

# Adult Learners' Festival

The third annual nationwide Adult Learners' Festival will take place from February 2nd to February 6th 2009!

AONTAS would like you to get involved...

*AONTAS believes that all adults in Ireland should have equal access to learning opportunities. We believe that adult learning has a hugely important role to play in the economic and social future of Ireland. We know that adult learners and adult learning centres do vital work on a daily basis.*

## The Adult Learners' Festival is about

- Celebrating adult learning and the achievements of adult learners
- Showcasing the work of adult education providers
- Promoting the work of AONTAS and the adult education sector
- Ensuring that adult education is placed firmly on the political agenda

## What's taking place during the Festival?

AONTAS is promoting a different theme each day during the Adult Learners' Festival 2009.

**Monday, 2 February 2009** is themed '*Celebrate Learning!*' AONTAS will host the **STAR** (Showcasing Teamwork, Awarding Recognition) Awards Ceremony for adult learning projects, which takes place at Dublin Castle on February 2nd.

**Tuesday, 3 February 2009** is themed '*Learn in your Community*'. AONTAS are encouraging community education groups throughout the country to hold an event to celebrate and promote the valuable work they undertake

**Wednesday, 4 February 2009** is themed '*Never too Old to Learn*'. The day will bring together senior learners to take part in the Senior Learners Network. During this event '*Don't Stop Me Now*' AONTAS research on the learning needs of older people in Ireland will be launched and the **Forever Young Choir** will perform. AONTAS are encouraging older learners to come together and celebrate learning.

**Thursday, 5 February 2009** is themed '*Learn at Work*'. In conjunction with IBEC, AONTAS are encouraging all engaged in workplace learning to hold an event to celebrate the festival - from an information session for employees with a little help from the AONTAS information booklet to a sample class for employees, there is a way to celebrate learning in the workplace.

**Friday, 6 February 2009** is themed '*Lobby for Learning*'. To mark the close of the Adult Learners' Festival, AONTAS will host a policy-focused event on Friday, 6th February. The theme of this event is 'Adult Learners' are a Good Investment' AONTAS are encouraging adult learning groups throughout the country to highlight adult learning issues to local public representatives in their own lobby event.

AONTAS is working with various national groups in planning the Adult Learners' Festival. These groups include the **Irish Vocational Education Association**, the **National Adult Literacy Agency**, the **National Youth Council of Ireland** and **Active Retirement Ireland**, to name but a few. We are also working with key national stakeholders and major players in

the adult education and community and voluntary sectors to gain their support for the Festival.

Last year adult education groups all over the country organised events during the festival - from exhibitions of adult learners work, to information sessions, open days and taster workshops on different courses.

*By working together, we can all contribute to making the **Adult Learners' Festival** a huge success!*

### **How to get involved in the Festival**

AONTAS would like as many groups and individuals as possible to get involved in the Adult Learners' Festival. Whether you are part of a large national organisation or a smaller group at local level, your participation will make the Festival a success.

Some examples of last year's activities...

- In Wexford, Access 2000 held a coffee morning for their courses while in Maynooth mature students held an open day for prospective students
- In Tallaght, Dublin a Learners' Fair was organised in partnership with all providers and included all forms of adult and community education
- In Sligo they coincided their Adult Learners' week to run during the week of the Adult Learners' Festival
- In Dublin the DIT Music Conservatory hosted taster evenings offering information sessions on music courses
- In Kildare, Network Kildare had the enrolment for their courses on 'Active Citizenship and Women Today' during the festival
- In Kilkenny, the VEC VTOS group ran a short drama production which involved an adult education group.
- In Dublin 8 Adult Education Providers' Network held a Learning Safari. It included workshops, exhibitions, IT projects, open days etc. throughout the week of the festival.
- Tipperary Institute had a Learning Bus running during the festival that went to 10 different towns to bring learners to the institute to find out about courses on offer and to network with other learners
- D8CEC held a taster IT class for older learners which included learning to e-mail. Participants e-mailed their concerns about adult learning to Minister for Lifelong Learning, Sean Haughey.

### **The Curiosity Campaign**

Ever wondered how you tell if a car has been resprayed? Or how to achieve that perfect takeaway taste in a wok? Curious?

That was the basis of the Curious Londoners Campaign, which back in 1998 aimed to promote adult education and lifelong learning in the London area. The campaign is being adapted for use in Ireland, as part of the AONTAS Adult Learners Festival which runs from February 4th to 8th 2009.

The theory behind the campaign was simple but effective – that a desire to learn can be stimulated by curiosity. Research carried out in advance of the campaign found that people with bad learning experiences can often resist the message that 'Learning is good for you'. So the campaign focused on promoting learning as a normal activity, which everyone can do regardless of their age or learning stage.

Over a period of a couple of weeks, a group of enthusiastic activists saturated the boroughs of London with hundreds of A4 posters. The posters featured a half sentence, relating to a hobby, or issues such as health, crime or minority statement, accompanied by an image. The response was phenomenal with local learning organisations inundated with queries from people – who contacted the office through a phone number displayed on each poster.

### **Campaign Plan**

AONTAS is working closely with the UK Campaign for Learning to plan for the launch of the campaign two weeks before the Festival begins. Posters will be displayed around the country and will include the Festival website address, as well as the Festival text line. The text line is being used to distribute the AONTAS information booklet with details of financial supports, guidance services, useful website addresses and contact numbers. The main aim of running the campaign in Ireland is to promote learning and information about learning supports to people in a fun and interesting way. We believe that the nature of this particular campaign will engage people in Ireland, but will also generate media interest locally and nationally.

### **How you can get involved**

A full campaign toolkit is available from AONTAS, which explains the theories and methods which informed the campaign. AONTAS will supply you with copies of the Curiosities themselves – but you can also produce your own. Guidelines for writing your own curiosities are included in the toolkit - don't forget to add the Adult Learners' Festival logo and textline number. You can then display the posters in different locations around your own community. AONTAS is interested in hearing from people or organisations interested in promoting the campaign. For more information, and ideas on how you can get involved, email Niamh Farren, Communications Officer, [nfarren@aontas.com](mailto:nfarren@aontas.com), phone 01 406 8220

### **What is Community Education?**

Adult and community education are often said in the same breath but are they the same? Adult education provision in Ireland has a long history that includes the work done not just by the VECs but by the trade unions and other voluntary groups over many years in the last century.

The definition of adult education from the Murphy Report 1973 is the provision and utilisation of facilities whereby those who are no longer participants in the full-time school system may learn whatever they need to learn at any period of their lives

A more recent definition comes from the first and only White Paper on Adult Education 2000 and is defined as systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training.

In 1973 the Murphy Report did attempt to describe an adult education that had a critical and difficult role to play in a rapidly changing society if it is to seek to provide information, knowledge, skills and attitude to change which people may need in order to cope with changing conditions of individual, social and communal living.

The Irish Government's first ever White Paper on Adult Education - Learning for Life (DES 2000) advocated a national programme of Adult Education within an overall framework of lifelong learning based on the following priorities:-

Consciousness Raising, Citizenship, Cohesion, Competiveness, Cultural Development, Community Building.

In the case of community education it is a complex concept to define and it is challenging to understand how it works in practice.

Source : <http://www.aontas.com/>

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<http://www.adultlearnersfestival.com/>