



PRESS INFORMATION

23rd February 2010

Reigate woman marks success of national scheme

A local woman has marked the halfway point of a national construction skills scheme by becoming its 250th successful participant.

Angela Evans, 49, from Ashdown Road, Reigate has graduated from Building Futures, an initiative from national construction services company Wates, which gives jobseekers an opportunity to undertake construction skills training to improve their job prospects.

The course, which was held at East Surrey College in Redhill, Surrey, was organised by Wates in partnership with East Surrey College and Raven Housing Trust to help jobseekers in their local community.

Established by Wates in 2005, the Building Futures programme, accredited by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance, was developed to help long term unemployed, ex-offenders and parent returnees return to the workforce and learn about different trades within the construction industry.

Angela Evans previously worked in landscape maintenance but when the council depot she worked from was relocated she was unable to travel to the alternative site and was forced to give up the job she loved.

Despite looking for other jobs, the economic climate meant that she struggled to find work and was unemployed for 6 months before someone from Wates suggested that the scheme might help her to find a different field of work and offer valuable training.

During the two-week course Angela and 15 other people from across the Redhill area took part in the scheme, receiving basic training in carpentry, brickwork, painting & decorating, health and safety.

The programme concluded with the participants using their newly acquired skills to redecorate the nearby Merstham Community Facility's main training and meeting room.

Angela said, "The Building Futures course has been fantastic. You get information and training in different types of work in the construction industry and advice on the courses available locally that will help you move into work in that area. It was also really good to put my new skills into practise on the Community Day.

"Following the course I'm now really fired up about learning more about ecological surveying, and am aiming to take an IT course at East Surrey College to help me move into this new field of work."

The scheme has so far helped 251 long term unemployed people and gives participants the opportunity to obtain their Construction Skills Certification Scheme qualification and safety equipment – an essential requirement for working on a construction site – free of charge.

Louise Hyde, Building Futures Project Manager from Wates says: "The key to the Building Futures programme's success hasn't been about simply giving people new skills, but about inspiring them to learn new things, explore new possibilities and to have confidence in their ability to succeed.

"We are planning to increase the number of participants in Building Futures to 375 by the end of 2010 by holding 18 further courses nationally."

Frances Wadsworth, Principal & CEO at East Surrey College said at the award ceremony: "We are delighted to have worked with Wates in the Building Futures programme which has clearly been of great benefit to the students but also to the community of Merstham. Our magnificent new college building is testament to the craft of the construction trades and will I am sure inspire the students to further develop their skills".

ENDS

Picture Caption: (left) Tony Freeman from Raven Housing Trust, and (right) James Wates - Trustee of Wates Foundation – presenting Angela Evans with her end of programme certificate

For further information about Wates Living Space please contact Emma Radcliffe at Beattie Communications on 0161 216 4273

Editors Notes

Wates is one of the UK's largest family-owned construction services and development companies. Established in 1897, it remains privately owned by the Wates Family. Wates employs more than 2,200 people and had a turnover of £1,009 million in 2008.

The company works across a range of sectors, including education, prisons, affordable housing, retail fit out and refurbishment, office interiors, land development and commercial buildings.

Wates has three areas of Corporate Responsibility focus: to reduce the impact of CO2 emissions from our activities; Target Zero of eliminating all non-hazardous waste to landfill by 2010; and boosting skills and employability in areas of most need. Wates was awarded Silver status in the Business in the Community Responsible Business index in 2008.

Safety is a top priority within the Wates Group, and the excellent safety record has resulted in RoSPA Gold Awards for Occupational Safety and the British Safety Council Awards for the past six years.