

NEWS RELEASE

Thursday 11 June 2009



Essex Big Skill winners announced!

The winners of Essex's Big Skill Awards 2009 were announced on Thursday June 11 at a ceremony held outside the Shire Hall in Chelmsford.

Run by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in partnership with BBC Radio Essex, The Big Skill Awards recognise and reward people who have improved their life or the lives of others through learning.

The winner of the overall award for excellence, chosen from the winners of each category, was mum-of-five Leslie Townsend, who the judges described as "one of life's inspirations".

Leslie, 37, from Shoeburyness, won the Skills for Work Award category for gaining qualifications and progressing to be manager of a care home, despite looking after her children and also caring for her mother and father.

She now helps other carers at the home with learning and qualifications. "She exemplifies training and is a role model and support for others," said judges. "She's a worthy winner and an inspiration to all, showing that by embracing learning you can achieve above and beyond."

The winners were announced on Thursday at an outdoor awards ceremony that was open to the public to attend. Winners were presented with a certificate, a trophy and a £150 experience day voucher by BBC Sport presenter Ray Stubbs, who returned to Chelmsford to present the awards after launching The Big Skill in January this year.

The awards ceremony followed a day-long showcase event outside the Shire Hall, where people could try their hand at different skills taught by colleges and training providers in Essex, including computer skills, a town-centre orienteering competition, hair and beauty tips and a keepy-uppy football skills contest.

The Essex winners of the Apprenticeship Awards 2009, also run by the LSC, also received their awards at the ceremony. Alice Ryan was named Apprentice of the Year, with Allied Construction winning Employer of the Year.

BBC Essex presenter Dave Monk said: "How do you choose an overall winner from such strong entrants? For me, gaining glimpses of these people's quest for knowledge was both uplifting and humbling. It confirmed the positive influence continuous learning can have on all our lives."

Janice Logie, Area Director at LSC Essex, said: "The Big Skill has done a great job of raising awareness of the learning and training opportunities on offer in Essex.

"It's been wonderful to celebrate and recognise the real achievements of learners across the county," she added.

"The Big Skill winners should be an inspiration to others and show that it is possible to overcome challenges and learn new skills that can open doors and change lives for the better."

The full results are as follows:

14 - 16 Learner Award

- **WINNER:** T-Jay Sinani, 16, from Southend
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Carolann McCormack, 16, from Basildon
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Billie Everett-Mackenzie, 16, from Chelmsford

17 – 19 Award

- **WINNER:** Zoe Rogers, 19, from Basildon

Adult Learner Award

- **WINNER:** Request for no publicity
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Elizabeth Ainge, 31, from Great Dunmow
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Steven Bertie, 39, from Benfleet

Skills for the Community Award

- **WINNER:** Kelly Bickford, 29, from Brentwood
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Sharan Allsopp, 43, Canvey Island

Skills for Work Award

- **WINNER:** Leslie Townsend, 37, from Shoeburyness
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Katie Morgan, 24, from Grays
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Edward Gryko, 53, from Romford

Employer Commitment to Skills Award

- **WINNER:** Federal Express Europe Inc.
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Thurrock Council
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Britvic Soft Drinks Ltd

The Learners' Champion Award

- **WINNER:** Stephen Orbell, 45, from Colchester
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Jason Richards, 37, Dagenham
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Robert Wilcockson, 41, from Shoeburyness

Big Skill Excellence Award winner

- **WINNER:** Leslie Townsend, 37, from Shoeburyness

Apprenticeship Awards 2009

Essex Apprentice of the Year: Alice Ryan

Employer of the Year: Allied Construction

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Notes to editors

**For more information or if you would like to attend, please contact Matt Ware or Lou Mains at Tribe on 01603 417722 or email matt@tribepr.com
For comments from the BBC, please ring 0121 567 6274**

The Big Skill 2009

The Big Skill first ran in 2008 and following its success in Norfolk was rolled out across all six counties in the East of England, with support from Ray Stubbs.

About the Learning and Skills Council

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) aims to improve the skills of young people and adults to ensure that England has a workforce of world class standard by 2020.

The LSC:

- provides free training programmes to young people and adults employed in local businesses
- plans and funds education and training in schools, colleges and sixth forms
- provides advice and supports people wanting to continue in, or return to, education
- provides financial support to young people and adults to allow them to continue in education

About BBC East

BBC East is built around six local radio stations and online sites - Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Three Counties (Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire).