

Castlerea training centre opening up a whole new world of career opportunities



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RETURNING TO education can be daunting but the Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) Training Services, based in Castlerea, can help open up a whole new world of career opportunities as well as equipping people with new skills and confidence.

A recent awards ceremony saw a number of people, aged between 18 and 60, graduate with FETAC accredited awards at Levels 3, 4 and 5.

The RWN Training Service came about in response to a survey conducted by young people volunteering with Project Match in Castlerea in 2010. The survey established the need for more accredited locally based training and RWN, in partnership with FETAC, has been running this initiative since the summer of 2011.

Since then over 100 trainees have registered, with 54 of these achieving major awards and 50 using the courses on offer as a stepping stone to employment or further and higher education. Nineteen are currently in training and of the 83 who left 56 are either in training, employment or awaiting a place on a training course.

The programme offers QQI (FETAC) accredited awards at Levels 3, 4 and 5. The Level 3 is ideal for those wanting to gain basic computer skills, while the emphasis in the Level 4 is on skills needed in employment such as customer service and workplace safety, but this course also builds on IT skills and offers trainees a good lead-in to the Level 5. The major award at Level 5 is IT based, with communications and administrative skills and is eligible for points for further education.

'Our approach is very much based on community education where we take each trainee as an individual and set out a progression plan'
-Nóirín Kavanagh

Speaking to the Roscommon Herald, Nóirín Kavanagh, Training Co-ordinator at RWN Training Services, explained that in the current climate of learning and second chance education was an everyday, but not everyone was aware of or confident enough to avail of it.

"RWN Training offers people from ages 16 - 65 an opportunity to gain not only new skills but also the confidence to return to learning and consider new career options. Our approach is very much based on community education where we take each trainee as an individual and set out a progression plan with them. This is reviewed regularly and trainees get feedback on their

progress, which is a great way to maintain motivation. There are many obstacles to returning to learning and it is often a major challenge for people who have been out of a learning environment for many years. However, with the support taken by the trainers and the support of other learners and the services of the Roscommon Women's Network many have discovered that they can not only achieve awards but actually enjoy the process," said Nóirín.

"Our training is progressive and having the different levels to aim for is important for trainees' sense of achievement and motivation. The Level 5 is particularly valuable, as trainees who achieve skills at Level 4 can progress to the Level 5 and benefit from the opportunity to avail of third level opportunities and enhance their employment prospects by having both Level 5 standard of education and work experience to add to their CV," added Nóirín.

Work experience is also a key element of the course, and again the opportunity to see the skills in use in a real environment is invaluable. In conjunction with the RWN Charity Shop trainees can gain retail skills and experience.

Being involved in a range of community based activities through Project Match. Trainees also do a two-week work experience block. RWN Training extends thanks to local employers who support this opportunity. Courses run throughout the year in the RWN Training Centre. Anyone wishing to learn more can call in at any time. The training centre is situated in the Old Mill, Castlerea across the road from Billy Doyle's and down the stone steps. You can also call 094 9621691 for further information.



Pictured are the recipients of Feta level 4 Employment Skills at the RWN Training Centre in Castlerea. Back L-R, James Darrig, Tutor; Nora Fahy, Manager of RWN; Fiona Kilbaine - Walsh, Teresa Cunningham, Nóirín Kavanagh, Training Co-ordinator. Front: Michelle Mander, Tom O'Dwyer and Jane Haywood. Pic: Liam Reynolds

Dylan reaps the rewards of second chance education

EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD Dylan Murray recently graduated from the Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) Training Centre with a FETAC Level 5. This is one of the major awards and is predominantly IT based, with communications and administrative skills and is eligible for points for further education.

"I would really recommend the courses in RWN Training Centre to any young person - they are worthwhile"
- Dylan Murray

A native of Dublin, Dylan left secondary school at the age of 16, but when he moved to the

Castlerea area two years ago he availed of the opportunity to return to education. He first completed a Level 4 employment skills course in November 2013 and then went on to the major Level 5 award, from which he graduated last week. Dylan is now hoping to go onto third level in September.

"When I came to Castlerea I decided to do the Level 4 employment skills course in the RWN centre and we were using computers and I did work experience. The Level 5 was more of a challenge, with lots of written and presentation work and IT but I got through it and now I am hoping to study Business and ICT in GMT in Castlebar in September," said Dylan. The ambitious young man was full of praise for the RWN Training Centre and the many opportunities it provided.

"I would really recommend the courses in RWN Training Centre to any young person - they are so worthwhile - if you are out of education for a while it can be hard coming back into it, but when I got into it I really enjoyed it. There were people of all different ages, from 18 to 60, and we got on well and some of the older people were a good influence on me," said Dylan.

The RWN Training Centre has proven to be an excellent stepping stone for Dylan and for a young man who left school at the age of sixteen he is now looking forward to a bright future.

"I left school when I was 16 so I never thought I would be going to college - it's brilliant, I'm delighted - The RWN Training Centre just opened up so many new possibilities for me," said Dylan.



Pictured is eighteen-year-old Dylan Murray who recently graduated from the Roscommon Women's Network (RWN) Training Centre with a FETAC Level 5 award and he now hopes to go onto third level education.



Michelle Mander, Tom O'Dwyer and Jane Haywood pictured after receiving their awards at the presentations at RWN Training Centre, Castlerea.

Pic: Liam Reynolds