29 May 2015

Norfolk to get its first child doctors as Children's University awards its first 'PhDs'

A 12-year-old from Martham near Aylsham, and a 10 year old girl from Great Yarmouth are set to become the county's first child doctors next week, when they receive a doctorate from the Norfolk Children's University.

Alex Skinner has clocked up more than 830 hours of voluntary learning, making him the university's most dedicated student. Brooke Marjoram, has also completed over 800 hours of additional learning by completing a range of activities, from jazz, tap and ballet dancing to circus skills to sign-language.

The Aylsham High School and Edward Worlledge students will be just two of more than 1,200 children to graduate at special ceremonies at the University of East Anglia (UEA) on Tuesday, 16 June, Wednesday, 17 June and Thursday, 18 June.

Led locally by Norfolk County Council, the Children's University aims to inspire children to develop a passion for learning outside of the classroom.

The programme is open to anyone aged five to fourteen and gives children the chance to collect stamps in a special *Passport to Learning*, for each hour of approved learning that takes place outside school.

Stamps can be collected in over 150 accredited learning destinations in Norfolk, or in hundreds of other destinations across the country.

Alex, who has been a Children's University student for five years, will receive his doctorate from Louis De Bernieres, award-winning author and Chancellor of the Children's University in Norfolk.

At the event Alex will also showcase his achievements through a video he has produced to show the impact that the Children's University has had on his life.

He said: "I enjoy being part of Norfolk Children's University and I would recommend it to anybody under 14 years, I am hoping they will extend this age.

"The Passport to Learning makes learning fun and attending graduations make you feel as if you have really achieved something.

"I am pleased that I have reached my award at Doctorate level, and now want to go on and get to the highest level possible- Fellowship level."

Brooke said: "I really enjoy learning new skills and developing my interests outside of school and it makes me so pleased that the hard work and time I put into these activities is recognised by the Norfolk Children's University. I will be so proud to receive my Doctorate level award at the graduation ceremony, I can't wait to carry on to achieve the next levels of learning in my passport!"

Among those donning caps and gowns at next week's ceremonies will be almost one hundred children from the same Norfolk school.

Howard Junior School, in King's Lynn has been enrolling children in the university for 5 years and will have 23 children receive Masters level awards this year, for completing between 500 and 800 hours of additional learning.

Greg Hill, headteacher of Howard Junior School, said: "Children's University has provided enormous benefits for our pupils – inspiring them with their learning, being aspirational with their goals and giving them all a clear focus towards higher education.

"The Children's University promotes excellence and enjoyment with learning. Year after year more pupils are joining the scheme after positive feedback from their peers."

In all, more than 40 Norfolk schools will be represented at next week's events.

As well as attending a special certificate ceremony and hat-throwing at the UEA, the children are also given an interactive tour of the campus by UEA Ambassadors, designed to highlight the benefits of attending university.

James Joyce, Chairman of the Children's Services Committee at Norfolk County Council, said: "The main aim of the Children's University is to raise the aspirations of all Norfolk children by rewarding those with the motivation and determination to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

"It gives children recognition for spending hours of their free time participating in activities that will develop the skills they need to be resourceful and talented adults. Although open to all, it puts particular emphasis on supporting schools to raise the life chances of vulnerable children and inspire them to aim for a university education."

Author Louis De Bernieres (who is the Norfolk Chidlren's Unviersity Chancellor) said: "If you want to be successful and get the most out of life, you should go a bit further than you have to. That's what the Children's University does- it adds extra quality to children's learning."

Photo opportunity
Alex and Brooke will receive their doctorates from Louis De Bernieres at a ceremony taking place in the Thomas Paine Centre between 6.30pm and 7.30pm on Tuesday, 16 June.

The Howard Junior post-graduates will be receiving their certificates in a ceremony to take place in Congregation Hall, from noon to 1pm, on Wednesday, 17 June.

Notes for editors

List of schools participating (in day order)
Tuesday 16 June
Necton Ce Primary School
Little Plumstead Primary School
Hillside Avenue Primary
Norwich Primary Academy
Hillcrest

Wednesday 17 June
Howard Junior School
Sparhawk Infant and Nursery School
Hemblington Primary
Heacham Infant
Neatished
Norwich Free School
Ormesby Village Junior School
Ormesby Village Infant School
Alderman Swindell
Millfield Primary
Stoke Holy Cross Primary
Brundall
St Edmund's CF School
Browick Road Infant School Wymondham
Horsford Junior
Wicklewood
St Mary's RC Primary
St Johns Community Primary School Hoveton

Thursday 18 June
Redgate Junior School
Holly Meadows School
Scarning vc Primary
Toftwood Infant School
Colman Junior School
Magdalen Gates
Northgate Infants
Edward Worlledge Primary
North Walsham Junior, Infant School and Nursery
St Francis of Assisi
Dersingham VA Primary
West Earlham Jnr
Drayton
Thursday 18 June
Caister Infant, Nursery and Children's Centre
Trowse Primary School
Rockland St Mary Primary School
Bure Valley Junior
North Denes Junior School
Old Catton Junior
White Woman Lane

For political comment
Cllr James Joyce (Liberal Democrat) Chairman of the Children's Services Committee, on 01263 587212
Cllr Emma Corlett (Labour) Vice Chair of the Children's Services Committee on 07557 634891
Cllr Roger Smith (Conservative) on 01508 538225
Cllr Paul Gilmour (UKIP) on 01362 690131
Cllr Richard Bearman (Green) on 01603 504124

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