

Impact on father's learning and relationship with children

Tony left school at the age of fifteen and joined the army as an apprentice chef. During his time in the army he had a motorbike accident and lost his leg above the knee. He was invalided out and returned to 'Civvy Street'. Losing his leg has never stopped Tony though. He took up a variety of past-times including Parachuting, organised a Hovercraft Exhibition on the River Severn, Gliding and Sailing. It was sailing that became his real passion. After his successful completion of the Round-the Island Race, he went to night school and studied navigation. He achieved his qualification and went on to compete in international sailing events. In 1994 he represented Great Britain in Rutland in the World Championships, won the European Championships in 1995 and went on to represent Great Britain in the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta where his team won the Gold!

Tony's children live with his ex-wife and he was keen to find ways to continue to be involved in the lives of his children. Early in 2007, whilst attending a Peruvian night at Downside Middle School with his son, Tony was approached to join in the Family Learning programme running there. He was keen to become involved in activities alongside his son who attends the school and has discovered personal benefits for himself. *"Family learning is not only about the children's learning, adults learn too"*

Tony has enjoyed the group support and bonding that goes on through the courses. Group dynamics are excellent and there is good co-operative working between the adults. *"Individuals get to develop their own ideas, enhancing the learning experience and bringing more to the Family Learning courses"* As a result of his time at Family Learning, Tony feels he has re-gained his self belief. The tutors have encouraged confidence in Tony's ability to achieve academically to the extent that he has taken exams in NVQ City & Guilds Level 2 Literacy, having started the course just 3 weeks previously.

Tony has an NVQ Level 3 in Care and was on the Nursing Bank until recently. Tony wants to put his new qualifications to good use and is working towards employment as a Learning Support Assistant. Achievement of his exams will help him to do this. Tony's son will be leaving Middle school at the end of this academic year. He has so enjoyed his time with Family Learning and the opportunity to spend time with his son that he hopes to continue doing the same with his daughter, as long as there is Family Learning at the Middle school she chooses to attend.

"The Family Learning team is excellent and the tutors are very responsive to the learners' needs"

Isle of Wight Council Community and Family Learning