Cambridge-based educational charity celebrates 60th birthday

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The National Extension College (NEC), who are based in Sawston on the outskirts of Cambridge, are reaching a landmark birthday in 2023 as they **celebrate 60 years since the college was founded by Michael Young, Lord Young of Dartington**, as a pilot for what he intended to be the nucleus of The Open University (OU).

Established on 12th August 1963 as a not-for-profit distance learning provider, NEC has a strong, proud heritage of widening access to education for people of all ages by offering access to essential qualifications that can be studied flexibly, at any time and anywhere.

Chief Executive Esther Chesterman says: *"NEC believes that everybody deserves a chance to achieve their learning goals, no matter their circumstances, and we are proud of all of our students' achievements. We support learners of all ages to help them achieve their goals.*

"Looking towards the future, we are excited to see where newly developing technology in areas like adaptive learning and AI will lead NEC. Our goal is to continue to deliver the same high quality learning materials and support for many years to come, and we feel that the expertise gained from 60 years in the sector will be our greatest benefit when tapping into the next generation of online learning.

"To celebrate our 60th birthday we are sponsoring a tree as part of Trees for Streets Cambridge, have partnered with local charity Centre 33 for whom staff will be fundraising, and are offering a bursary of up to £1,000 to one learner interested in changing career or returning to the workplace."

Throughout their 60 years, the college has seen hundreds of thousands of students enrol on their courses, all with different goals and reasons for needing to access distance learning. From initially delivering courses via live broadcast, to sending whole courses in the post to now delivering fully online courses, NEC has been at the forefront of ensuring education is accessible to those in need of flexible study to fit around their lifestyle.

Alumni include **comedian Russell Kane**, who studied A level Sociology with NEC and received the fastest ever A grade from enrolment to completion and went on to embark on a degree at Middlesex University. Last year, Kane worked with the NEC to deliver the **Russell Kane Scholarship** which is supporting three students to study towards GCSE and A level qualifications that they may otherwise have been unable to complete. A second scholarship is planned for 2024.

National treasure Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, who became the first British ski jumper at the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, completed several GCSEs and A levels with NEC in the late 1990s before heading to De Montfort University.

The college works closely with a range of highly respected partners including Prisoners' Education Trust, awarding bodies, schools, universities, local authorities and subject associations. In particular it maintains a close association with the Open University with whom it is proud to share a history and ethos.

www.nec.ac.uk

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About The National Extension College

Established in 1963 as a not-for-profit distance learning provider, the National Extension College (NEC) has a strong, proud heritage in widening access to education. Our aim is to transform lives and open up new possibilities for people of all ages by offering access to essential qualifications like GCSEs and A levels, as well as vocational qualifications in management, business and teaching.

www.nec.ac.uk

Trees for Streets Cambridge

Cambridge City Council has partnered with the charity Trees for Streets to make it easier for residents to fund tree planting in streets and parks across the city. The ambition is to increase tree canopy cover and make the city more climate resilient, whilst also helping to reduce air pollution, improve mental and physical wellbeing and make the city an even more lovely place to live.
https://sponsor.treesforstreets.org/provider/cambridge-city-council

Centre 33

Centre 33 has been offering free and confidential information and support to young people for over 40 years. They support any young person up to the age of 25 with their mental health, caring responsibilities, housing, sexual health and more. https://centre33.org.uk/

NEC 60th Birthday Bursary

The NEC 60th Birthday Bursary will provide up to £1,000 for one learner to study a course or courses with NEC which will enable them to get back into the workplace or to change career. The closing date for applications is 4th August and the recipient will be announced on 16th August at an event NEC is holding at The Stapleford Granary Arts Centre in Cambridge to celebrate its 60th birthday. .

Contact: Amanda Davies (NEC Marketing Manager)

w: www.nec.ac.uk

E: marketing@nec.ac.uk

Registered office:

Woolpack House,

70 High Street

Sawston

Cambridge

CB22 3HJ

t: 01223 400200

Company Contact:

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The National Extension College (Part of the Open School Trust)

T. 0800 389 2839
E. marketing@nec.ac.uk
W. https://www.nec.ac.uk/

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