable Placement 2009

HMV UK Ltd - Most Popular Placement 2009

Brian Michael - Dedication to the Work Experience Programme 2009

The following companies were awarded Highly Commended certificates:

Careers Scotland

The Army

Weslo Housing Management, Bathgate

Morrisons Supermarket Plc, Dedridge

Interserve

Intercell Biomedical Ltd

Lothian Mechanical Handling

First Group Edinburgh

...continued

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Council Chief Executive Alex Linkston, who delivered the keynote address at the breakfast, said: "We are ambitious for our young people in West Lothian, and it is essential that they have opportunities to develop skills for work and skills for life."

"Working in partnership with local employers last year, we were able to offer around 2000 young people a Work Experience placement including 97 extended placements for pupils who have found school challenging".

"We are delighted to work with local businesses to provide real encouragement for young people as they prepare for the world of work. For many pupils, the Work Experience programme can increase motivation and inspire them for the future, and it gives employers an opportunity to influence

schools and ensure potential employees are better ready to join the work force."

"It's a real win, win situation for all parties, and contributes to a sustainable local economy for the future."

The following companies kindly donated items for the prize draw:

Howden Park Theatre
Five Sisters Zoo
SCHUH
The Wee Restaurant
Johnson & Johnson Medical Limited
Truly Scrumptious

Thanks go to the photographers for the morning Kirsty Heaney (Inverlmond) and Heather Norrie (James Young) who are both undertaking Higher photography at West Lothian College.

Successful Partnerships in Practice

At the Big Breakfast in November a former pupil from Pinewood School, Scott Boyd gave a short presentation on his work experience and how he has continued to be on placement at Scotmid, supported by the Employment Service of the Learning Disability Independence Team. Talking in front of such an esteemed audience is daunting for any young person but for a boy like Scott, with significant learning difficulties this was even more of an achievement.

For those who weren't at this event, Scott was the first pupil from Pinewood School who has benefited from the partnership between school staff and this service in the Adult Learning Disability team.

We have tailored the work experience programme which best meets the needs of the pupils. Scott went out one morning a week from March until June to Scotmid in Blackburn, where he learnt how to stack shelves, deal with customers etc. He was supported by a member of Pinewood School staff who coached him in the different aspects of the job, and also encouraged him in developing his independence.

At school, we had already identified Scott as being someone who could in the future be employable and he had been referred to the Employment Team even before starting on placement. Scott's destination from school was to attend a specialised course for young people with learning difficulties at West Lothian College four days a week. We had hoped that the Employment team would be able to support him on a work placement the other day so that, in the future he might secure a job. These are difficult times for any young person trying to gain employment but young people with additional needs have even more barriers to overcome to gain employment.

I am pleased to report that not only were all our aims achieved but our expectations were exceeded. Scott has gone on to college, where he is learning valuable learning skills to help him in his transition to adulthood. He has also continued to work at Scotmid, facilitated by Stuart Pretswell from the Employment Team, first in Armadale and then in West Calder



who took over supporting Scott learning the job. The latest update has been that when Scott moved house he secured a permanent 2hr contract with Scotmid at their Armadale store, which is fantastic news for Scott.

We are all delighted with Scott's success. It is an excellent example of working in partnership between school, adult services and employers. Scott's mum is delighted with how it has all worked out. She can't believe the change in his maturity since starting with Scotmid and college this year. We all wish Scott well in the future and can't thank Scotmid management enough for creating such a successful outcome.

If you want to find out more about the Employment Service at the Learning Disability Independence Team or you can offer them placements, then contact them on 01506 775933.

Hazel McPake, Work Experience Co-ordinator, Pinewood School.

School Pupils Donate to the Macmillan Centre

A group of pupils from West Lothian secondary schools recently donated a twin seat and table to the Macmillan Centre at St.John's Hospital, Livingston. The seat was built by the pupils themselves while attending Blackburn Local Employment Scheme (BLES) as part of West Lothian Council's 'More Choices, More Chances' strategy. The pupils attended BLES one day per week over a series of weeks where they learned a variety of basic skills in joinery and painting & decorating.

The picture shows the pupils presenting their seat to Susan Mason of the Macmillan Centre alongside John Ewart MBE (Manager of BLES) and Laura Quilter (Transition to Work Coordinator, West Lothian Council).



Extra-time provides More Choices, More Chances in Coach Education

A group of West Lothian S5 pupils recently participated in the highly successful 10 week 'Extra-time' project which ran in partnership between West Lothian Council Education Services and Heart of Midlothian Football Club.

The innovative project which was part of the West Lothian Council's 'More Choices, More Chances' strategy involved a programme of activities designed to increase the motivation, self confidence and aspiration of the participants whilst completing an SFA Coach Education course.

The photograph shows the participants with Anne Durnian (Senior Education Development Manager, Education Services) and Alistair Shaw (Head of Cultural, Communities & Economic Development Services) at the Presentation Ceremony which was recently held at Tynecastle Stadium.



