



PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 3rd June 2010

Penzance resident named South West Young Apprentice of the Year

Gary Nicholls of Mounts Bay Engineering is celebrating today after winning the Young Apprentice of the Year Award at the South West Skills Awards, which took place last night (2 June).

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 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.

Gary Nicholls of Mounts Bay Engineering will go on to the national Apprenticeship Awards ceremony at Westminster Plaza in Central London on 15 July 2010 where he will be amongst the best from England.

Dr John Chudley, Regional Director for the South West National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) agreed: "These awards recognize individuals at every stage of life and career, and the contributions of employers, both large and small, spanning all sectors.

“By acknowledging and rewarding the diverse learners and training opportunities in the region, we hope to encourage more individuals and organisations to take part in initiatives in the future.”

Further information about the South West Skills Awards can be found at:
<http://www.skillsawards.org.uk/>

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Gary Nicholls

Gary Nicholls became involved with the Young Apprenticeship programme two years ago aged just 14. He has a keen interest in Marine Engineering and so joined the Engineering programme at Cornwall College. To complement his classroom-based training, Gary started work experience with Mounts Bay Engineering, Penzance, in 2009. He works hard to support the five staff and has helped with a range of tasks on all sizes of vessel - from one-man fishing boats to beam trawlers.

His employer tries to tailor tasks in line with his college training and he is often trusted to work alone as he is able to use his own initiative, knowing he can ask for support when needed. His dedication, commitment and eagerness to learn have made him an integral part of the Mounts Bay Engineering team. Thanks to the Apprenticeship, Gary has overcome his learning challenges and he is now doing all he can to achieve his dream of joining the Army. His positive mental attitude has impressed all those who have worked with him – as have his personal and academic development and the growth in his confidence and self-esteem.

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.