

PRESS RELEASE

Immediate release

2nd October 2008

Marilyn's pledge to keep New Charter sparkling!

A caretaker at one of Ashton's landmarks has been awarded Union Learning Representative of the Year.

Marilyn Gollom is a familiar face for all the residents of the 90 apartments in Assheton House, overlooking the town centre bus station. But she's equally well-known among her colleagues who provide caretaking and cleaning services for the Greater Manchester landlord.

Marilyn's enthusiasm turned towards learning in early June this year when she was appointed a union learning representative. Since then, she has passionately promoted the opportunities for skills learning among her colleagues who work across New Charter's 15,000 homes.

At New Charter's employee awards night at the end of September, Marilyn was pleasantly surprised to get the accolade. The award is sponsored by unionlearn, the TUC funded organisation for promoting training and development among trades union members.

Marilyn said: "Many employees in my part of the business work on their own out in our neighbourhoods. But it's vital we all have the basic literacy and numeracy skills to communicate, and the confidence to contribute to how the business moves forward. I find staff are comfortable talking to people like me about their training needs. I'm pleased if I've helped them to get new skills or brush up on the ones they've had from school.

"I lived for many years in South Africa, so have first-hand experience of how important qualifications become when jobs are oversubscribed. We are increasingly competing in a global market, and many emerging nations have impressive skills – we need to match or surpass them to flourish."

Marilyn practises what she now preaches. Over the last few years she has obtained qualifications in subjects as varied as garden design and learner



support. She also provides support for those teaching accredited ESOL citizenship courses.

New Charter's Director of Organisational Development Christine Amyes said: "We were one of the first companies in the North West to sign up to the Skills Pledge. This commits us to supporting all employees to achieve a minimum of a level 2 qualification. Union Learning representatives like Marilyn really help us engage with those parts of the workforce that are traditionally more difficult to reach. She has made a fantastic impact in a relatively short time, and her enthusiasm is proving infectious!"

At the same awards evening, the Learner of the Year (sponsored by Ashton Sixth Form College) was named as mobile caretaker Richard Withington.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £57million a year and a workforce of almost 800, New Charter is one of the region's largest Registered Social Landlords, and is regulated by The Housing Corporation, a Government watchdog. By incorporating Aksa Housing Association, the Group owns 15,000 homes.
2. unionlearn was established by the TUC to reach out to all members who could benefit from study at the workplace or a local college or learning provider. Union Learning representatives are a key part of promoting opportunities and were statutorily recognised in 2002.
3. The Union Learning fund awarded The Learning Centre at New Charter £16,000 to launch and support the commitment to the Skills Pledge.
4. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project highlighting housing associations' performance. As social businesses, housing associations do not make profit. They offer homes for rent and sale at prices local people can afford. Housing associations provide more than homes - they help create places where people want to live. Wherever you see the **iN business for neighbourhoods** sign, something great is happening in the area. Housing Associations who display this logo are committed to their customers, the neighbourhoods they work in and strive for excellence in everything they do.

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