

## Recent Events

### 100 Family Learners

#### Family Fun

The "100" Family Learners' Voices event took place in December last year. The learners enthusiastically took part in tile painting with 'Janet Ceramic' and sculpture with artist Fiona Maher. All involved left with grins and goodies, including SALP director Fiona Boucher, whose Christmas tree was laden with hand painted Christmas decorations with slogans such as "Learning is fun".



Photo courtesy of Churchill Photography

### 100 Young Adult Learners

"I enjoyed every minute of the day"  
"No doughnuts!"

Such were the range of feedback comments from the 100 Young Adult Learners' Voices event. The new Scottish Parliament welcomed a heated discussion between 16-25 year olds and a panel of Scottish Politicians. (MSPs and MSYPs). Due to the passion of the delegates and the central heating of the theatre, there was so much huffing and puffing that (several days after) the roof fell down!



Photo courtesy of Churchill Photography

### 100 Older Learners

Older learners? Young at heart!

100 Older Adult Learners in the Arts explored participants' creative side while using the many rooms of the MacRobert Centre in Stirling. The gathering of older learners resulted in the development of unique ways to engage older learners in the arts. This singing, dancing extravaganza took place on the 30th March 2006. One delegate commented "I discovered there are so many opportunities for learning!"



Photo courtesy of Churchill Photography

# voilas!

Voice of Informed Learners Across Scotland

Issue 5 July 06



Voicing Youth Concerns at the Scottish Parliament



## Write for us!

Chris Fairgrieve & Deborah Bowie, Editors

The new look platform to air your adult learners' voices. *Voilas* is back and re-launched with this issue. As ever, we encourage learners to express themselves on these pages... and that includes you!

Future issues will follow in which we hope you will have an input by providing articles, artwork, poetry or your letters of opinions. You may be nervous about writing for a newsletter and of course, some editing may be required depending on layout restrictions. But if you "give us your best -we'll do the rest!".

Each person whose letter we publish will be sent a Chambers Adult Learners book with their copy of the next newsletter.



## What's On?

### How to get involved

Check our website or contact SALP for details of how to sign up. We will confirm your place by post.

### 24th August

#### 100 Arts Learners' Voices

An opportunity to make your point visually and put your questions to the panel.

### 8th September

#### 100 Literacy Learners' Voices

Bring your opinions for an afternoon of discussions and literacy learning in Scotland.

### 26th September

#### 100 International Language Learners' Voices

This session will be about finding your voice and talking directly with a panel of MEPs.

## Relaunch of Voilas

### James Grant, Chairperson of the National Adult Learners' Forum

*Voila* {vwala} prep there is, there are, that is, those are; *en-une idée* what an idea!

I'm delighted to welcome you back to the learners' newsletter VOILAS. This issue will hopefully bring learners back up to date with what has been going on.

The Forum has now adopted a thematic approach to bringing learners together making it possible for more people to become involved in their particular area of interest. The idea behind having thematic groups is that each can learn from the other, exchanging skills and knowledge across different areas of learning.

In Adult Learners' Week, four learners from the National Steering Group met up with other learners from six European countries who want to work with us to develop learners networks. We spent three days looking at how we could develop a successful European Learners' Network. This was rounded off by joining the 760+ people at the 15th Anniversary of the Adult Learners' Awards at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange.

