

Press Release

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Bricks and Books Break Mould for Women

A single mum from Cardiff is breaking the mould to become one of only a handful of female bricklayers in Wales.



Paula Campbell congratulated by Jane Hutt, AM and Marcella Maxwell, Chief Executive of Chwarae Teg

Paula Campbell, mother of four from Pentrebanne is building a new career in the construction industry after receiving £1,000 to help contribute towards her costs of studying.

The 38 year old secured the funding from a special trust set up in memory of the late Swansea East AM Val Feld, which is administered by Chwarae Teg, the economic development agency for women. The Val Feld Memorial Trust Bursary donates £1,000 each year to up to three single mothers, over the age of 25, who are pursuing a course of study.

Already a qualified HGV driver and with three sons and one daughter now in full time education, Paula decided to embark on a two year Construction in Brickwork course at Barry College Cardiff Construction Training Centre (CCTC) in Cardiff Bay.

Paula is the only female in her group of 15 student bricklayers and one of only three women attending courses at the Training Centre.

She will be using the bursary to purchase tools and equipment to kit her out for the world of construction.

"It's been a tough road getting back in to the studying world again and I was under no illusions that being a woman in a predominantly male field would be easy, but I'm determined to go all the way", said Paula.

"Over the years, I've shelled out for other people to do work on the house and decided that I could be doing it myself. The financial support from the bursary will now make it so much easier", she continued.

Ultimately Paula would like to be able to set up on her own and use her skills to do small scale private work for women and older people who may not have a lot of money.

Before she does this however, Paula will be using skills gained in her first year to build a wall around her property, and the CITB qualification gained on completion of the course, to move into construction site management, specializing in onsite health and safety.

Jane Hutt, Minister for Assembly Business, Equalities and Children presented Paula with the cheque at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay said: "Paula's story shows us that there are women out there ready to break the mould, and it was a real pleasure to meet someone not afraid to challenge gender stereotypes. I would like to congratulate her and all the other mums who are using their drive and ambitions to further their careers."

Construction is one of the largest industries in the UK, employing around 2 million people, yet only around 10% are women. Marcella Maxwell, chief executive of Chwarae Teg said:

"Paula is an inspiration for young girls, her peers and her own family. No career should be out of anyone's reach, and women like Paula demonstrate that a man's world can very much be a woman's world too.

"Paula has told me that she will be visiting a local school over the next few weeks to talk to female school leavers about the career choices available in construction. It's fantastic that Paula will be such a positive role model for girls - the more chances young people are given to experience non-traditional occupations, the more chance there is of challenging outdated notions about male and female roles."

"We received more than 70 applications and each and every one of the applicants is a worthy winner in terms of their commitment to learning and overcoming challenges still faced by so many women today."

Other recipients of this year's Val Feld Memorial Trust Bursary include Lisa Anne Thomas, a 37 year old mother of three from Bethesda, who is using the award to fund an access to higher education course at Coleg Menai, help with child care costs, a computer and special equipment to help with her dyslexia. And mother of two, 38 year old Catherine Jones from Denbigh, is putting the bursary towards the costs of retraining as an accountant following a diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis in 2005, which put an end to the dream of a career in teaching.

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About Chwarae Teg

Chwarae Teg was established in 1992 to support, develop and expand the role of women in the Welsh economy, believing that the Welsh economy will only reach its full potential when every individual is given an equal opportunity to contribute.

Women, although playing a greater role than ever before, are often confronted with barriers in education, employment and enterprise that stop many from developing their skills and careers. Chwarae Teg draws

funds from the Welsh Assembly Government and Europe to support projects designed to help women overcome these barriers and raise the profile of these issues. Membership and consultancy fees provide further income.