

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
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Press Release

Date

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TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE IN 2010 BY IMPROVING YOUR SKILLS

Improving your skills could lead to a better job and more pay. January's *Sign Up Now* campaign - run by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) – is encouraging all adults to take up learning during the 2010 European Union Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Sign Up Now – the sister campaign to Adult Learners' Week – is inspiring adults to learn new skills throughout 2010 to improve their health, get a better job, boost their confidence or just for the pleasure of discovering a new talent. *Sign Up Now* is being delivered across the country, through hundreds of local colleges, adult education centres, museums, libraries and other community and voluntary organisations; offering courses ranging from numeracy and computer skills to dressmaking and interpreting dreams.

To help anyone finding it hard to take up learning or get back to work, NIACE has published *The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning 2010*. The book includes useful information on managing your money and getting a job. For more information, visit: <http://shop.niace.org.uk/ruble2010pack.html>

Michael Douglas, aged 31, from Norwich, was homeless and on benefits when he joined Street Life Soccer. Despite a 13-year break from education, he successfully completed a 30-week course combining education and sports skills training. Since then, Michael has supported new homeless students at Street Life Soccer and has volunteered with Football in the Community coaching children. He has two part-time jobs – one with Norwich FC and another as a support worker for the YMCA.

He said "I have gained employment because of the skills I've learnt. Learning also helped me achieve my dreams of helping people and coaching. Without learning I wouldn't be the same person that I am now."

Mary Jarvis, aged 55, from Peterborough, joined the NHS as a cleaner when she was 36 and has since taken every opportunity to develop herself by learning

essential work skills. Recently she has achieved NVQ Level 2 in Care, NVQ Level 3 in General Healthcare and is currently studying for NVQ Level 3 in Perioperative Care. She is now working as a Perioperative Assistant.

She said, “I wanted to learn because I wanted to better myself. Learning has boosted my confidence, given me a focus and made me feel more worthy. Learning has given me a career rather than just a job.”

Gary Peel, aged 49, from Retford, worked for 30 years at a supermarket chain but left after a serious breakdown in his mental health. As a way to recovery, Gary was encouraged to return to learning by his health counselor. After gaining a range of qualifications, he found paid employment as a Teaching Assistant at a local primary school.

He said, “Learning gave me an order to my life when I was ill. The more I learn and achieve, the more I want to go on to the next stage. Learning has helped me to change career.”

Kamy Basra, Campaigns Officer at NIACE said: “Make this year count. In these tough economic times the benefits of learning and improving our skills has never been more important – whether it is to stay in a job, or to get a job in the first place.”

She continued, “Learning has never been more flexible. There are short bite-sized courses, or part-time, evening and distance learning options, with or without a qualification. And this year in particular there are even more exciting opportunities on offer, due the hundreds of Learning Revolution Transformation Fund projects taking place across the country.”

She ended, “Many people find a new lease of life when they decide to learn something new, so you may just want to take up learning for fun! To find out what's on offer where you are, call Careers Advice free on 0800 100 900. Taking up learning could transform your year.”

Ends

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Notes to Editors

1. *Sign Up Now* is a national campaign held each January and September, encouraging adults to sign up to a whole range of new learning opportunities. For more information, visit: www.signupnow.org.uk
2. Free customizable promotional material is available for *Sign Up Now*. Further details are available at, www.signupnow.org.uk
3. Publish your taster sessions on the free *Sign Up Now* online calendar at www.signupnow.org.uk/calendar. The calendar is used by Careers Advice telephone operators to provide callers with free advice and information about learning opportunities in their area.
4. Nominations for the Adult Learners' Week Awards 2010 are open until 5pm, Friday 29 January 2010. Individuals, groups and family learners can be nominated for their remarkable and inspirational achievements through learning. Nominations can be made on paper or online, for more information visit www.alw.org.uk/nominate
5. For details of 2009's Adult Learners' Week Award Winners visit: <http://www.niace.org.uk/alw/2009/public/winners2009.htm>
6. Find out more about the European Union Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: <http://www.2010againstopoverty.eu/>
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.