

# Press release

8 July 2009: For immediate release

## Skills for Life Winners

The first winners of a new annual awards scheme for learners and tutors of WEA Skills for Life courses have been announced. Skills for Life Learner of the Year Razuiai Bibi and Tutor of the Year Sarah Edwards were chosen from amongst nominees from all over England, and will receive their awards at an event at Birmingham University on July 15.

Razuiai has won the Olive Cordell Skills for Life Learner of the Year Award for her inspiring achievements since returning to learning in January 2008. She brought up her nine younger brothers and sisters after their mother died when Razuiai was thirteen, and left school with no qualifications having been unable to attend classes for most of her teens.

Since returning to learn at a WEA Everyday Maths class held after hours at her local primary school in inner-city Birmingham, Razuiai has progressed on to two more numeracy courses and is now studying for a childcare qualification involving 300 hours of voluntary work in school. Now that her own three children have started school, Razuiai feels that this is her time for learning. She is very ambitious and has her life from now on mapped out.

Razuiai's tutor Alison Clamp says, "Razuiai puts all of us to shame! Other students, and myself, are inspired by her dedication. When students feel they cannot put time to a task they look at the way Razuiai manages her time and realise they can do it. She always tries to help others in the class and I have never heard her complain or criticise. "

Sarah won the Olive Cordell Skills for Life Tutor of the Year Award for the impact her teaching has had on the lives of the learners who attend her courses in and around Whitehaven, Cumbria. She began her teaching career after attending a WEA 'Helping in Schools' course to help support her children. She developed a keen interest in becoming more involved in local community activities and, having undertaken Skills for Life training, she now teaches courses which aim to increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of people who would otherwise struggle to make the most of learning opportunities.

Sarah has taught 34 courses in the 2008/09 academic year alone – and every time she has been observed her teaching (and the learning achieved by her students) has been graded as outstanding. Her preparation for teaching, course planning and the design of her course materials are excellent. Sarah has tailored many of her courses for specific groups of learners, including by contextualising Skills for Life courses so the course and its materials are relevant to learners in their real lives.

WEA Learning Manager Julie Ballantyne says, “Many learners have told me of the impact Sarah’s courses had on their lives. She inspires learners to reach their potential personally and professionally. Many continue learning with the WEA and other providers, and some go on to get jobs in areas they had thought were beyond their reach.”

The WEA was able to set up the Olive Cordell Awards and pay a prize to each winner thanks to a legacy left by Olive Cordell, who was herself a community studies tutor.

**Ends.**

### **Contact:**

For further information about the event including to request attendance or a photo call please contact Graham Marsh on 07824 569306 or email [gmarsh@wea.org.uk](mailto:gmarsh@wea.org.uk).

### **Notes for editors:**

#### **Workers' Educational Association ([www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk))**

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a charity and the largest voluntary sector provider of adult education in Britain. It provides learning opportunities for over 95,000 people each year across all nine English Regions and in Scotland.

The WEA creates and delivers around 12,000 courses each year in response to local need across England and Scotland. The Association believes that education is life-long and should continue beyond school, college and university in order to help people develop their full human potential in society.

WEA courses are created and delivered in response to local need, often in partnership with local community groups and organisations, including trade unions.

Last year the WEA ran over 150 numeracy courses across England comparable to the one Razuiai attended. Sarah is one of more than 1,150 tutors who delivered WEA courses during the year for particular groups of people with a need for education, often in partnership with local charities and community groups.

#### **Olive Cordell Awards**

A legacy kindly left to the WEA by Olive Cordell, who was herself a community studies tutor, means the WEA has been able to set up the awards in her name, and funds a prize of £200 to each of the two winners.