

4 May 2010

Press Release

## **CRC LECTURER BILLY KERRY WINS TOP AWARD**

**CRC lecturer and sculptor Billy Kerry, who left school at 13 and overcame enormous obstacles to gain a first class honours degree in Fine Art, has won a prestigious Adult Learner's Award.**



Billy Kerry with one of his sculptures

He will be presented with a Regional Individual Award later this month in recognition of his inspirational journey to success, despite leaving school unable to read and write and with severe, undiagnosed, dyslexia.

Billy, 29, was brought up in a gypsy family and earned his living selling from door to door. He taught himself to read when he was 13, but it wasn't until he was 23 that he started to turn his life around, after walking into Cambridge Regional College and speaking to careers advisors.

He enrolled on an Access to Art and Design course at the College, where his severe dyslexia was diagnosed, and determination saw him complete difficult essays before moving on to do a Diploma of Foundation Studies the following year.

A talented sculptor, Billy won a place at Chelsea College of Art and Design, where he gained a First in Fine Art and returned to Cambridge to lecture at CRC, continuing his arts practice with a studio in London.

"I have turned my life around. I feel that I am living my dreams," said Billy. "It wasn't easy leaving the family home but now my family are very proud of me and all that I have achieved. I feel I can share this with others who may feel that their dreams to study are beyond them. I am living proof that they are not."

"Gypsy children don't go to university, that's for other people. But I never felt like a conventional gypsy child - I knew I had something else about me."

Billy, who hopes to continue his learning with a Masters in Sculpture and complete a PhD, will be presented with his award at the East of England Adult Learners' Week Regional Award Ceremony, at the Air Space Conference Centre at the Duxford Imperial War Museum, on 19 May as part of Adult Learners' Week, which runs from 15 to 21 May.

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: "The incredible stories of all our Adult Learners' Week award-winners show just what can be achieved in life through determination, imagination and ambition.

"Billy, like all of this year's award-winners, is proof of how learning can absolutely transform lives, often leading to new jobs and careers; and helping people to cope, or

even overcome, the many challenges that they face. Hopefully millions of adults across the country will be inspired by Billy's story to take up learning and discover for themselves a whole new raft of opportunities."

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### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

For more information, please contact Lynn O'Shea, PR & Events Co-ordinator, on 01223 418773 or email [loshea@camre.ac.uk](mailto:loshea@camre.ac.uk)

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Cambridge Regional College is the second largest provider of full-time education for 16 to 19 year-olds in the eastern region. The College has around 3,500 full-time and 6,000 part-time students. Students come in from a 40-mile radius, covering Cambridge and its surrounding villages, eastern Bedfordshire, northern Essex and western Suffolk.

Over 80 per cent of full-time students are aged 16 to 18 years old and come to the College after secondary school; the rest are mature students, studying on a range of Access to Higher Education and vocational programmes. The College offers the largest and most comprehensive range of vocational courses in Cambridgeshire, and has one of the largest Train to Gain contracts in the Eastern Region.

Adult Learners' Week, 15 – 21 May 2010, is the largest annual celebration of adult learning in the UK. It is supported by the Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills, the European Social Fund, Careers Advice, Ofcom, the Office of Communications, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Booktrust, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Ufi/learndirect, Foundation Degree Forward, National Open College Network, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority and BECTA. More details at: [www.alw.org.uk](http://www.alw.org.uk)