Student of the Year!

Leanne Smith's commitment to helping children achieve their goals has been rewarded with the Lenovo/Challenger TAFE Student of the Year award. SEE PAGE 2
Leanne Smith’s commitment to providing high-quality, professional child care services has been rewarded with the Lenovo/Challenger TAFE Student of the Year award.

Prior to focusing on Children’s Services, Leanne had a varied education and training background that included some University-based study.

“I studied Horticulture for a while, and did two years of a Psychology degree, but found the lack of hands-on involvement too frustrating,” she explained.

“I’m used to being very busy, so training at Challenger TAFE enabled me to enhance my practical abilities, but still continue to work in the community and stay in touch with the real world.”

The awards were presented on May 2nd at Challenger TAFE’s Annual Graduation Ceremony at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle, which was attended by more than 1000 graduands, prize-winners, their families and friends, as well as Challenger TAFE staff, industry guests and sponsors.
Leanne also received the College’s top vocational award (sponsored by the Rotary Club of Fremantle, and Rotary Club of Applecross), and is very much a woman on a mission with clear goals mapped out for her career.

Having been involved in caring for people and providing supportive services for many years (including looking after her sick mother), Leanne has also been involved in community work with head-injured and disabled people, homeless youth, drug and alcohol agencies and Perth City Mission. Through all these selfless efforts, she has determined that caring for people is her path in life.

Leanne has now completed no less than five qualifications with Challenger TAFE - the Certificates III, IV and Diploma of Human Services, and the Certificate III and Diploma of Children’s Services, and she is now a fully-qualified child care worker.

Driven by her personal philosophy of child care workers being more than just “babysitters”, Leanne hopes to be running child care facilities from her home in just a few months.

“I was really keen to go into business for myself as soon as I was qualified,” she explained.

“And running a home-based child care service means that I can only cater for seven children per day. The benefit of working in this situation is that I can really get to know the children’s parents and become more of a partner with them in the total education of the child.

“I get a special satisfaction from my work as it allows me to watch children develop and reach their goals. My role in responding to their daily and ever-changing needs means that I am constantly learning new skills and developing my abilities as a child care worker.”

By undertaking training at Challenger TAFE, Leanne now has the skills needed to successfully manage her child care centre. As well as knowing how to successfully interact with children, she is also well-versed in planning and programming, assessing for developmental norms, communicating with parents, and team management.

Leanne is very modest about her achievements, including winning the two College awards.

“I’m not the sort of person to go about blowing my own trumpet, but this recognition will definitely lead to more opportunities for me to pursue my dreams and expand my professional horizons,” she said.

“Anything that supports me in establishing child care centres as places of excellence within the community is incredibly helpful, and I’m very appreciative of these honours.”
Great start to prison-based animal training program

The prisoners involved in the program are responsible for the dogs’ around-the-clock care, but they also have specific periods of ’non-contact’ time scheduled into their training, so the dogs do not develop separation anxiety.

Each dog, which is aged around 18 months, has two prisoner handlers - one as a primary trainer, and the other as secondary trainer - so the dogs can become used to being handled by more than one person. This is vital preparation for adoption into a new home, and avoids the possibility of them becoming too dependent on their trainer.

During the 10-week training program, the prisoners undertake five units of study in the Certificate II in Animal Care (Companion Animal Training) which includes feeding, housing, hydrobathing, basic first aid for animals, and health care, including administering medications. This provides them with the training and experience needed to work towards establishing careers as animal refuge workers, vet assistants and vet nurses.

Research from the US Celldogs program revealed positive shifts in recidivism levels, and Ken says that other studies have shown that people working with animals develop an increase in empathy levels.

“We are anticipating that the Wooroloo Animal Program initiative will provide social, as well as educational benefits to the participants, as the training highlights the 24/7 responsibilities of pet ownership,” he said.

“We have already seen some fantastic results from the first round of training, with the prisoners showing a vast improvement in their problem-solving and communication skills, and the dogs responding to this with a huge change in their obedience and behaviour.

“The benefit to the community is we are able to help K9 Dog Rescue in their endless task of re-homing abandoned dogs.”

At the end of each round of training, the dogs are “adopted” out to the general public. The people adopting the dogs are offered further training with their new pets through Challenger TAFE, so that the efforts of the prisoners continue through positive pet ownership.

The program has generated a significant amount of media attention to-date, with several stories running in local papers, a documentary on ABC Local Radio, and a segment on the ABC TV Stateline program.

The training program is one of many that Challenger TAFE helps deliver through the prison system, with Conservation and Land Management, and Horticulture-related studies offered at other minimum-security correctional institutions in WA.

