

This story was filmed and recorded during early February 2006 for 'Hear all about it!'

This campaign is a wonderful selection of inspiring adult learning stories told by the learners themselves. The highlights from Dawn's interview can be watched and read; this is the transcript of the whole interview. The on-line learning champions would be delighted if her stories were used to promote learning in your organisation, college or charity. You can link your webpage to the West Midlands Learning Directory – Hear all about it! page

[www.wmld.org/pages/hear\\_all\\_about\\_it/](http://www.wmld.org/pages/hear_all_about_it/).



Dawn's story -

I'm doing part time colleges, I know it sounds daft but I'm doing quite a few different studies. I did a BTEC for a year and a half, I couldn't get to second level but I'm still doing another course, I'm doing my level 1 creative skills, cause I'm quite talented with my flower arranging and because I love it. I'm doing my IT on a Monday, working with computers going through the boxes and doing all different areas. On a Tuesday we do our literacy so that's our English, so we all have to learn the nouns and all of our different things, all of our techniques what we've got to learn and do sentences afterward, that's quite good. I've just recently started a voluntary job on a Wednesday so it's my second week this week and I've learnt to practice on a posy so I've done it better this week. I do my class on a Thursday to do my flower arranging, so each week we do a different arrangement, that's quite good. Then I go to the other college and I do my IT, so I work through a booklet, that's quite good. On a Friday morning I do my maths, just working through my E2, had another practice, got a little bit better this week so that's really good, I'm quite a busy lady.

Literacy classes to help me with my reading and my IT gives you a bit more confidence, cause you use your dictionary work that brings your English into it. Your maths is more your sums and things like that. It's everyday life, like at the supermarket when you're weighing things, they bring that into it, measuring, they bring that into it, there's quite a lot involved. And then my flower arranging I do different designs every week, so its good, we work through a book. If I get stuck my tutor says to me this is how it looks and then you get it, how the design works. We get marked for it sometimes, every couple of weeks, just to say you've done the shape right, you've done that right, so it's quite good. IT it was like going through the boxes and formatting and going into that.

I lived in Charnsley Wood when I was little. Went to a proper school and I struggled with my literacy. When I left school I did a YTS, there used to be a training thing in Charnsley but that gone now. I used to do all different things like planting, modelling stuff like that, then I went on to a factory did golf packing, did that for about a year. I packed it up cause I got claustrophobic working in a factory, and then I decided to go on another YTS doing hairdressing. Did that for another year then I met a chap, had a baby so I couldn't go to work for ages, then I had my second child. And then I went to work, I did cleaning for eight years, then I split up with my chap then I moved back to Charnsley Wood, that's my life.

I wanted confidence, I wanted to get back to college to learn my maths and my English because nowadays when you want a job its all qualifications and there is only jobs out there like cleaning. I did it for eight years and I hated it. This is a chance for me, now that I've brought my two kids up and they're growing up now I want to go out there and try and get a career. This is my time for myself now, I'm 37, I need to get qualifications, I'm going to try my hardest to get where I want to, I've continued with my flower arranging cause I love it so much and if I can get into flower arranging I'd love to get into gardening. I won a competition, not last year but the year before, third with the housing, that was quite good, that gave me a good boost. And mainly, its good for people, they should go back to college and learn all the things, you should have done it when you were little but its never too late to learn, you've always got that chance to do it and I think you should do it, its really good.

When I was with my chap, before I split up with him, he used to call me stupid and say I can't do things, cause I did have problems with my reading, it was really hard. When I went back to college and I got my own place with the kids, my confidence got better and everybody said to me, even my tutor now, you've been at college for three years your confidence has come on better, you've aimed, did what you wanted to do and you can continue to do that, its basically just more practicing really.

I'd love to go into a florist's shop, if I can get the qualifications. If I can't, I'd love to get into a garden centre where you can grow your own plants, cause I love it anyway, and its good therapy. I'd love to do that because its good when you go in a garden centre, you can do the plants and do all the different things, its really good. I'm hoping I could get a job doing that. I don't want to go back to cleaning again.

They help us with our English, she's given me an assignment to do this week, like if you want to write a letter to your son cause he lives in America, and I'm doing that. I do find it hard to write letters so this is what we're practicing on now, cause this is like everyday life. I need to practice if you're writing a letter to a job; it needs to be the right setting and you've got to understand it. A way of doing that is writing it back to yourself, you can even go on a computer to check that and use spell check so that's another way of learning. Other things we have to do is we were doing a project on businesses, setting up your own business, I think I'm going to go back to that later on. It's a good way of learning if you want to set your own business up, its an interest then that you could learn. With my maths its everyday life, copying out of your bills, adding and things like that. Weighing is a good thing cause if you get into a supermarket, say you've got to weigh bananas out, or apples or grapes, anything like that, it's a good way of learning.

I did a competition about a year and a half ago, on my BTEC year, I came third on flower arranging, didn't think I was going to do it, I was shocked, you know when you get shocked and you think like "oh God, no" its not going to happen to you. And I won third so everybody was proud of me cause I was on my first year, and it's only me that studies this hard, some of the students

in the classes they muck about and they was quite good with me so I was quite pleased with that.

I think I've achieved a lot, going back to when I was with my ex I've done quite a lot, I used to let him do all the bills and everything and because I'm living on my own now, I've learnt to pay the bills on my own, I've learnt to phone up people if you have trouble you know, and they give you time to pay, I've had confidence to do it, I've never done that in my life before. And other things I've learnt, I've even sold a mortgage on my own, I've never done that before in my life. I have got confidence, I mean talking to you people now, I didn't think I'd have confidence even to do that. I think I've achieved quite a lot but I still want to aim at college to get my level one, cause at the moment I'm on E2 and if I try and aim for my level one. And with my flower arranging get somewhere and I'll be quite happy, maybe I'll get somewhere I don't know, but I'll try!

This project was managed by [jo.knight@niace.org.uk](mailto:jo.knight@niace.org.uk) - who can be contacted for more information. She works for NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education). Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council funded the project.

