Royal Patron Launches Junior Prince’s Award

Our Royal Patron The Duke of Cambridge launched the new SkillForce Junior Prince’s Award during a visit to the Yorkshire and Humberside region in June.

Prince William made a special visit to Goole High School in East Riding, Yorkshire, to launch the Junior Prince’s Award in our 10th year. Students from two participating primary schools and Goole High showed The Duke their teamwork and communication skills by traversing a “D-Day minefield” set up on the playground.

SkillForce instructors briefed The Duke on the exercise and head teachers from a number of SkillForce schools met His Royal Highness. There was plenty of time for Prince William to speak to students too.

The SkillForce Junior Prince’s Award is a new initiative starting this academic year. It gives primary-aged children the opportunity to take on a range of activities to build confidence and resilience as they prepare for secondary school. Activities include first aid, team work, navigation, projects about remembrance and camping out.

Peter Cross OBE, Chief Executive, said: “This is a landmark moment for SkillForce. It means we can reach thousands more young people and inspire them to succeed using the values and skills of ex-Servicemen and women”.

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SkillForce 2014
10 Years Of Inspiring Young People To Succeed

Youth First

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SkillForce Celebrates 10th Birthday

A national training event unites our charity for our 10th birthday.

In a special training event in the Midlands, colleagues from England, Scotland and Wales refreshed skills, knowledge and best practice - and celebrated our 10th anniversary as a charity with the inaugural SkillForce Awards, recognising the inspiring work of our instructors and staff.

Peter Cross, Chief Executive, said: “The first SkillForce Awards was an occasion to celebrate the professionalism and dedication of our staff today. We voted for our winners, and I was simply delighted to present the awards with David Dickinson, one of our trustees, for Instructors of the Year, Service, Rising Star, Leadership and Outstanding Achievement.”

Liz Manning, Fundraising Director, was compere for the event which recognised the work of every team.

And to Peter’s surprise, there was also a Founders’ Award, which gave special recognition to the three remaining members of staff who founded our charity and have worked for SkillForce ever since. They were Peter, Tony Shuttleworth (instructor and trainer) and Steve Handford (Senior Manager, Quality Assurance).

We took the opportunity to take this fantastic aerial photo of our entire team!

Prince William Extends His Patronage

In addition, SkillForce was delighted to receive notification from Kensington Palace that The Duke of Cambridge has agreed to extend his patronage of SkillForce - a wonderful birthday present!

Boosted by this, we are as committed as ever to inspire young people to achieve at school and succeed in life using the skills and values of those who have served their country.
Celebrating Excellence

A student’s view of her visit to the battlefields of Ypres this in April

Poem and testimony by Bethany Birchenough, student from East Kent

Some people recite the same words to you
day-to-day.

A peaceful environment, full
yet no-one speaks.

Only the breathing of the trees
and the subtle gust of wind,
removing the leaves that disturb you.

As the flowers blossom between each headstone,
the sun beams onto the crucifix,
guiding all those whose lives were wasted
to rest peacefully.

Lest we forget. Lest we forget.

“My day at Ypres was an inspirational day. Richard [Morgan, East Kent] who accompanied me, the other students and Mr Bradshaw on the trip crammed the day with lots of interesting information that I didn’t know. I carried around a notebook with me and took in the scenery and the powerful words which were spoken by Richard. Throughout the day we visited several different grave yards, all different sizes and the information that was told to us was not only interesting but was very touching.

The day went really well and we even got to enjoy a wonder through the town of Ypres visiting several different chocolate shops.

The best part of the trip was writing our thoughts on all the registers that are kept in a box at each graveyard, and also the emotions that you feel when walking amongst those who were younger than us, yet they bravely fought for us during the war.

The Menin Gate was beautiful and having the opportunity to participate in lying down the wreath was an opportunity I couldn’t say no to. Writing those words on the wreath of remembrance was a thought out sentimental message from me and the other students who went on the trip.

The message said “Our love goes out to all those who fought for us in the war, lest we forget” the words written on the wreath and the scenery and information given to me throughout the day is what inspired me to write the poem above.