Challenger TAFE Animal Studies lecturers will be following up on the adopted dogs’ progress over the next couple of years, so that the training can be continually improved for both the dogs and the prison students.
Self-taught Carpenter and Joiner, Roy Brierley, can now get a fair rate of pay after earning a Certificate III in Carpentry and Joinery via a Skills Recognition project run through Challenger TAFE.

Carpentry and Joinery Lecturer, Kevin Williams, explained how he needed to see Roy at work on-site in order to assess him for the Residential Housing qualification.

“There’s no replacement for one tradesperson talking to another, as you get a genuine feel for their skills and expertise when you see them go about their professional activities,” he said.

“Roy proved himself to be so skilled that we granted him the complete Certificate III qualification in Carpentry and Joinery, and recommended trade level status be granted.”

By undertaking Skills Recognition, Roy now has a qualification that recognises his 16 years work experience in the construction industry.

“I knew the program would be really worthwhile, as the big job I was working on at the time covered 80% of the course,” he said.

“Now I can get a fair rate from the builders who have always paid me a little less because I didn’t have a trade certificate. And if industry rules change in the future, I won’t be left short by not having a formal qualification.”

Kevin says that Roy’s story is a great example of the positive impact Skills Recognition can have on a person’s livelihood and career prospects.

“It’s filling a vital gap in the education market for those people who, for whatever reason have not completed formal qualifications, but have built up a wealth of skills and experience over time.”

Thanks to a grant from the Department of Education and Training, Challenger TAFE has been managing a Trade Skills Recognition trial during 2006/07, in order to develop more relevant and flexible programs.

At just 16 years old, Rosechannyae Graham is already taking some giant steps in pursuing her dream of a career in beauty therapy, and has been awarded Challenger TAFE’s Aboriginal Student of the Year award (sponsored by the Rotary Club of Rockingham) in recognition of her drive and commitment to succeed.

After completing a Certificate II in Nail Technology last year, Rosechannyae is now studying for a Certificate I in Customer Service (Beauty, Hair and Retail) and Beauty Lecturer, Narelle Robertson, is very impressed with Rosechannyae’s positive approach to her studies.

“Rosechannyae’s focus, dedication and willingness to assist others, along with her ability to grasp skills quickly, made her a very strong candidate for this award,” she said.

“The Certificate II that she completed last year was offered as part of a State priority to engage young Indigenous girls into vocational courses, and Rosechannyae is a shining example of the benefits of offering these training opportunities.”

Community work is also a significant part of Rosechannyae’s life as her family spends every Christmas providing food, clothing, blankets and pillows to people living on the streets.

“Mum had a hard life growing up, so we feel it’s really important to help people who are struggling in society – especially at Christmas when everyone can get so involved in their own lives and forget about those who are less fortunate.”

Rosechannyae has also faced challenges in life, as she suffers from hearing difficulties and attended The WA School for the Deaf in Cottesloe when she was younger.

“I’ve tended to keep my disability to myself, because it’s never really stopped me doing anything,” she explains.

“My deafness is a part of who I am, but I don’t let it define me. I think it’s more important for me to make my mark on the world by becoming an excellent beauty therapist, and I’ve always wanted to work in a field where I’m making people feel better about themselves.”
Christopher Leach has taken out the top award for his field having been recognised as Challenger TAFE's Apprentice of the Year.

After leaving school early and trying a few different career paths, including information technology and retail store management, Christopher decided a trade was the way for him.

“It got to the point where I realised I couldn’t go any further in a retail career,” he explained.

“I’ve always enjoyed tinkering with electrical devices, as I find the process of dismantling these objects an utterly absorbing past time. “With my sights set on setting up a home and planning for a family, I knew that I needed to change tack and focus on a trade that offered me greater career options.”

At first Christopher thought attending Challenger TAFE would be a struggle for a mature-age student; but this was not the case, and he thrived, getting top marks in all classes, and gaining an apprenticeship.

Having completed all the requirements of his trade, Christopher is now qualified in Electrical Marine Installation.

“The aspects I enjoy most about my new career are that I’m always learning, the work is really varied and can be based both indoors and outdoors. I also get to meet and interact with people from other trades, so I’m improving my communication skills and understanding of other jobs associated with the industry,” he explained.

Being able to use his hands, working on high-standard building projects, and learning how to make electrical systems work are just a few areas that have captured Christopher’s interest.

“At the moment I’m at a consolidation phase of my career, where I’m laying some solid foundations that will stand me in good stead for setting up as an independent contractor or working for a large organisation,” he said.

“I’m constantly amazed at how much there is still to learn and endless areas to get involved in.”

Christopher is employed as an apprentice for Tropic Marine Electrical in Warnbro and finds working in a small business satisfying, as it allows him to shine and receive immediate feedback on his progress.

