

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, June 16, 2009



Hertfordshire Big Skill winners announced!

The winners of Hertfordshire's Big Skill Awards 2009 were announced on Tuesday, June 16 at a glittering outdoor ceremony.

Run by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in partnership with BBC Radio Three Counties, 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 Anthony Hull - who also won the 14-16 Learner Award.

Anthony, 16, from Watford, overcame a traumatic home life before choosing to live with his grandparents and opting to start an NVQ Level 1 course in hairdressing at West Herts College.

Judges said Anthony, whose ambition is to have his own salon, had made a significant journey since he began studying.

"Anthony has come up against so many varied difficulties at such a young age and has overcome them all, keeping on the right tracks. He has completely changed his life around and we felt this was a very humbling application," the added.

Pamela Reynolds, 45, also from Watford, won the Adult Learner Award for overcoming cerebral palsy to undertake a counselling skills course at West Herts College.

Nominating her, tutor Ros Purcell said: "A mixture of determination and sensitivity makes Pam stand out and deserve recognition."

The winners were announced on Tuesday in Stevenage at an outdoor awards ceremony that was open to the public to attend. Winners were presented with a

certificate, trophy and a £150 experience day voucher by BBC Sport presenter Ray Stubbs, who launched The Big Skill in Stevenage in January this year.

The awards ceremony followed a day-long showcase event at the Gordon Craig Leisure Centre, where people could try their hand at different skills taught by colleges and training providers in Hertfordshire, including IT and hairdressing skills as well as various construction skills. Demonstrations includes veterinary care and cookery skills.

There were also be stage performances throughout the day, with band performances from Otley College, a number of acting and dancing displays and a performance from a freestyle footballer.

The Hertfordshire winners of the Apprenticeship Awards 2009, also run by the LSC, received their awards at the ceremony. Charlee Peters was named Apprentice of the Year, with Swift Horsman Group Ltd winning Employer of the Year.

Laurence Culhane, Assistant Editor at BBC Three Counties Radio, said: "Every nomination had a story to tell of hard work, dedication or inspiration. All those nominated can be justifiably proud of their achievements."

Jeff Wren, Area Director at LSC Hertfordshire, said The Big Skill had done a great job of raising awareness of the learning and training opportunities on offer in Hertfordshire.

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

more

The full results are as follows:

14 - 16 Learner Award

- **WINNER:** Anthony Hull, 16, from Watford
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Aaron Gibson, 16, from Hemel Hempstead
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Amber Kelly, 15, from Bushey

17 – 19 Award

- **WINNER:** Zoe Murphy, 18, from Cheshunt
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Jamie Curtis, 17, from St Albans
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Chloe Grinham, 19, from Watford

Adult Learner Award

- **WINNER:** Pamela Reynolds, 45, from Watford
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Danielle Mackenzie, 20, from Letchworth
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Jamie Hardy, 20, from Hitchin

Skills for Work Award

- **WINNER:** Mark Boxer, 19, from St Albans
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Lewis Lanza, 17, from Hatfield
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Elizabeth Sladden, 29, from Waltham Cross

Employer Commitment to Skills Award

- **WINNER:** Hertsmere Leisure, based in Borehamwood

The Learners' Champion Award

- **WINNER:** Elizabeth Green, 47, from Watford
- **HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Neville Holding, 50, from Stevenage

Big Skill Excellence Award 2009

- **WINNER:** Anthony Hull, 16, from Watford

Apprenticeship Awards 2009

- **Hertfordshire Apprentice of the Year WINNER:** Charlee Peters, 20 from Stevenage
- **Hertfordshire Apprentice of the Year HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Richard Fox, 20, from Hemel Hempstead
- **Hertfordshire Apprentice of the Year HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Zoe Murphy, 18, from Cheshunt
- **Employer of the Year:** Swift Horsman Group Ltd based in Ware

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Notes to editors

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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).