SkillForce Study Features in Times Educational Supplement

An independent assessment of SkillForce’s work featured in the UK’s leading education publication in early June. Focussing on our primary work, the study by Professor Susan Hallam of the Institute of Education at the University of London was picked up by the Times Educational Supplement.

The article included quotes from a headteacher of a SkillForce school in Yorkshire and instructor Phillip Hind from the East Anglia team. The news piece noted how the values of ex-Servicemen and women (the SkillForce Way, as we would know it) had a positive impact on the children’s learning, in particular teamwork. More details are at www.skillforce.org.
Celebrating Excellence

The SkillForce Prince’s Award had a breakthrough year this summer with a record number of students taking on the challenge of “24 Hours to Make a Difference” the length and breadth of the UK. Here are some of their stories.

Commitment in Saddleworth

NORTH WEST: A group of year 11 SkillForce students from Saddleworth School in Oldham have shown their commitment to the community by transforming a part of the gardens at Dr. Kershaw’s Hospice in Oldham.

The year 11 students were taking part in the SkillForce Prince’s Award.

Dr Kershaw’s Hospice provides specialist palliative care for adults with non-curable, life-limiting illnesses in a peaceful and homely environment.

Some of the tasks the students completed included staining a large shed, erecting fencing, clearing weeds and laying paving for the hospice volunteers to allow them easier access to the compost heap at the rear of the shed.

Student, Sami Achour said “Being able to take part in the challenge was a really exciting opportunity for us - not only did we get to design and plan the activity but we were also able to complete the whole thing ourselves. It feels like we’ve really achieved something.”

SkillForce Instructor Darren Taylor said “we are extremely proud of the students’ commitment to the project. The group was extremely respectful to members of staff, the patients and their families”.

Green Mission for SkillForce Students in Wiltshire

WEST OF ENGLAND AND SOUTH WALES: Eight Year 10 students from St Laurence School, Bradford on Avon, took part in the Prince’s Award - 24 Hours To Make A Difference - with a clear ecological mission this year.

The students took part in a community project which took place at the Tithe Barn. The project was to aid the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust in producing a community orchard. This would include a variety of apple trees along with pear and plum trees.

The main purpose of the day was to dig out the areas already plotted, insert a stake, plant the fruit trees and provide a solid foundation for the trees. This would ensure that they will be productive for a significant number of years.

The SkillForce students were able to mark out and gather the resources to make tree planting packs for 16 trees. This meant each student had the responsibility of finding their own location for each tree. This gave them an enormous sense of achievement and pride in what they had accomplished.

Instructor Luke Donovan said: “Many people from the local community along with town council members turned up for the event and passed through during the day. They all seemed very happy and appreciative of the efforts the students had made, giving up their time in order to give such a valuable resource back to the community of Bradford on Avon.”

“All the students worked exceptionally hard. Their work ethic and ability to work as a team was excellent. They also worked equally well with the people who had donated the trees and the primary school students who were also invited to help with the task.”
Celebrating Excellence

PRINCE’S AWARD - A quick UK Tour

DEVON & CORNWALL: The SkillForce cohort at Torquay Academy agreed to take on the challenge of repainting the external walls of the 11th Torbay Sea Scout unit in Barton; it was important that the Sea Scout unit would be in mint condition and ready for its up and coming annual inspection in July. The small but motivated team pulled together and painted the entire hall in Battleship Grey!

NORFOLK: Students from Wymondham High discussed three possible sites and settled on tackling overgrown pathways at the nearby “Lizard” nature reserve. They agreed a way forward with a local interest group and got to work. The mayor of Wymondham said: “You [Skillforce] are exactly what these young people need. They have shown real self discipline and commitment giving their free time to make a difference to our community”.

MANCHESTER AND LIVERPOOL: A large group from Litherland High School took on the joint challenge of restoring and cleaning the war memorial in Litherland and helping restore the “Shot at Dawn” memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

SCOTLAND EAST: Students from near Edinburgh painted an incredible mural as they refurbished a local youth and community centre, the Mansion - Gracemount Youth and Children's Centre.

