

Sign up for Adult Learners' Week

May 17 - 24, 2008

ORGANISATIONS and community groups from across North Wales have taken up the challenge of using Adult Learners' Week (May 17-24) to showcase the diverse range of opportunities that exist for people who want to get back into learning.

NIACE Dysgu Cymru, the organisation that promotes adult learning, has worked with hundreds of groups and individuals across the country to co-ordinate a week of fun, informative and interactive events.

Covering everything from art and horticulture to computer skills and digital photography, the events are designed to give people a taste of the kind of learning activities on offer in their local area.

Adult Learners' Week is recognised as the UK's largest festival of learning, and in Wales, has become a real driver for people to get together and try their hands at a new skill or learning opportunity.

The benefits of lifelong learning are well-documented; increased self-confidence, new friendships and improved long term health are all experienced by individuals who extend their learning journeys beyond their formal education.

Within the business environment, continued learning will not only help individuals to improve their

career prospects and financial situation but is essential on a national level if Welsh businesses are to survive and thrive in today's competitive environments.

Richard Spear, director of NIACE Dysgu Cymru, has been encouraged at the sheer number of events that are planned across the country.

He said: "There are excellent learning opportunities on offer up and down the country and the main objective of Adult Learners' Week is to highlight and promote these."

"Once people get a taste of what is on offer they feel empowered to find out more and many go on to learn new skills that they can put to good use."

Research during last year's Adult Learners' Week revealed that more than 17,500 people attended over 1,000 'taster events' in Wales.

A follow-up survey also showed the majority of these - 60% - went on to take some positive action, with two in five selecting a course with a registered learning provider.

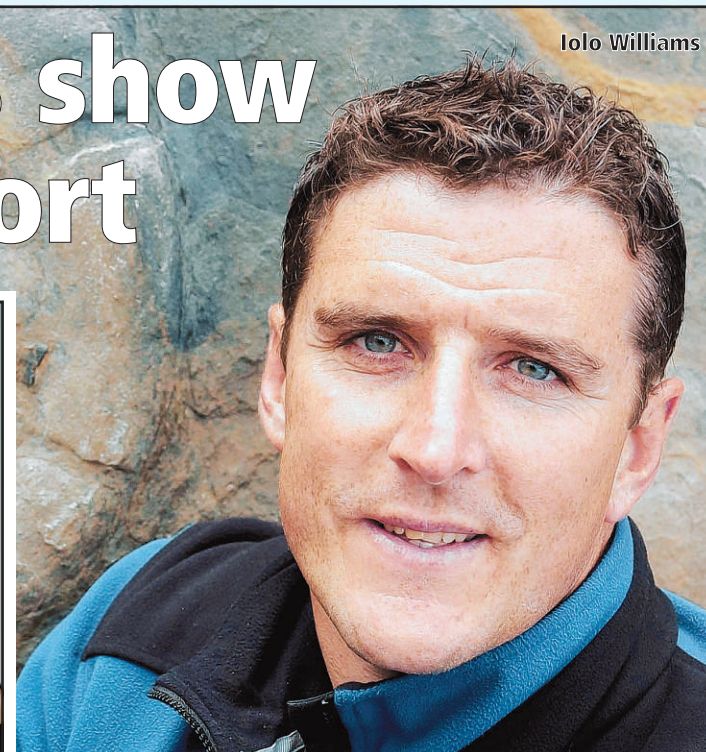
Spear added: "People all have their own reasons for getting back into learning but the main message is that whether you are young or old, an experienced learner or someone returning to learning after a number of years, there is something to suit every taste during Adult Learners' Week."

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Celebrities show their support

Iolo Williams

Nia Parry



TELEVISION presenter and naturalist Iolo Williams, pictured above, said: "As a teenager I had a choice - to either enter the armed forces or to continue my education."

"I chose learning and went to London to study ecology. That decision has impacted on my whole life; my career, my lifestyle and my interests. "Who would have thought that learning could be so powerful?"

Television presenter Nia Parry, pictured left, said: "There is always something new to learn."

"Once you have made that first step the possibilities are endless and you feel so empowered! Through teaching Welsh, I have been privileged in seeing so many people succeed and achieve their goals - there really is nothing else like it. I would recommend anyone to take on a new learning challenge; you never know where it may take you, who you may meet, or what you may find out."



From Manchester to the Mabinogion

Poet and writer
Les Barker

LES Barker, 61, from Wrexham has been a poet for more than 30 years and when he moved to Wales from Manchester he was determined to immerse himself in the local culture.

One of his aims was to learn to write poetry in the Welsh language. Les began writing in Welsh by experimenting with the awdl (a long poem in strict metre) and then followed this by translating the Odliaur (a book about rhyming) into English.

Two years on, Les is now confident enough in his use of the language to hold performances in front of a Welsh-speaking audience.

Les is a firm believer that learning a language should be fun and uses his experience of the English folk scene and comedy performance to promote learning Welsh. His experience of learning Welsh has led him to become involved

with the preparations for a new folk festival in Mold, the Tegeingl.

Les said: "I am delighted to have found a community where writing, singing, dancing and playing instruments are normal activities."

"Learning Welsh has been an enormous achievement for me and has really helped me to settle into the local culture."

Les was nominated for an Inspire Adult Learner of the Year Award by his Popeth Cymraeg tutor, Frances Jones. Frances said: "I was so impressed with Les's dedication and enthusiasm for learning a new language and his ability to use both languages in his vocation as a poet and writer after so little time."

"His hunger to learn and embrace the Welsh language and culture is an inspiration to others."

Kellogg's lay on learning with Special Kllasses

ONE of North Wales' largest employers is using this year's Learning @ Work Day (Thursday May 22) to showcase the different learning opportunities on offer to staff.

All 530 employees working at the Kellogg's factory in Wrexham will be offered taster classes in a range of subjects, from Tai Chi and sign language

to IT and digital photography. There will also be taster classes for employees who are interested in learning to speak Welsh. The sessions will take place within the dedicated learning centre at the complex throughout Learning @ Work Day and also on the evenings before and after, to allow an equal opportunity for all employees to get involved. Ian

Rowley, union learning representative at Kellogg's, commented: "We are big supporters of Adult Learners' Week and this year plan to use Learning @ Work Day to give staff a chance to try a variety of taster sessions. The choice of subjects was made in response to our recent employee survey so we are looking forward to a good response from people."

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