



Remploy Learning Rep joins Communitas team

Joining the Communitas Union Learning Fund team as a full-time project officer is Colin Daws. Colin was a Union Learning Rep (ULR) for four years at Remploy Pinxton, where he managed the on-site learning centre, helped workers, including those with disabilities, to access courses and supported their learning.

Colin, one of the union's most committed and successful ULRs over the last few years, was awarded the 2005 Remploy ULR of the Year award.

'Looking back over my time as a ULR, I never thought I'd become a project officer,' he says. 'It's thanks to the union and Communitas for their support and confidence in me. This new position is an exciting opportunity for me to support other ULRs to develop skills and learning.'

Colin will be based in Communitas' Rotherham office and can be contacted at colindaws@communitas.eu.com.

Region 2 member scoops prestigious training award

Ex-Corus employee and Community member, Keith Sedgwick has won a Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) award for outstanding commitment to catering and hospitality.

Keith was made redundant in March 2006 after 27 years of working at Corus' Lackenby site. Before joining Corus Keith spent 10 years as a chef in the Merchant Navy. When made redundant, he was keen to pursue his previous career as a chef and contacted Communitas who helped him to look at different training opportunities and find him a place at Middlesbrough College. With Communitas' support, Keith completed courses in food preparation and catering, and is currently taking courses in food hygiene, pastry, professional cookery, and health and safety. Keith has also spent time volunteering his skills to help schoolchildren learn how to cook.

'If it hadn't been for Communitas I wouldn't have been able to go back to cheffing,' explains Keith. 'They've been marvellous, whenever I've needed help or support they've been there.'



Zero tolerance for bullying in the UK Footwear Industry

Community and the British Footwear Association (BFA) have launched a campaign to combat bullying at work in UK footwear companies. The campaign follows the development of a comprehensive strategy by Community health and safety representatives from footwear companies and the Andrea Adams Trust, the leading anti-bullying charity. See page 24.

Rob Sneddon, Community's National Health and Safety Officer, said: 'Community members employed in UK footwear factories are delighted that the British Footwear Association have recognised that there should be no place for bullying at work and are joining us in this campaign. I hope that other industries follow their lead.'

Adding support to the campaign Niall Campbell, Chief Executive of the BFA, said: 'We are pleased to support a campaign to increase awareness of the seriousness of the impact of bullying both on victims and on any onlookers who see it go unpunished.'

Corus coffee morning

Community members from Corus joined in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning and raised £1,500 for Macmillan Cancer Support. Around 700 employees, contractors and union officials attended the event at St David's Hall, Cardiff, in October, and raised £500 which was matched by Community and Corus Strip Products Ltd.

Uncovering injustice in Colombia

Community Vice President Keren Bender reports back on her recent trip to Colombia as a member of the British delegation of Justice for Colombia.

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist. Thousands have been killed in recent years by its army and paramilitary death squads. As the union's Vice President, I travelled to the country with Justice for Colombia (JFC), the TUC-backed coalition that supports the Colombian people and trade union movement in their struggle for peace and social justice. The delegation was made up of senior trade unionists, human rights lawyers and Labour Party people keen to learn at first hand what is really going on there.

From landing in the capital Bogotá, we were accompanied by armed police everywhere we went until we boarded a plane to fly up country. Many hours later after taking a coach and local bus we reached a remote mountain village. There we met locals, mostly peasant farmers and indigenous people, who wanted to tell us what was happening. It was a secret meeting as they feared reprisals if it became known they had spoken to us.

It felt surreal at times, sitting in the open air among that beautiful scenery, hearing one horror story after another. We struggled to hold back tears as the people told their stories with dignity and thanked us for coming to listen to them. Their message was clear, 'Tell the world what's going on'.

Before returning to Bogotá that night, we visited a shantytown, home to some 1.4 million displaced people. Among all this filth and degradation, the hundreds of children who followed us were all spotlessly clean. Here we heard many stories of abuse and hardship but the one I remember most was told by a 12-year-old boy whose mother had been shot dead in her shack only a few days before by the police who 'apparently' were looking for someone else. As the eldest of six children, he now has to fend for them. The police will never be brought to book for his mother's murder.

When we returned to Bogotá that night we were all emotionally drained but we couldn't have been prepared for what was still to come. Everywhere we went we heard the most horrific accounts of human rights abuses, from intimidation to torture to assassinations, from those who had suffered the abuses or those speaking on behalf of loved ones who had 'disappeared' or been murdered.

The ones who suffer are people like you and I, - teachers, health and public service workers, farmers, students and trade unionists. And it will be pressure from people like us that puts an end to this abuse of human rights.

If you would like to find out more about Justice for Colombia's work and how you can support it, visit www.justiceforcolombia.org

Keren (second left) with a group of Colombian women healthworkers who had suffered abuse and intimidation.



The colourful but rickety local bus was the only way to reach the remote village.



Delegates take a breather from listening to stories of human rights abuse.