

Charity works wonders to help jobless youths thrive

Heathfield scheme's latest batch of graduates saluted at ceremony

By **Joe Middleton**

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A CHARITY helping young people into employment celebrated its latest graduates becoming work-ready at a special awards night.

The ten-week Heathfield Works programme specifically focuses on unemployed young people in isolated rural areas and helps them to find new work opportunities.

Olivia Borg, an aspiring journalist who was a member of the most recent cohort, said the "spirit of Wealden filled Punnett's Town Community Centre", when the youngsters gathered with officials last week for their graduation ceremony.

She said: "Being a participant on this programme, I have had first-hand experience of the amazing work that this organisation does, and the belief and motivation it gives back.

"I knew what I wanted to do from the beginning, however, due to unforeseeable circumstances, my dream of being a journalist had been left as exactly that, a dream.

"However, through working with this programme, slowly but surely my aspiration to work in the media is now becoming a reality as I build up my experience."

An eclectic mix of people, from farmers and councillors to business people, came together to celebrate the determined youngsters' efforts and recognise their achievements in overcoming barriers to success.

Trials

"The night was filled with success stories, accompanied with a lot of cake and non-alcoholic mulled wine, the start of new careers were formed, interviews

were organised, new contacts were made and work trials were planned," Miss Borg added.

As part of the programme she and other young people took part in CV-writing workshops, community challenges and mock interviews.

The scheme is run at Heathfield Youth Centre.

Miss Borg added: "If you want to try out being an estate agent one day and a firefighter another day, this group seems to be able to make it happen through determination and persuasion."

Heathfield Works is run by national employment charity Tomorrow's People, which assists disadvantaged young people to find and keep a job.

The group is currently recruiting for its next cohorts.

■ Anyone interested in joining should email lcrozier@tomorrows-people.co.uk or call 07437496551.



ACCLAIM: The Heathfield Works graduation event, at which youngsters were recognised for overcoming the barriers to success



NEW SKILLS: Former students Joe Stewart and Dale Chapman



CERTIFIABLE SUCCESS: Wealden District Council chairman Barby Dashwood-Morris with Heathfield Works' Olivia Borg and Liza Crozier