

SKILLS SERVE UP SUCCESS FOR NOTTS WAITER

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A Notts man who started as a waiter and 19 years later runs a restaurant taking nearly £3m a year is thrilled his employer has taken the Skills Pledge, to encourage others to follow in his footsteps.

Center Parcs, whose holiday village and Head Office is based in Sherwood Forest, is one of the first companies in the East Midlands to commit to the pledge to encourage and support all of their employees to train to achieve at least a Level 2 qualification, five GCSEs at Grades A-C or equivalent.

Steven Roberts, 37, who lives in Ravenshead, started as a waiter in one of the Sherwood holiday village's five star restaurants. Through the company's training programme he did a number of in-house courses to lead him through management development taking him to one of the top service positions within the village.

Steven said:

"I did a two year catering course at Clarendon College when I left school and started applying for some positions locally, but Center Parcs really caught my eye as it's such a large organisation. I got a job as a waiter in one of their restaurants and since then it's simply been a case of taking advantage of every training opportunity offered. I wasn't necessarily ambitious but the training available and the opportunities for promotion have kept me here. I think that the Skills Pledge is a great initiative as the company have now made a commitment to take all staff to

their potential."

Center Parcs, who employ 6,100 staff in four holiday villages across the country, are dedicated to training. They run over 250 courses a year ranging from customer care to gas engineering and from beauty therapy to forest ranger qualifications. Accredited with Investors in People and Hospitality Assured, taking the Skills Pledge was the natural progression for the organisation.

Jo O Neil, the UK Training Manager for Center Parcs Ltd, said:

"Center Parcs is recognised as an organisation committed to training – we have access to Train to Gain, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded training service and we run the vast majority of our courses internally.

"Signing up to the Skills Pledge was the natural progression for us to demonstrate our commitment to training.

"As a hospitality organisation we are always guest facing and time to run training programmes is scarce, but it's essential for us to make sure there are opportunities and flexible training programmes to ensure we have well trained staff who can do the jobs well. Plus by offering a wide range of NVQs and other training to our employees we are a more attractive employer to school leavers, graduates and established professionals."

Karen Woodward, Director of Regional Skills in the East Midlands, said:

"Skills are vitally important for individuals, for their future employability and for the success of businesses throughout the UK.

"And by signing up to The Skills Pledge companies are making a commitment to investing in education and training helping them reap the benefits with dramatic improvements in attainment.

"We'd encourage other organisations across the East Midlands to sign up to the Skills Pledge. By making a commitment to the Skills Pledge employers will also have access to a Skills Broker, part of the Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain service, through whom they can access free literacy, numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses. The Skills Broker can assess the company's training needs and help the employer produce an action plan that will set out contributions from the state, the employer and the individual."

Notes to Editors:

- Photographs available. Contact GNN

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