

June 2008

# Newsletter

*From the Learning & Organising Team*

## **The New Regional Learning and Organising Committee 2008/9**

Following Regional Council many congratulations to the following people who were elected Wendy Allison, Manchester Branch/ Paula Atkinson, Cheshire county/ Elaine Cotterell, Lancashire County/ Nick Green, Cheshire County/ Victoria Hames, Environment Agency/ Nita Sproston, Blackpool / Kevin Smith, Blackpool health/Paul Warburton, GMFire/ Paul Wiggins, Wirral. Our first meeting was held on the 25 June. Because we have already have one vacancy (Wendy is joining the staff in July) and two co- option places the committee agreed to invite Cheryl Forrest, Bill Renwick, and Linda Payne to join the committee. Our Motion '**Learning Pathways for UNISON Stewards and Active members**' was carried unanimously - see your regional council delegates for a full print out. The Women's Aid campaign for toiletries is in full swing – send in your women's toiletries to your branch who will send them on to Women's Refuges in the region.

## **Return to Learn**

Each year we offer free places on this course. Following a flood of applicants we ran 8 information meetings in **Bolton, Salford, St Helens and Blackpool**, our target areas. If you have members in these areas, you may wish to establish whether there are places still available. The ideal participant is someone who has been away from the learning process for some time and wants a gentle re-introduction to the process – ask Cleve Tait for more info. - email him on [c.tait@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.tait@unison.co.uk)

## **Women's lives**

This year we are running Women's Lives groups in **Manchester and Liverpool** and we are over subscribed. Women who are interested in brushing up their writing and research skills and are up for a weekend school where they will be offered the opportunity to take the national numeracy and literacy test have come forward in droves. For more information about this free course for members contact Helen Titherington [h.titherington@unison.co.uk](mailto:h.titherington@unison.co.uk)

## **WEA – the Workers Education Association**

are our national partners and teach several UNISON courses. Currently they are looking to expand their tutor base contact Debbie Gayle [dgayle@wea.org.uk](mailto:dgayle@wea.org.uk) for the low down.

## **Initial basic training for newly elected**

**Branch Officials** happens each year in this region in May following the AGM period Jan-Mar. This year we had over 70 participants on the following modules, Secretaries, Treasurers, Chairs, Health and Safety officers, Equality officers, Education and Life Long Learning Coordinators and Communication officers

If you have Branch officers who have not yet taken initial basic training ask them if they want to go on our waiting lists and if we get enough numbers we will run separate courses in the autumn. Contact us with names and membership numbers. As you read this we hope Branch Education Coordinators have received their new GUIDE and the BRANCH EDUCATION SURVEY 2008 – please do your best to complete the survey and return it to Helen Titherington –Fax it to 0161 661 6710

## Learning and Equality

We are looking for partners to work with us on developing a diversity and community cohesion programme. One of our ideas is that we should offer more opportunities for people to get together with a person from another culture or way of life and just talk to them and ask questions they've never dared to ask or never had the opportunity to ask before.

That's why we want members and potential members to train to be a 'living book' – who would then be available for a 'short term loan' (15-30 mins) at pre arranged times in libraries and community centres. We would probably pilot the process with one or two branches.

- Could you be a Living Book?
- Do you work in a library where 'Living Book' projects have been attempted?
- Would you like to pilot 'Living Books' in your Branch?

Please contact Cleve or Helen for more information

The Building Confidence Suite of courses has been revised in conjunction with Unionlearn at Riverside College – the three one day modules are

- **Building Confidence**
- **Speaking Skills**
- **Presentation Skills**

The courses have been updated to include participants' suggestions – thanks to our courses which ran in Manchester and Liverpool in May and June – ready for our autumn programme.

*'It was great to work with your lay tutor, Steve Holmes who helped the course participants feel at home straight away'*

Dianne Jones Union Learn Tutor Riverside college

Dianne will also be tutoring our new course **Mental Health in the Workplace 21-23 July** – this course will tackle issues around sickness absence cases where mental health issues feature – it's a great introduction to the subject and gives reps lots of information on how to handle cases – watch out for new course dates in our autumn schedule.

## Challenging Racism in the Workplace Programme

Challenging Racism in the Workplace is a programme of supported negotiations for branches. The idea is to form a small branch team who will be offered training and help to devise a bargaining strategy intended to tackle the employer about how they are responding to their Equality Duty and how they are consulting their staff in this process. The following branches sent teams to the initial basic training days in June, **Blackburn with Darwen; East Lancs health; Bury; Manchester; Oldham and Tameside.**

*'It was great to meet the new branches coming on stream. As most of you would guess our Branch has had an up and a down relationship with Knowsley Borough Council over the years. But with this agenda we've really made progress. I would urge all branches to follow suit and push that open door to challenge racism in the workplace'* Roger Bannister, NEC member and Branch Secretary, Knowsley branch

For more info contact Dion Baugh [d.baugh@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.baugh@unison.co.uk)

Adult Learners week went down a treat again this year – We held a **learning lunch at Arena Point on 23<sup>rd</sup> May** but we are looking for reports from your events too – if you could write a short piece/ paragraph - please email us

Helen Titherington will be attending a national joint meeting 2 July in London regarding progress with the **Knowledge and Skills framework in NHS trusts** please do not hesitate to get in touch with an update of progress or the opposite in your Trust

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