

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 Joy'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/.



Joy's story -

I'm a part time administrator for the Scarman Trust and I'm also studying part-time, I'm now on a management course and I'm also doing NVQ level 2 in administration. Now I'm an administrator but I'm not looking at staying doing administration forever I'm thinking of going higher. So it's down to studying and that's what we have to do. You can't sit back and think, "I want to be like that lady and I want a home and a car". You can't just talk the talk, you need to walk the walk as well. So we have to get all the education we can and it's not down to "I haven't got any money" because there are loads of free courses out there. You just need to try to get the contacts or ask around, go to the job centres, wherever there are signs saying employment/education. You have to try to look at life with the wider view. You can't just sit back and just think of benefits. You need to set the foundation for your children if you've got children, because then the kids grow up thinking, "Oh well, my mum, my dad used to do benefits and stuff, why cant I do the same?" You need to stand firm! Let them know you've got to do whatever you need, whatever it takes to make life comfortable, life worth living. You've got to make yourself think about what you want in life, what you need. I need in the future to have myself a proper home, drive a nice car, maybe a Lexus or something! And I need my kids to go to university. And I know I can't sit down and expect to live on benefits to gain that, no way! I need to work and, administration, the money is not bad, but I need money because we have to have money to do what we want. And in order to get the money we need, we need to find out what we want in life, "I want to move to a management level" and I get on a course and I put my best in. And I know "yeah, that will be great!" Finally I can get my management job. And if I can go higher and I see the courses there then yes, I will be going higher, that's just me, always thinking of going higher and higher. That's just down to our personalities, some people think, life is not worth living and I'll stick to what I am, but for me, no, I think of going higher and higher. First I got my administrative level 1 and a first aid course, which I did that and got certificates, did telephone manner and stuff and got my certificate in that. I'm now doing my level 2 in administration, and I'm also doing my management job. Oh, I forgot one thing, I did my English, my GCSE in English and I got a D, and I'm thinking, "Nah, don't want to stick with a D, I want to go higher", so I'll be trying to get up to a B. I'm not going to say its easy cause it isn't, when you've got a family to take care of and working, doing education, again, its hard work. But if you know, My mum used to say to me "If you want good in life your nose got to run". It's very hard but in the long run it will be worth it, you wont regret it, you just got to do what you got to do. Make time, make spaces, I would say, organise

yourself. It's going to be hard but if you need it as bad as you think you need it you will do whatever it takes. And that's what I think.

The Scarman Trust is a charitable organisation that gives grants to members of the community who are doing things beneficial to the community. For example, there are people doing after school clubs for kids, people getting together for parents, young parents, child playgroups and stuff. I got involved when a friend came to me and said, "You know they've got a free course going with the service providers network, where you can do your administration." And I think, "Yes! I've always wanted to work in an office, I think that would have been great". So I went along, signed up, started training with the Scarman Trust and after I got my qualification the administrator was leaving and I went to the boss and said to him, "Well Derek, I need a job, I've been training here and I think I've got enough knowledge of what going on around". He said, "Ok, I'll have to put you on three months probation." I remember saying to him, "I think I'll give you a run for your money!" I really did give them a run for their money, I'm not only doing administration, I'm also assisting Elizabeth, who is the grants officer, and I'm so hands on. And I think I'm so lucky I did this, if I sat home and said "Oh, I can't be bothered, I've got the kids to look after", I wouldn't be where I am today. Which is going up the success ladder. You have to do whatever it takes. I wish people out there would just get up. It doesn't matter how old you are, even if you're 45 its not too late to make yourself what you wanted to be, your dreams. It's never too late for me, even if I'm 60 and I think, "yeah, I needed to do that", and it's there, I'm going on it. I think success is better than being idle. It's just great!

I wasn't born here, I was born in Jamaica, I came here five years ago. I have two kids back home and one here. In my country its really tough, its hard, in Britain there are courses for free, back home its not free, you have to pay for it and I can't afford it. Then there is nothing you can do about it. For people back home and they come here and they haven't any education, I can understand cause its really expensive. My mum was a single parent, she brought us up me and my sister without any debt, and it was really rough and that's why I think coming to Britain, opened my eyes because there are a lot of things to do here where education is concerned, you've got free education. Back home you couldn't get it free so why should I sit down? I need to get all the education I can get, make myself equipped to get any job, its great! Knowing from where I'm from, really poor, couldn't get anything; just think "Oh, look at that girl, going out, her mum can take her shopping". I couldn't. I'd watch my mum tidying up; watch her going to work, trying to prepare dinner. My mum would cry, say she hasn't got any money, she doesn't know what's going to happen to us. When I got married and came here that was a big breakthrough and I'm making use of it, I'm not going to squander my time down the drain. I'm going to make use of it cause it's a gift. It's a lovely feeling.

In the future I want to see myself owning my own home, making myself more comfortable. Seeing my kids off to college, preparing for university, whether its opening a bank account and trying to save towards their university expenses and fees. Work-wise, professionally I want to be a manager, I know

I'm getting a certificate, and I'll go on to management. Maybe go higher, to director or something! I'm always thinking big, and I can't help it cause that is just me. Don't want to stay at one level, keep moving until you know I've hit my target. To be financially strong. The chance is there so I'll take it.

My advice is, you might have kids, you might worry about who will look after the kids but, you should be able to get benefits to get the children a child minder. Try to make your time and go into education. I'm sure sitting down sometimes you don't even get sufficient money to cover the kids clothes. Looking in yourself and feeling that things definitely aren't enough. That should give you boost to call people who can point you in the right direction. There are lots of things going on in Birmingham. I'm not going to say it's easy, or it's like a bed of roses, cause it isn't, nothing comes easy. It has to be hard work and then you know it pays off well. I would say to parents or families that it doesn't matter, you can, there is help out there you just have to ask. Never, never go back, always look forward, the moment you start just keep going, its hard work, you might end up crying, get up, brush yourself of keep going. You may fall, nobody is perfect. If you keep going forward you may achieve more than you expect.

This project was managed by 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.

