

Hastings Man Runner-up For Achievement Award

A Hastings man who is launching his own personal training business has been named as runner-up for an achievement award.

Matthew Huggins, aged 31, of Hastings has been chosen as runner-up by employment charity Tomorrow's People in its annual Awards for Achievement. The awards pay tribute to people who have overcome significant barriers in their quest to get back to work. Matthew attend the awards ceremony at Plaisterers' Hall in central London Tuesday evening, where he proudly collected his award.

Matthew was chosen as runner-up for the Roger Sterba Memorial Award, which marks a client's journey to employment-where he or she has faced particular difficulty in achieving their goal. The special award commemorates the late Roger Sterba, who, as a manager of Tomorrow's People in Kent, made such a difference to many hundreds of disadvantaged people.

Matthew left school with no formal qualifications and held a series of part-time jobs in gardening and roofing, but had little idea what he wanted to do with his life.

A visit to Tomorrow's People in January 2007 was to change his life. Matthew was determined to develop a career. His Employment Adviser gave him free, one-to-one support, helping to build his confidence and gave him guidance on interview techniques and Writing his C.V.

The Adviser discussed Matthew's skills and abilities with him, and it became clear that he had an interest in fitness. Matthew had already gained several qualifications in this field including life guarding and fitness training certificates, as well as first aid qualifications.

Matthew's Adviser therefore suggested that these could form the basis of a business and approached Alan Burrows at the Princes' Trust regarding funding. The Princes' Trust agreed to consider Matthew for funding. Time was not on his side, as his business plan had to be agreed before his 31st birthday, which was just eight weeks away.

Graham Wilkins, Tomorrow's People Programme Centre adviser said, "When Matthew first joined the programme centre he was unsure of what to do with his life, but worked determinedly to ensure his business plan was ready in time. Both his business plan and presentation were accepted and Matthew immediately enrolled on a Prince's Trust business course. This has given him a new confidence and he has a real interest and knowledge of the fitness business."

Matthew's personal training and circuit training company, Fresh Start, began trading in July, and has now gained three personal training clients.

Matthew said, "When I first came to Tomorrow's People I had no idea what to do with my life, but they helped me to recognise and develop the skills and abilities I already had. Running my own business is a dream come true and they have helped me turn my life around."

Tomorrow's People is a national charity, with a 23-year track record of success in helping people out of long-term unemployment, welfare dependency and into jobs and self-sufficiency.

Since 1984, the charity has helped change the lives of more than 400,000 people across the UK who had been resigned to long-term, even life-long, unemployment.

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