

PRESS RELEASE

7 May 2008

Contact: Simon Bennett, Knowledge Development Director, Tel: 0121 631 5821
Mob: 07866 409288 Email: simon.bennett@mlawestmidlands.org.uk

Inspired by art: Health group wins learning award

The Bilston Art 4 Health Group has overcome personal barriers to learning, to win the MLA West Midlands Special Group Adult Learners' Week Award.

The group meets at Bilston Craft Gallery and provides free weekly art and craft activities to adults who are referred from a range of support services.

They follow Individual Learning Plans which allow them to focus on their own goals and progress. For some, being outside their usual environment is a big step, but the venue has inspired them to develop their artistic skills. Group learning in a supportive setting has given them confidence and self belief.

They are now an inspiration to others experiencing issues with mental health or social exclusion.

The MLA West Midlands Award is being presented for the first time this year.

It recognises the outstanding achievements of adult learners, as well as the contribution that museums, libraries and archives make to supporting them.

The panel of judges unanimously agreed that the members of the Art 4 Health Group are worthy winners of the Group Award.

The Group have commented on how their home at Bilston Craft Gallery, which is part of Wolverhampton Arts and Museums Service, has been an important factor in their success.

MLA West Midlands: the regional council for museums, libraries and archives

Grosvenor House, 14 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RS
Tel: 0121 631 5800 Fax: 0121 631 5825
www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk

'We all fell in love with the gallery which shows varied and exciting exhibitions. We now have a home there which inspires us all ... We all come to class to be stimulated and inspired, to take the pressure off our normal lives and being in such wonderful surroundings only enhances our love and passion for learning.'

Through participating in art therapy the group are now all keen to practise their new skills outside the classroom. Their work has already been showcased in leaflets produced by Wolverhampton PCT and in exhibitions for Wolverhampton Adult Education Service and World Mental Health Day. Future plans include a major exhibition show later this year.

Ends

Notes to Editors

MLA West Midlands

MLA West Midlands works with the eight English regional agencies and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in the MLA Partnership to improve people's lives by building knowledge, supporting learning, inspiring creativity and celebrating identity. The Partnership acts collectively for the benefit of the sector and the public, leading the transformation of museums, libraries and archives for the future. Visit: www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk.

NIACE and Adult Learners' Week

1. The Bilston Art 4 Health Group will be presented with the MLA West Midlands Special Group Adult Learners' Week Award at the West Midlands Adult Learners' Week Regional Award Ceremony at Kings Hall, Stoke on Trent on Wednesday 21st May 2008 from 10:30am – 12:30pm. Journalists and photographers are invited to attend. More information is available from Ed Melia, NIACE Press Officer, on 0116 204 4248 or 07795 358 870 or ed.melia@niace.org.uk
2. Adult Learners' Week, 17th–23rd May 2008, is the largest annual celebration of adult learning in the UK. It is supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the European Social Fund, learndirect, the National Learning and Skills Council, Ofcom - the Office of Communications, the Quality Improvement Agency, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and City and Guilds. More details at: www.alw.org.uk
3. Adult Learners' Week 2008 will include the following national events:
 - Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th May: **Cultural Diversity Weekend**
 - Monday 19th May: **Adult Learners' Week National Award Ceremony** - QEII Conference Centre, London
 - Tuesday 20th May: **National Policy Conference** *Adult Learning and Culture* to be held at the London Chamber of Commerce
 - Wednesday 21st May: Quick Reads Learners' Favourite Award and Voice on a Page to be held at The Globe Theatre
 - Thursday 22nd May: **Learning at Work Day** – *What makes learning at work, work* at the Victory Services Club, Marble Arch
 - Friday 23rd May: **Silver Surfers Day**
4. A national helpline - **learndirect** - is available year-round for confidential advice and information about careers and courses. The call handlers will have access to the NIACE website and can give information about local activities during Adult Learners' Week. Calls are free on 0800 100 900.
5. Events for Adult Learners' Week 2008 are listed in the interactive online calendar at www.alw.org.uk/calendar where you can search by keyword, your preferred date and by the region you live in. Or call **learndirect** free on 0800 100 900 to find Adult Learners' Week events local to you.
6. The themes for Adult Learners' Week 2008 are:
 1. Globalisation and the changing world of work
 2. Environmental Sustainability

MLA West Midlands: the regional council for museums, libraries and archives

Grosvenor House, 14 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RS
Tel: 0121 631 5800 Fax: 0121 631 5825
www.mlwestmidlands.org.uk

3. Technological Change
 4. Citizenship and belonging in a diverse society
 5. Demographic change
 6. Poverty reduction
 7. Changing expectations and perceptions of the Third Sector
 8. Well-being and happiness
7. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the leading non-government organisation for lifelong learning in England, and exists to encourage more and different adults to engage in better-quality learning of all kinds. It campaigns for, and celebrates the achievements of, all adult learners.

To contact the winner or institutions involved

Art 4 Health (Wolverhampton)

Sian Fletcher, Wolverhampton Adult Education Service (AES)

Telephone: 01902 558164

Email: sian.fletcher@aes.wolverhampton.gov.uk

MLA West Midlands: the regional council for museums, libraries and archives

Grosvenor House, 14 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RS

Tel: 0121 631 5800 Fax: 0121 631 5825

www.mlawestmidlands.org.uk