“My current job involves a fair degree of responsibility, including supervising a trades assistant,” he said.

“I also have to work autonomously at times, which is good for developing my confidence, and means that I’m constantly busy, because I can’t just hide in a workshop and not be noticed by anyone.”

The award, which is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Cockburn, is a first for Christopher and he is quietly pleased with his achievement.

“I’ve always planned on doing well in this career, as I made a conscious effort to go back to training and set myself on a path towards excellence,” he said.

“Receiving this honour confirms my belief in my abilities and let’s me know that I made the right decision to get out of a dead-end job and set myself up for a better life.”
Automotive students at Challenger TAFE’s Fremantle Campus are now using a new interactive learning tool that is designed to increase their engagement by bringing a healthy competitive feel to classroom lectures.

Qwizdom has been developed to ensure that students understand the concept being taught to them whilst also giving the teacher the means to chart the students’ progress and check classroom attendance.

When Charlie Gracewood’s pre-apprentice students come to class, they are each given a small ergonomic RF remote that they use to communicate with the teacher during the lecture.

“Teaching using Qwizdom revolves around the students answering a set of questions I’ve set up via a powerpoint-style presentation,” Charlie explained.

“This is based on what the students have learnt in previous lectures, and what we are covering in that day’s class. When a question appears on the main screen, the students have to answer it via their remote, and I can monitor each student’s feedback via my laptop screen.”

The benefit of this form of teaching and learning is that it is quick, fast and interactive, and allows lecturers like Charlie to instantly respond to students’ performance - a more efficient and effective process compared to traditional paper-based tests, homework and marking.

“Now I can see not only who is answering correctly, but also how fast each student is answering, or if any have failed to answer the question,” Charlie explained.

“That healthy sense of competition has definitely increased this group of students’ desire to learn.”

Charlie’s classroom is now much more of a discussion area, where the students voluntarily interact with each other about the subject they’re learning, and spend less time getting involved in social conversations.

He is also able to engage reluctant students more effectively, as they do not have to physically put their hands up to answer questions.

Qwizdom initially evolved as a school-based teaching and learning tool in the UK, but has translated well into Challenger TAFE’s Automotive environment. Planning a lesson is similar to creating a powerpoint presentation, and lecturers like Charlie are able to easily import videos and photos, as well as data from excel spreadsheets, into the Qwizdom lesson plan.

“I’ve found it really easy to use, and it’s only taking me an extra 15 minutes in lesson preparation,” said Charlie.

“When you factor in the time I’m now not having to spend marking tests or homework, that’s a huge bonus.”

Dominic Mullins is one Automotive student who is thriving on the hands-on nature of answering questions via a remote control.

“I’m sure I’m learning much faster than normal since we’ve started using Qwizdom,” he said.

“Even though I still need to use paper-based notes for revision, the interactive question-and-answer sessions seem to have made remembering all the facts and figures much easier.”

Qwizdom is being trialled in Challenger TAFE Automotive classes with the aim of improving teaching and learning methods, with lecturers able to focus more on imparting skills and knowledge. By using it, lecturers can quickly detect students that have learning difficulties, or problems in grasping information. It can also be easily adapted to suit other business units within the College.

“It’s incredibly satisfying to teach a class full of interested and responsive students,” said Charlie.

“It’s already obvious that the students using Qwizdom are feeling more confident in their learning abilities, and the positive feedback they’ve given me shows that it’s working out really well for them.”

Interactive teaching revs up Automotive students’ learning
Trainee of the Year award puts Colin on the fast track

Colin Riley’s career in the Automotive industry is on the fast track after being honoured with Challenger TAFE’s Trainee of the Year award (sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA).

After completing a Certificate I (Pre-Apprenticeship) in Automotive - Light Vehicle Servicing at Challenger TAFE, Colin is now in the second year of a full apprenticeship at Shacks Holden, Fremantle, and is passionate about the industry, even though he didn’t initially consider it as a career option.

“Before starting my apprenticeship, I dabbled in a variety of other career paths, including cabinet-making, plumbing and retail logistics,” he explained.

“Then I did some work experience at Shacks Holden and realised that the best career for me was one involving my main interest in life - motor vehicles.”

Since joining Shacks Holden, Colin has been amazed at how much attention to detail and responsibility is involved in the role of a motor mechanic.

“I’m based in the prestige cars workshop at Shacks, so I’m seeing the latest technology that’s used in high-end motor vehicles,” he said.

“The computerised nature of modern high-performance cars means that servicing them involves being very thorough and incredibly focused. It’s a huge responsibility, because if you don’t get it right, it can come back to bite you.

“Because of this, I have to be a perfectionist, because nothing less will do. If there’s a rattle in the vehicle, I cannot rest until I find it, discover the cause, and fix it!”