Instructors Hannah Smith and Derek Rhoddan had a hand in the design but said: “All the hard work and enthusiasm came from the students. They were delighted, and got a real sense of achievement when the mural was finished.”

LONDON & ESSEX: 30 students from 3 schools in London and Essex formed a super team to renovate gardens at the Royal Gunpowder Mills, north east of London.

The students made bird boxes, cleared paths and restored gardens - in the pouring rain. Nick Farrow (Deputy at Manningtree High, Essex) said after the challenge: “This is fantastic. You guys are doing such a great job with our students!”

Area Manager Sarah Ferguson said: “The staff at the site were amazed by our students work ethic. Well done!”

DORSET & SOLENT: As part of Fareham Voluntary Week, students from Henry Cort Community College “wowed” local councillors and leaders by their enthusiasm and commitment to get involved in activities to “tidy up” the community, sponsored by a local shopping centre.
Fundraising Update

D-Day Commemoration at the Royal Albert Hall

On 6 June SkillForce was offered an incredible opportunity by BBC Radio 2 to be part of their commemoration of the 70th year anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

Alongside The Royal British Legion and SSAFA, SkillForce received the profits from an event at the Royal Albert Hall - broadcast on BBC Radio 2, the Red Button, and streamed live to 200 cinemas nationwide!

The concert included music, performances and real-life accounts of the momentous day and featured Sir Patrick Stewart, Katherine Jenkins, Dame Vera Lynn, Seth Lakeman, Dermot O’Leary, Jeremy Vine, the Military Wives Choir and the Concert Orchestra.

It was a priceless opportunity for SkillForce to raise its profile. One of our instructors Phill Hind, from the East Anglia Team and formerly Army Air Corps, spoke to a sold-out audience at the iconic Central London venue.

Marathon Runners Shine

A SkillForce team of runners in this year’s London Marathon brought the smiles and energy to match the distance in glorious sunshine in the capital.

Our six runners were Alex Richardson and Sian Purath from corporate sponsor Clyde & Co, Pete Horswell, and SkillForce’s own Kimberley Hamilton and Anam Ahmed (who ran with Jake Butcher, Anam’s sight partner). A SkillForce team cheered on the runners from Mile 13, just metres from Tower Bridge. Fundraising Officer Susan Norris met our runners after their incredible exertions in the Spring sunshine at a special reception hosted by our supporter, Help for Heroes.

Showing her finisher’s medal proudly, Sian said: “It was great to see my friends, family and SkillForce along the route. It definitely kept me going.”

Pete from Adventure Partners said: “The hot weather made it harder, but the encouragement and people shouting my name along the route kept me going.”

After months of training, Anam - our partially-sighted SkillForce colleague who lost his sight after being injured serving in the Army, said: “It was incredible. The race was going well until about Mile 18 and then Jake and I found it really hard. I don’t plan to run another marathon! But it was an honour to do it for SkillForce. And a brilliant achievement.

Help for Heroes Grant

We’re delighted that Help for Heroes has given us another significant grant.

Our charity first approached Help for Heroes (H4H) in 2009 for help to support an internship programme for Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) personnel as part of their recovery programme.

The internships were a success and, to date, donations from H4H have totalled grant funding of £674,746, which has helped SkillForce run programmes to employ WIS veterans.

The latest grant of £215,135 will be used to support 40% of the salary and training costs of up to 8 veterans in 2014.

In addition, funding will be used to pay for the training cost of 15 Wounded, Injured or Sick personnel on SkillForce’s Military to Education programme. This will deliver a Level 3 Diploma in Mentoring and Developing Young People and is designed to give Service Leavers the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for mentoring and teaching professions.

And finally, this generous grant will pay for a Taster Placement for up to 20 Wounded, Injured or Sick personnel considering a career in education. The placement will usually involve a placement with us in a school.
New Military to Education Programme

SkillForce launches refreshed course for ex-Forces to start new careers in education

SkillForce is the trusted bridge for Service Leavers and ex-Forces into a new career in education.