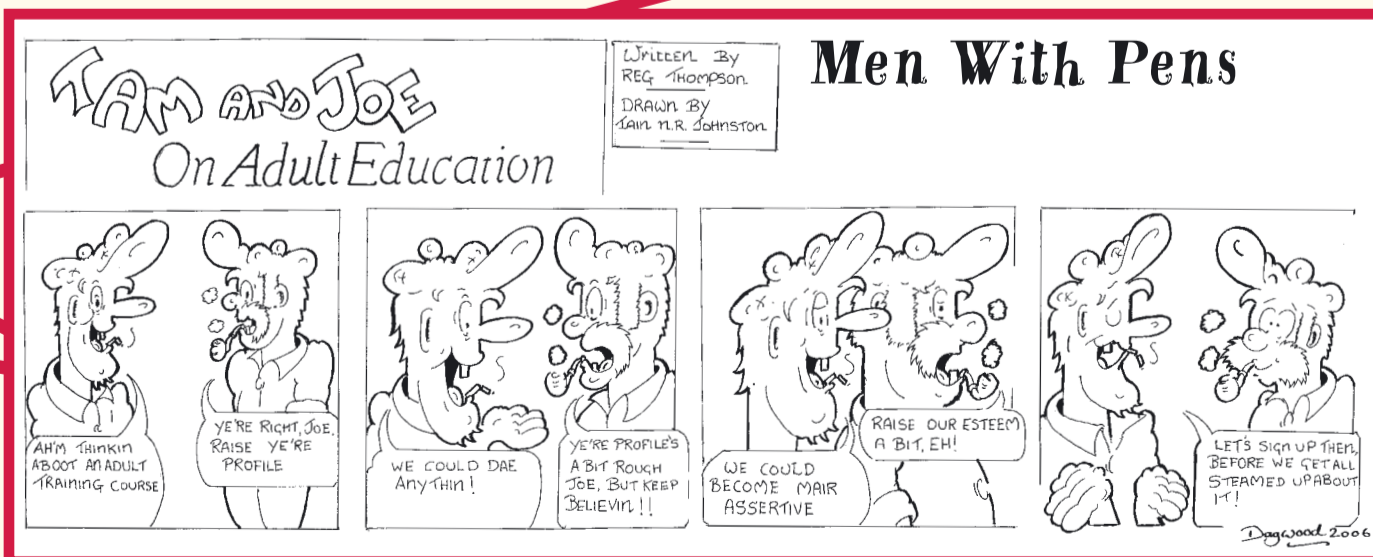
As many of you will already know, The National Learners' Forum has been working hard to raise the profile of Adult Learning in Scotland. This year we have organised five '100 Learners Events' and more are planned for the future. So keep watching this space.

## Contact SALP

If you wish to write for us, sign up for events or have any questions, please get in touch.

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## From BALSAs and Beyond

Chris Fairgrieve

I was not a learner in the traditional sense having reaped the benefits from a fantastic education through school, university and research overseas in Uganda. In the course of recovering from mental health problems a friend introduced me to the fledgling organisation that was to become BALSAs (Borders Adult Learners and Students Association).

However, I soon discovered that joining BALSAs would help me get my life back on track. It would teach me new skills like committee skills, confidence in my own abilities, assisting to organise a conference and make presentations. What I did not know was that it would also give me the opportunity to express myself better, re-integrate into society via contacts and enjoy again public speaking and campaigning.

As well as acquiring these skills, BALSAs gave me the chance to put something back into the system on behalf of adult learners, to lobby and represent their views and ultimately contribute to the development of policy and implement strategies.

This all became apparent when my involvement took me further than the local level to be a representative of the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership and then to represent Scotland in two European learners' study tours. At the same time, having lost out on my previous career opportunities I was undergoing a great transition in life and trying to teach myself to become a creative writer.

In 2005 I was successful in winning awards at both local (Scottish Borders) and national level. This gave me a tremendous platform for involvement and recognition of my efforts. I will continue to represent learners' views and participate in meetings, workshops and committees. Finally I hope to become an advocate of learning and good citizenship and put into practice what I have learned in building local community capacity as well as continuing to develop my skills promoting learning via creative writing.

Copies of the publication resulting from the European learners' study tours: *I Did It My Way – Journeys Of Learning In Europe* are available in several languages. Please contact SALP for details.

## Euro Vision

Dreaming of travel around Europe, but not got the cash? No need to go any further than the west end of Edinburgh. On 23-25 May 2006 the European Learners' Network met at the Grosvenor Hilton in Edinburgh for a conference and series of workshops to discuss how EU countries can aid each other's adult learners. The goal is to develop a new Learners' Forum that spans the continent.



## The Adult Learners Awards

15 Year Anniversary, May 15th 2006

Suzanne Spencer  
Previous winner, Deaf Action

The hall was full of joy and laughter all around. Then it was time for the entertainment, which was presented by Elaine C Smith and the Four Tops. Elaine C Smith filled the hall with laughs and then she started to sing. That was great to hear.

Then the Four Tops came on stage. They were all dressed in bright orange, all the way down to their shoes. They then sang

Friends were made and solutions found on overcoming geographic barriers and bringing the European Learners' Network into fruition. For more information log onto [www.salp.org.uk](http://www.salp.org.uk) and remember that we have a 100 International Language Learners' event to be held on the 26 September 2006, at the *European in Edinburgh*.

to us all for ages. We listened and some of us went down to the front of the stage to dance. They sang several songs and people videoed it and took photos. They left the stage and I went to get a camera to get my photo taken with them too.

It was about 11 – closing time, so we all then got our things ready to go home. The night went very well and everyone enjoyed themselves. We all said good-bye to each other and the organisers, then went on buses that were organised by the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership. I found the night was wonderful – great fun!