Winning the Trainee of the Year award is a big achievement for Colin.

“It’s great to receive this sort of recognition and it shows that I’m taking a step up in my career. I must thank my lecturer, Jim Hope, for his support throughout my studies, he’s a terrific teacher, and his talent in his field made learning new skills much less daunting.”

Colin says that it is an interesting time to be in the Automotive industry, as it is constantly changing.

“Each year sees more additions to vehicles to make them safer, ride better, more powerful, and, most importantly, more fuel efficient,” he said.

“With all this new technology come new tools, and that means new skills that are required to use and understand them, so I’m excited to be working in an industry that isn’t static.”

Colin’s plans for the future include completing his Certificate III in Automotive and continuing his studies so he can pursue a career in Motor Sport.

“I’ve realised the importance of training for achieving my goals,” he said.

“I’m now keen to finish my apprenticeship, so I can undertake further study that focuses my energies on the performance side of cars and engines and allows me to move into a career in Motor Sport.”

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From little things, big things grow

A former Aquaculture student of Challenger TAFE is blazing research trails in the industry through his involvement in the farming of Southern Bluefin Tuna.

Miles Wise completed the Certificate II in Aquaculture at the College in 1996 and is now Broodstock Manager at the Clean Seas Tuna research facility in Spencer Gulf, South Australia.

"After working in commercial fishing and diving for a short time, I thought undertaking the Certificate II in Aquaculture would be a good way of starting out in the industry," he said.

"The training I received at Challenger TAFE made me certain I was heading in the right career direction, and gave me the confidence to go on to a degree in Aquaculture at the University of Tasmania."

Since then, Miles has carved out a range of experiences in the aquaculture industry, including undertaking research into Grouper production, and working in the commercial production of Yellowtail Kingfish in South Australia, and Barramundi in Queensland.

Miles’s current major project at Clean Seas Tuna is attempting to get Southern Bluefin Tuna to spawn in captivity.

"This research is the first in the world to try and close the life cycle of Southern Bluefin Tuna," he said.

"When this happens, it will be a significant international breakthrough in the farming of tuna."

The project is in the early stages, but has already established a world-first with the fish successfully releasing healthy sperm. The fish are housed in a specially-made temperature and light-controlled system, and there are high hopes for this environment also producing good-quality eggs, a problem that has occurred in similar ventures with other tuna broodstock around the world.

There are considerable motivations for the successful farming of Southern Bluefin Tuna in captivity, as the breed is under a huge amount of commercial fishing pressure and is regarded as overfished.

Challenger TAFE Aquaculture Lecturer, Tony Bart, said that Miles is another example of one of the College’s outstanding students who has gone on to become a successful member of the industry.

"I remember Miles as a kid fresh out of school, so it’s great to hear that he’s grown into a confident young man, who ten years down the track is playing a significant part in aquaculture research and development," he said.

"It’s always a pleasure to catch up with former students like Miles, as it is a timely reminder that our Aquaculture training is industry-relevant and sets up our students for great careers with excellent prospects."
Newmont snaps up Family of Trades students

Students from Challenger TAFE’s Boddington-based Metals Family of Trades pre-apprenticeship course have jumped straight into Stage One Apprenticeships with Newmont Australia.

Since starting the 12-week course in October last year, all seven students have secured Apprenticeships with Newmont Australia and have been placed with companies such as Atlas Copco and Westrak for their training.

Most of the 16-25 year old Family of Trades students were local to the Boddington region, three of which were brothers Christopher, Jonathon and Simon Gillis, aged 19, 24 and 25 years old respectively.

“It was a bit like being at school together again, except we were now all at the same level of learning,” explained youngest brother Christopher.

When the boys’ car broke down part way through the course, Christopher and Jonathon decided to ride their bikes to TAFE instead, as they didn’t want to miss out on anything.

“It was a 5km trip which wasn’t too bad, but Jon only had a rusty mountain bike and I was riding a one-wheel monocycle, with roller blades as a backup in case I got a flat tyre!” Christopher explained.

Lecturer, Warwick Hall, said it was fantastic that the Gillis brothers were so keen to make the most of the intensive training opportunity.

“It was a big challenge delivering this training in 12 weeks, but the students asked lots of questions and managed to pick things up really quickly,” he said.

“When Newmont’s Maintenance Superintendent, Pat Remarno, paid the group a visit, he was so impressed with their attitude and work ethics, that he had no hesitation in recommending all of them for apprenticeships, and reimbursing their course fees.

“To know they are now working as apprentice fabricators, welders and diesel-fitters is a very satisfying outcome, and shows how industry-relevant the Family of Trades training is.”