

West Lancashire Challenge NEWS

February 2012

Networking Event Challenges Businesses to Develop Apprenticeship Opportunities

On Thursday 1st December, West Lancashire Challenge & West Lancashire College arranged the first of a series of business networking events. Local businesses were invited to learn more about how apprenticeships can help them to increase the efficiency and productivity of their business.

Business leaders from across the Borough heard from inspirational guest speaker and entrepreneur Kevin Moseley, CEO SwimFin, who refused help from the Dragons Den team and now exports SwimFin worldwide. Kevin, originally a swimming instructor from Skelmersdale, talked about his journey from the first SwimFin prototype – conceived as a unique swimming aid – through to the innovative product produced today.

Paula Gibson of the National Apprenticeship Service walked employers through the apprenticeship landscape and the benefits they can bring to businesses. Paula laid out how apprenticeships can help attract new talent, re-skill existing staff, overcome strategic skills shortages, develop a skilled and accredited workforce, generate increased sales and improve customer service levels.

Our very own Alex Lambie, Challenge apprentice with West Lancashire Borough Council, talked about his experience as an apprentice and how it has given him the opportunity to gain the confidence and experience to further develop his career. Alex commented "All the experience I have gained and all the skills I have developed are thanks to this apprenticeship and it has really helped me realise my potential."

Cllr Adrian Owens, West Lancashire Borough Council, added "Through the West Lancashire Challenge Project, the Council and its partners are working together to do all that we can to encourage employers to provide apprenticeships and work experience opportunities, particularly for young people".

Louise Dawson, Principal at West Lancashire College commented "We are really encouraged to see so many local employers at the network event and we look forward to developing stronger links with the local business community over the coming months". Businesses were then invited to network in Café West where they enjoyed canapés and refreshments, supplied courtesy of the college catering students.

The feedback so far has been very positive. With over 50 attendees, 3 companies have offered apprenticeships and many others have asked for an Apprenticeship Appraisal. As a spin-off from this event business leaders have also offered to be guest speakers in college, offered work placements and also want to be part of employer forums. As you can imagine we are absolutely delighted!

A big thank-you to all the speakers, the businesses who attended the evening and (of course) to those whose efforts made the event possible.



Apprenticeship Information & Recruitment Fair

To those who weren't able to take part in December, it's not too late to be involved - as part of Apprenticeship Week the Challenge Team is holding an Apprenticeship Fair on Tuesday the 7th February from 4:30pm until 7:00pm. Again hosted by West Lancashire College at their impressive new Skelmersdale Campus; why not come along and find out how taking on an apprentice can benefit your organisation.



Prize winners

At recent West Lancashire Challenge events we held free draws for some fantastic electronic prizes. The competitions proved really popular and more than 500 people put their names down when we attended Freshers Fairs at West Lancashire College and Edge Hill University as well as at a Volunteer Market event held at Christ Church Ministry Centre in Aughton. Those taking part have the opportunity of receiving regular bulletins from WLCVS and updates on what is happening on the Challenge project.

Our first winner was Megan Bruen who is a first year student at Edge Hill doing teacher training and she hopes to become a primary school teacher. Megan won an e-book reader which we hope will give her lots of fun for recreational reading and possibly be useful for her studies as well.

Our other winner is Kath Oakley who made the trip from Maghull especially to visit our Volunteer Market event in Aughton. Kath browsed the stands and chatted with charities and voluntary organisations that ranged from ecological groups to overseas educational charities and many others in between. Kath, who volunteers regularly at Café Vista, a community café based at the ministry centre, wins a multi media tablet which she intends to use as an e-book reader, for storing photographs and music.

Congratulations to both our winners, we hope you get lots of fun out of your prizes.

Health Network Event

During 2011 the West Lancs Challenge has hosted a series of Health Network Events, the most recent of which was held at the end of November at the Ecumenical Centre in Skelmersdale. In order to raise awareness of the increase in alcohol related domestic violence incidents during the Christmas period, we chose this as our theme for the day. For this event, the Challenge team worked in partnership with WLCVS, Domestic Violence Support Services (WL), Discover Drug and Alcohol Services (18+yrs), Young Addaction Drug and Alcohol Services (under 21's) and MARACs (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences).

The event was aimed at health professionals and gave them an opportunity to network and take part in workshops which aimed to increase knowledge and awareness on what services/initiatives are available 'on the ground' locally relating to a theme of domestic violence, alcohol and the role of MARACs. The event had over 75 attendees and 98% of the 50 evaluations received stated that the attendees had gained new information and felt the event had been worth while. Furthermore, 2 GP's attended the event, Dr Biswas (vice-chair of the West Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group), Dr Bonsar and a trainee GP from Beacon Primary Care, Dr Zoe Oliver, which gave them an insight into the vibrancy and value of the sector and the many valuable projects and organisations delivering direct or indirect health outcomes in the area.



For more information on the West Lancashire Challenge please call:

01695 712645

Or email: john.corish@westlancs.gov.uk OR gillian@wlcvs.org