## Up for It? Fife Adult Learners Conference

The event was attended by 81 learners and 19 staff, with the first session facilitated by community workers. Areas discussed included:

- How can Local Planning Groups ensure that best use is made of available resources and reach those who would most benefit from the services?
- How can meaningful involvement of the community in planning and delivery of services be developed?

In the afternoon session, workshops focused on:

**Gonnie No Dae That?** – techniques to deal with situations more assertively.

**Cards R Us** – how to produce a professional-looking hand-made greetings card.

**Get REAL!** – an informal supportive setting where students can think about their learning.

**Relaxation is the Key** – various relaxation techniques to discuss stress and its effects on our lives and health.

**Sound Your Own Drum** – sounding out thoughts through drumming.

The afternoon was given over to speakers from BALSAs and SALP. The final part of the day focused on how we could develop opportunities for learners in Fife to influence decision making in relation to learning provision.

## Making a Difference

James Grant, Chairperson of the National Adult Learners' Forum

Learners' Forums make a difference. They encourage participation by learners in the campaign to improve access to learning, service delivery and policy development within the wider learning society.

I got involved in the Moray Adult Learners Forum in 2004, not realising what it had to offer. It provides learners with an opportunity to support each other. It gives learners a voice to inform and influence learning policy and practice. It enables learners to develop their skills in whatever area they have chosen and share experiences with others so they can develop a culture of life-long learning.

**Learning is not about just literacy and numeracy. If you take the time to think about it, people are learning everyday.**

After being involved in the Moray Forum for sometime I got the opportunity to get involved in the National Forum.

I wanted to get involved because I was enthusiastic about my learning and I had seen others in my area develop new skills

by being involved in the Forum, playing an active role in their community. I felt that by getting involved nationally it would give my area a voice at a national level and get support to improve opportunities in learning throughout the country.

The National Learners' Forum Steering Group identified that not all learners were being reached. There were people out there with skills in the Arts, Health, Sport, Family, Literacies and many others.

To increase the participation nationally in the Learners' Forums, we have chosen to adopt a thematic approach.

**Using themes we hope to attract those that are committed, passionate and interested in making a difference and changing things about their learning theme.**

The development of the thematic forums will help to enhance 'social enterprising' skills, identify opportunities for learners' views to be heard at the highest levels of political influence and to improve learning provision throughout Scotland.

**If you're also enthusiastic about your learning why not check out if there is a forum in your area or call SALP on 0131 220 5667**

## Learning Corner

Sheila Young

I am nearly 70 years old and not being able to email my grandchildren and family to take courage and go for

The local library provided really enjoyed my 'Bitesize' learners. It's not easy to pick up something totally alien and strange to begin with, but after a few lessons and encouragement from a very understanding and patient teacher, I worked my way slowly through the pages she had set up for us.

Now I am able to email and what fun it is too! Well worth all the frustration and anxiety of not being able to cope.

To learn something new is a challenge and difficult but can be mastered with

perseverance and a little outside help.

We all try and do our best and hopefully then manage to achieve something we thought totally out of reach. I know that there will always be teachers and volunteers willing to pass on their experience, patience and understanding.

Now having completed a 6 week course on email I have enrolled for an internet course and look forward to being able to look up things for myself rather than relying on busy young people. Its fun and fills in an hour waiting for somebody or something and teaches us so much.

I am so happy that I can at last master email and the internet and glad that I took the plunge. Now I feel *with it!*



## Adult Literacy

Agnes McGeough  
Chairperson of National Events Group

I left school with absolutely no certificates due to difficulties in seeing print and the black board, which eventually led to me attending a special school for the partially sighted.

When I came along to the SAGE Centre that was the start of a life-changing experience for me.

I grabbed every opportunity to learn that I could. Joining the Big Plus class for literacy and numeracy has made an incredible difference to me. The tutor is very good, tolerant and understanding.

I cannot believe how much enjoyment I now get out of sitting down with my grand children and reading and counting with them. It has given me confidence that I never had before.

## Word Puzzle



- 1 Derived from the Roman word for meeting place.
- 2 Held earlier this year in Scottish Parliament to bring young people together.
- 3 Trends, types or ways of identifying pathways. (The Learners Forum has 10 of these).
- 4 European Social Fund. (abbreviation).
- 5 We at SALP celebrate the \_\_\_\_\_ of VOILAS.
- 6 The skill of reading and writing.
- 7 To talk, write and read with others.
- 8 The head of our Learners' Forum.