

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 Sandra'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/.



Sandra's story -

I'm at college at the moment, I'm at Woodlands campus, I'm doing English and IT, which I really enjoy, it's great. We've done entry 2, had that exam, and passed that, now in going on to my entry 3 in English, hopefully I'll pass that one. We've got one coming up for our IT, an exam; we don't know when that is, it should be soon.

At my age, we didn't do all of the exams what they do today, and if you did sort of, if you were slow, you know, you just got left behind sort of thing. Wanted to improve my writing and my spelling, I have come a long way now. I've got more confidence, that's the best thing. I've improved my writing, learnt a bit more with my English, a lot more in my English than I did do when I was at school. Learning my spellings more, I'm progressing really, and I've got some passes so I can put them on my CV, which I didn't at school, cause at school we didn't do none of that. And there's more technology today now, I didn't do no IT, where there's more IT today. I didn't even know how to switch a computer on or off! And now I do, and I've learnt a bit more on there and on the Internet. It's really helped me a lot really; give me the more confidence that I've got. And to go and look for a job, at least when I do show my CV, I've got something down on there, whereas I wouldn't have before, before I went to college, I didn't have nothing.

I got married, had a child, and got divorced. I've been on my own now for about eleven years, I've had to bring my child up on my own from three and a half so its full time with that really. And then it come to a stage where I thought, well I'd seen the gremlins advert, that's what made me go to college. It does get across to you, you look and you think "Yeah, I could do something", I want to do something better with my life now. Now I've got older and my daughter's grown up she's nearly leaving school now, so I thought I want to do something better, I want to improve myself, I want a career, so I thought that's why I'd go to college. It's the best thing I've ever done, you know, I wish I'd done it years ago really. I love it. Our college is absolutely fantastic, the Woodlands campus. The tutors are great, they're fantastic; they've got all of the time for you. If you need help, they're there, they're friendly, they're great, and they're fantastic. I've been at college two years now and I'm hoping to go on a bit longer if I can and do a bit more so I can get more qualifications.

My IT, like I say, I didn't even know how to switch a computer on or turn it off, I've learnt a lot of things in computers, like saving, printing, going on the internet, cause there's a lot of things you can do on the computers. I think today, you need that technology because there are a lot of jobs out there with computer work. So that's helped me with all that lot. And my English, there's so much in English what you got to learn. Its helped with my writing, like writing letters, or

doing a CV, you know, or capital letters, vowels, consonants, all them, where you forgot when you was at school all that. It brushes you all up with all the English. It has really helped me really. Now I can write letters, and go into interviews and think, I've got the confidence, you know, I've got my CV, I didn't even know how to do a CV, but now I do. We're just doing that at the moment actually, at college, putting it all down, so I've got it then when I want to go for a job I've got the CV. And its showing you what its like now for an interview, what you need for the job, and its really helped me a long way actually.

My daughter is 15, she thinks I'm absolutely great, she's really, really proud of me; she thinks its got guts at my age, to go back to college and learn. It was really scary at first, but it's the first big step you've got to take. It's been fantastic actually. I look back, its great. Met so many people, friends, really a fantastic group at college, and we've all got on.

I'd say go for it. I wouldn't look back. It is scary when you go in and you feel a bit stupid I think, you think everyone is more in front of you, more advanced with the things, but they're not, they're all in the same situation as you. It's all different age groups in there, which is good. You meet lots of different people. If you're struggling you've got the help there, the tutors are very good. They're very friendly and if you need a one to one, you've got that help as well. They'll try and help you so you can pass your exams, which are fantastic, you know. They give you all the help and support you need.

Well my daughter is 15 so I thought now is the right time, cause I was bringing her up on my own. So I thought, yeah I'll go for it I'll go back to college now, cause she's ready to leave school. In a couple of years she probably wont be here, shell be off on her own horizon. I wanted to do something with my life, I don't want to just sit at home, I want to be out there, meeting people, get new jobs, and I want to do something, I don't want to be sitting at home. And learn skills, different skills, and different challenges. I've got much confidence now, which I think that's what I needed. I just want to go out there and do everything I can.

I used to do decorating, wedding cakes and birthday cakes, so I think I might go back into that, you know, catering and that, and if I do I think I will go to college then and learn more cause, you know, there's more up to date technology. I'm thinking about along that line. There are different challenges I just want to do. I'll just go for it, even if I haven't done them before. I've got that confidence now, that's what I've needed and I've got it to go anywhere and do what I want to do. You know, I might go in an office, or I might do waitressing, or like catering, I would like to do that cause I used to do wedding cakes and that which was really interesting so I might go back to that.

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.