Corporate Parenting

West Lothian Council is now providing more of our young people with the opportunity to become job ready. The council is backing the Get Ready for Work national training programme by providing funding over 3 years and asking colleagues across the 100 plus services within the council to support this by providing a work experience placement for young people aged 16 – 18yrs on the Get Ready for Work programme. 12 services have already signed up!

This development has delighted local training providers.

Jack Speirs, Training Manager from Sibbald Training has said "The placements within the council offer practical work based training within specific areas and with the experience

gained over the 26 weeks that the programme runs, the young trainee will be in a better position when applying for vacancies that arise both within the council and in the private sector."

Thomas McNee, a Get Ready for Work trainee who spent 6 months training with the Roads Department said "I am so much better prepared now to get a job than I was a few months ago. I feel I have a good chance as I have a good reference and some real work experience to put on my C.V." Thomas has now secured employment!

This is a unique opportunity for West Lothian Council to become part of the solution for these young people and help them in a very practical way to get on track to compete for jobs or move into training or learning.

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Waste no time in marketing recycling idea, budding Deans entrepreneurs told



Seven West Lothian High Schools took part in The Business Experience, a business start-up simulation event. It introduced young people to the idea of starting up a business and provided them with some of the basic skills and knowledge required to do so. The 2 day event served to introduce other education/ industry initiatives such as 'Young Enterprise' and 'Business Dynamics' whilst providing meaningful links to Standard Grade and Higher Business Management.

This was the first time that pupils from West Lothian had taken part in this event. The standard of entries from West Lothian was so high that the judges selected 2 teams to go forward to the grand final. The winning teams from West Lothian were; St Margaret's Academy with their innovative 'Techno-Desk' and Deans Community High School with their 'Envirobin'.

The Grand Final was held in Borders College, Galashiels on 8th December. The day was themed on the BBC TV series 'Dragon's

Den', where budding entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to Venture Capitalists. Fourteen teams from secondary schools in Midlothian, West Lothian and the Borders pitched their ideas to a panel of business experts in the final of 'The Business Experience' after being whittled down from a total of more than 650 participating students.

Envirobin, the cartoon character-based recycling containers aimed at making young children more environmentally aware won Deans Community High School first prize.

The team was immediately told by judges to 'waste' no time in getting their invention onto the market.

Judges praised the Deans' pupils' advance preparations and the quality of their presentation. Spokesman Caspian Woods, author of 'From Acorns ...' and founder of Editions Publishing, commented: "Their idea is an excellent example of a social enterprise project and the pupils have already got it past the thinking and academic stage. It's ready to go."

Among other products presented were an interactive skeleton and an exercise bike which powers the TV.

The annual event was organised by Essential HR, which provides a range of employment services including graduate recruitment and student placements, and is supported and funded by the Scottish Government's 'Determined to Succeed' programme.

"All teams showed a remarkable spirit of enterprise and demonstrated that the future of Scottish business is in good hands," said Lauren Parker of Essential HR. "Several of their ideas, developed from skills and knowledge gained in their schools and elsewhere, are capable of reaching the marketplace."

The event was enhanced further this year as Jewel and Esk College had developed a series of interactive modules to help participating pupils prepare for the event. Study through the modules also enabled the students to gain credits towards SQA NVQ Level 4 or Intermediate Level 1 qualifications in enterprise.

Focussing learning on skills for the future

New guidance will help schools and employers work closer together, while the vital skills for learning, life and work are brought to the fore of the curriculum.

Schools are being supported to build stronger links with local employers through a new online resource from Determined to Succeed, the Scottish Government strategy for enterprise in education. Partnership with Employers shares best practice from around the country and includes interactive training modules for teachers.

Meanwhile Skills for Learning, Life and Work – the fourth stage of the 'Building the Curriculum' documents – will encourage moving away from categorising learning as either academic or vocational. Focusing instead on the

knowledge and skills all young people need, teachers will be supported to deliver creative, engaging and work-relevant learning.

The new resources were launched in November at Johnson & Johnson Medical Ltd in Kirkton Campus, Livingston, which is involved in an innovative partnership with West Lothian College and Inveralmond Community High School. Speaking at the launch, minister for Schools and Skills Keith Brown said:

"Scotland needs a generation that is equipped with the skills required to be successful in a fast-paced and changing world, that can meet the economic and social challenges of the future and have an understanding of the workplace that will improve their chances of securing employment"

"Young people can receive a fantastic insight in to the world of work through links between local companies and schools and the new Partnership with Employers resource gives education professionals practical help in making this happen"

"As I have seen today at Johnson & Johnson Medical Ltd, Inveralmond High pupils are getting real benefits through practical experiences of the skills needed to succeed in the healthcare and life science industries. This is just the kind of partnership working I would encourage schools and colleges across Scotland to take forward, as we prepare young Scots for life in the 21st Century"

Further information may be obtained through the Learning and Teaching Scotland website:

www.ltscotland.org.uk

Should you wish any further information please contact Michelle Robertson.

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