

## Castle comes home

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**Television presenter and former British tennis champion Andrew Castle is “coming home” to help celebrate the success of other Somerset champions.**

Andrew, a former pupil of Richard Huish College in Taunton, will be back in his home town on March 15 to present the prizes in the 2007 Champions of Learning Awards.

The event is organised by the Learning and Skills Council to recognise special achievements in the world of learning – sometimes against extraordinary odds.

Entries for this year’s contest are already flooding in – with the closing date set at January 26.

Today Sally House, Partnership Director with the Learning and Skills Council in Somerset, said: “We look upon it as the learning equivalent of the Oscars.

“The awards night is a great way to celebrate special people and special achievements and we are delighted to have someone of the calibre of Andrew Castle to present the awards.”

Employers, colleges, learning providers or individuals across Somerset can nominate people for the awards. And there is still time to join in.

Among companies and organisations nominating entries for the first time this year are the Somerset-based fashion house Mulberry, and the St John Ambulance in Somerset.

Mulberry Training Co-ordinator Jonathan Carver, who has entered one of his staff in the category of apprentice of the year, said: "Entering a competition like this is a great way to show the people you work with that you really appreciate what they do; that you do recognise the outstanding efforts they are making."

***The awards will be presented at a celebration dinner being held at the Holiday Inn in Taunton on March 15.***

Last year's winners included Jed McQueen Jones (Young Learner of the Year), a student at **Taunton's** Richard Huish College, who in spite of undergoing extensive treatment for a brain tumour, continued his A-level studies, achieved straight A grades in maths, physics and chemistry and went on to Exeter University.

Shelley Catley, from **Shepton Mallet**, was the winner in the category called Juggling to Learn. Shelley excelled in her art and design studies at Strode College in **Street**, in spite of the responsibilities of looking after a premature baby.

And seventy five year old Iris O'Brien, from **Taunton**, picked up the Golden Learner Award (open to people over the age of 65).

The 2007 categories will also include:

- **Learning Against the Odds** – for individuals who have overcome a major difficulty or hurdle to reach their goal
- **Achieving Skills for Life** – recognising an individual who, irrespective of age, has significantly improved their literacy or numeracy
- **Apprentice of the Year** –open to all apprentices in Somerset
- **Working in Partnership to Benefit the Learner** – to recognise an individual or organisation that has helped to reduce barriers to learning by working with other organisations
- **Inspiring Others to Learn** – to recognise someone whose character or words of wisdom leave a lasting impression and motivate others to learn.

Details on how to enter can be obtained by contacting event organiser Andrew Coates on 01278 422301, email [Andrew.coates@prospects.co.uk](mailto:Andrew.coates@prospects.co.uk) or access the nomination pack via [www.lsc.gov.uk/col](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/col) . Alternatively write to Andrew Coates, Event Director, Champions of Learning Awards 2007, Pearl House, Church Street, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5AT.

## **ENDS**

Further information from: Andrew Coates (as above)