



PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 3rd June 2010

Weymouth celebrates success at South West Skills Awards

Weymouth was the big winner at last night's South West Skills Awards, which saw locals walk away with two of the 17 coveted awards.

The prestigious ceremony, which took place at Sandy Park conference centre in Exeter, was presented by BBC's former chief news correspondent, Kate Adie, OBE. Kate, who is the current presenter of Radio 4's *From Our Own Correspondent*, delivered a keynote speech about her own experience learning essential skills on the job.

This journalistic theme was reinforced by compere Clinton Rogers, the BBC's Chief Somerset Correspondent.

The Weymouth winners were:

- Sam Hilly – who won the Achieving Skills for Learning Award
- Medisave UK – which won the Train to Gain Small/ Medium Employer of the Year Award

The South West Skills Awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of apprentices, learners and employers who have excelled in the region.

Run by the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service, the evening combined the Skills Awards with the South West regional heat of the National Apprenticeship Awards.

Paul Lucken, Skills Director for the Skills Funding Agency South West said: "I would like to extend my congratulations to Sam Hilly, Medisave UK, the other winners of the evening and also to the shortlisted candidates.

“The effort and contribution made by this year’s winners have clearly made a positive impact on the organisations in which they work, their own personal development and, in turn, the wider South West economy. It is important to note that all entrants make the South West a better place for us to live and work – and that it is something worth celebrating.”

Further information about the South West Skills Awards can be found at:

<http://www.skillsawards.org.uk/>

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Notes to editors:

For media inquiries including comment, case studies or images, contact:

Rakhee Shah at Munro and Forster.

T: 0207 815 3960

T: rakhee.shah@munroforster.com

Sam Hilly

Sam Hilly joined the Fresh Start course at Weymouth College having had to leave his home in Lewes to begin a new life. Regardless of the personal challenges, he patiently and doggedly continued with his studies and achieved Level 2 qualifications in both literacy and numeracy. Sam has now joined the Personal Best course to gain volunteering qualifications and in September will become a student on the Access course at Weymouth College with the ultimate aim of becoming a virologist or a doctor. The benefits of gaining qualifications from the Fresh Start course not only gave Sam a new zest for life and greater self esteem, it also helped build a much better relationship with his parents.

Medisave UK Ltd

Medisave, a medical equipment sales company launched in 2000, struggled to succeed for six months before expanding into online sales. It then began to grow rapidly, reaching an annual turnover of £7.5m in 2009, which demanded many more staff than the existing family team. Recognizing success would be down to their employees, the company believed exceptional training would be the best policy. Medisave has long standing relationships with local training agencies and colleges and took advantage of Government training initiatives. The company employed an apprentice in each department with the aim of promoting people once qualified. It also began supporting staff through numerous qualifications including NVQ Business Administration and NVQ Customer Services Levels 2 and 3 and carefully designed short courses for all directors, senior managers, managers and supervisors. In 2008 Medisave began enrolling warehouse-based employees on the Train to Gain programme. In 2009, in partnership with Kingston Mauward College, four members of the Medisave management team began NVQ Management Level 3 qualifications and three department supervisors started studying for NVQ Level 2 in Team Leading. Currently over

50% of the company's employees are enrolled on training programmes - supporting the company philosophy that investing in staff is the secret to success.

The South West Skills Awards

These awards recognise the achievements of individuals at every stage of life and career. By acknowledging the diverse learners and training opportunities in the region, the Skills Funding Agency hopes to encourage more learners and organisations to take part in learning initiatives that not only support individual development but contribute to stronger economic and workforce prosperity.

Sponsors for the South West Awards

Train to Gain Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Business Link and Train to Gain

Skills Pledge Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Skills Pledge

Third Sector Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by European Social Fund

Success in Leadership and Management Award – sponsored by Train to Gain

Apprenticeship Awards – sponsored as a whole by City & Guilds

Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by EDI

Young Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by Unilever

Advanced Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by EAL / EMTA Awards Ltd

Micro Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Skills for Care

Small Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by BT

Medium Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Sellafield Ltd

Large Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by BAE Systems

Skills Funding Agency:

The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for channelling funding swiftly, efficiently and securely to further education colleges and other providers, primarily in response to customer (employer and learner) choice on programmes such as Train to Gain. It operates through customer focused services: *National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)*, *Employer Skills Services*, *Adult Advancement and Careers Service*, *Learner Skills Services*. The Skills Funding Agency is an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS):

The NAS was announced in January 2008 and officially launched in April 2009. Reporting to the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Education (DfE), the service will drive forward the Government's ambition for Apprenticeships. The service aims to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering Apprenticeships.