Military to Education is a new programme that gives Service leavers the skills, knowledge and understanding to prepare them for the mentoring and teaching professions. Learners will develop the skills and knowledge they need to plan and deliver training and to provide feedback to young people, in a way which supports and enhances each individual’s learning and character development. They will also learn how to embed different mentoring models by undertaking a number of supervised mentoring sessions. On successful completion, participants will receive:

- Qualifications (Level 3 Diploma in Mentoring in Alternative Education)
- Experience (a 3 week placement with one of our teams across the country)
- Recognition (we know how to work with ex-military and have 10 years’ experience of unlocking their skills and values)

Help for Heroes have generously offered support for the second course and has offered funding towards the training cost of 15 Wounded, Injured or Sick personnel. The first course is due to start in September with two further courses planned later in the year and early next year.

Former Chief of Defence Staff and SkillForce patron, Lord Dannatt, said: “The Forces in Mind Trust Transition Study and Lord Ashcroft’s Veteran’s Review have recently stated that resettlement containing a work placement is likely to be the most successful for the individual. I am pleased to see SkillForce’s new offer has taken this on board. The other key is that the course offers a Level 3 qualification in mentoring in alternative education and this opens up the opportunity for ELCAS funding to become available.”

Peter Cross, OBE, Chief Executive of SkillForce said: “SkillForce has 14 years’ experience of being the largest provider of training and employment for those leaving the Services and entering the education system. The new Military to Education course is based upon SkillForce’s experience of running the Intern Programme for wounded, injured and sick, and more recently, the Military to Mentor programme for over 250 Service Leavers. What makes us the choice provider of training to enter the education sector is that we are not for profit, and want to employ the best individuals having attended our training so we have a positive vested interest.”

If you would like to know more about the new programme, please email mentors@skillforce.org
Notice Board and Diary

Future Events and Notices

- Our Social Impact Reports for our work in England and Scotland are now available, following successful launches with opinion formers in Edinburgh and London. Please get in touch for more details or visit our website.

- In September, we are preparing for a special set of events in Wales, celebrating our renewed programme there and our 10th anniversary as a charity. Get in touch for more information.

- An incredibly special Gala Dinner will be held in November at the Imperial War Museum, London, this year to mark our 10th anniversary. Tickets for this centrepiece event are now available.

- Our corporate partners at Clyde & Co are getting on their bikes for an ambitious fundraising ride from Oxford to London via Surrey. Please contact our Fundraisers for more details.

- Our “Celebrate 10” campaign will continue throughout 2014, with a host of local and national moments on the 10th of each month. Make sure you follow our website, Facebook or Twitter to join in the celebrations.

- The new Junior Prince’s Award begins in the new academic year. Please keep your eyes and ears peeled for news and updates on our website as we inspire young people at primary level too.

VIDEO MESSAGES FROM OUR ROYAL PATRON

We are simply thrilled that our Royal Patron The Duke of Cambridge has kindly provided messages of support for our 10th birthday as a charity, the D-Day Commemoration, and during the launch of the SkillForce Junior Prince’s Award. View them all at: http://www.youtube.com/user/skillforceorg

Social Media Boost!

This term has been fantastic in raising our profile while we celebrate the success of our students in the classroom and beyond.

Our Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn profiles have taken a terrific boost.

Please lend your support by “Liking” us on Facebook (SkillForce), connecting to on LinkedIn (Skill Force) and following us on Twitter (@SkillForceUK).

Text Donate Campaign

We have launched this term a refreshed Text Donate campaign, so small donations can help us:

- reach more young people in schools in need of positive adult role models;
- help ex-Servicemen and women begin a new career in education;
- share the values of those who Served with a new generation of young people.

Donors can simply text SKIL01 £5 (or another amount) to 70070.

THANK YOU.... to all our supporters, donors and friends and colleagues in schools. Please continue to visit our Facebook and website as we celebrate our 10th Anniversary. For information about our programmes in schools, please contact sarah.annan@skillforce.org. And for fundraising: tessa.durham@skillforce.org.