

AROUND STAFFORDSHIRE

Student is happy at prize of iPod

A former Halesowen College student is dancing in the street after winning a must-have portable music player.

Sarah Aldridge won an iPod in a recent competition at a University of Wolverhampton open day.

Sarah, from Oldbury, won the MP3 player after correctly answering 10 questions about the university and its students.

The 19-year-old has recently completed her A-levels and HND Foundation Course in art and plans to study fine art at the university.

"I was really impressed with the university and am looking forward to starting my studies," she said.

"I'm really pleased to have won as my old MP3 player has stopped working and this one is miles better."

Elizabeth Scott, from Oxley, also won an iPod during the competition.

The 17-year-old has finished her first year of A-levels at St Edmund's Catholic School, in Wolverhampton, and is hoping to study either law or primary school teaching.

"I thought the University was really nice and everyone was friendly," she said.

"I've never had an MP3 player before so I can't wait to get downloading music."

Guided walk for ramblers

Ramblers are being invited to lace up their boots and join a guided walk through Halesowen.

The Shenstone Way walk will take place on September 20 between 10am and 1pm.

The walk will begin at The Leasowes and on through to Halesowen.

People should meet at the Warden's Base on the car park at The Leasowes, off Mucklow Hill. For more details call 01384 814642.

Baby bumps can be made into cast

Pregnant mothers are flocking to book a place to get plastered – and have a cast made of their baby bump.

Rather than trying to hide their large girths many mums-to-be are following the fashion trend of film stars such as Demi Moore and model Nell McAndrew and showing they are proud of their bump.

Now, thanks to a Bewdley shopowner, they can create a piece of artwork with a difference.

Livia Whittall, aged 29, who owns the Baby Bundle Maternity Boutique in Welch Gate, Bewdley, is offering the belly-casting

Report by Sue Smith

kits. They aim to enable pregnant mothers to have a cast made at the shop or at home during the last three months of pregnancy.

The casts can also include the full torso and even thighs and hands and can be left white or later decorated in latex or acrylic paints, with decoupage or even made into a bronze.

Once completed the cast can be hung on a wall or displayed as a unique object of art.

The kits sell for £37.50 and mother-of-one Livia is hoping they will catch on with

people locally. Olivia said the idea for both her shop and the casts had come from her own pregnancy with son Joshua, who is now 21-months-old.

Waiting

"People who take them home can get family or friends to help make the cast, making everyone a part of what is happening," she said.

"About 12 people have already said that they are interested in doing this and are waiting until the last three weeks of preg-

nancy. The aim is for mums and their families to create a lasting memory of their pregnancy.

"I am getting mixed reactions. While some think it is a good idea other have said they don't want to remember how big they are while pregnant."

Livia opened her shop in Bewdley after failing to find fashionable maternity clothes while pregnant.

She said: "When I was pregnant I had photographs taken of my bump and would definitely have one of these casts when expecting my second child."

Controversial treatment is used more frequently in county

Health chief defends use of electro therapy

By Nick Pritchard

Electroshock treatment is used significantly more in Staffordshire's psychiatric hospitals than most of the West Midlands, new figures reveal. Also known as electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), it is banned in a number of countries.

Figures from South Staffordshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust, which were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, show that there have been a total of 3,603 ECT administrations since 2002.

Mobile cameras to check on speeding

Staffordshire mobile include the following routes tomorrow:

A460 Rugeley between A51 / A460 junction of Sandy Lane / Hednesford Road to south of junction A460 Stile Cop Road. (A460 southerly direction from little Chef / Burger King island to Stile Cop Lane).

A51 Pasturefields between Amerton Lane and Hoomill Lane.

A51 Rugeley North, between junction with Bower Lane and A460 Sandy Lane.

A51 Rugeley South, between A460 and Brereton Island (main roundabout after leaving Rugeley on A51 South).

Pye Green Road Cannock between A34 Stafford Road and the junction of Pye Green Road / Brindley Road.

A34 Tittensor, **A34 Yarlet**, **A5005 Lightwood Road**, Stoke-on-Trent, between A520 and A50.

A500 between A34 Trent Vale and A53 Etruria Road (Roadworks), Stoke-on-Trent.

The figure compares to 1,682 for Shropshire County Primary Care Trust and 2,408 for Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust.

There were 2,300 instances for Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, 2,211 for Dudley South and Dudley Beacon PCT, 3,519 for Leicester Partnership NHS Trust and 1,343 for Sandwell Mental Health NHS and Social Care Partnership.

Anti-ECT campaigners say the Staffordshire total is an extraordinary figure given that the therapy is supposed to only be given as a last resort.

Dr Lucy Johnstone, a clinical psychologist who researches patients' views on ECT, has called for a ban. She claims that there is widespread evidence ECT causes brain damage, a fact accepted by some doctors and sometimes claimed to be the mechanism of ECT's therapeutic action.

Effective

The South Staffordshire trust's clinical director Abid Khan said: "Electro-convulsive therapy is an effective, and at times life saving, treatment for a small group of patients suffering from mainly mood disorders."

"South Staffordshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust delivers ECT treatment in an environment that meets the standards set by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. "ECT is administered in accordance with National Institute of Clinical Excellence guidelines.

"It is our view that this is an effective form of treatment for a small minority of patients and we ensure it is delivered by a team of highly trained professionals."

Music society meet

A music society is inviting people to its next meeting. The Dudley Recorded Music Society meeting is being held in the Parish Centre, at St Francis' Church, in Laurel Road, on August 31 at 7.30pm. Guest speaker Arthur Mould will present a talk on Shostakovich.

Choir members on the look out singers and musicians

A Stourbridge orchestra and choir are still searching for more people to take part in forthcoming performances.

New members are needed for Stourbridge Choral and Orchestral Society, which was formed in 1884.

Rehearsals take place in the music department of Ridgewood School, in Park Road West, Wollaston, with the

Licence call for hire cars



Lichfield District Council chairman Councillor Dr Bill Hassell and Steve Mallen, of Select Chauffeurs, with the new private hire special event vehicle licence

Council leader in plea to owners over new system

Report by Faye Casey

Limousine and chauffeur firms across Lichfield district are being encouraged to get licensed – and help attract new trade because people will feel more confident using them.

The chairman of Lichfield District Council, Councillor Dr Bill Hassell, took a ride in a luxury stretched limo from Select Chauffeurs, the first of its kind to be licensed in the district.

"We are hoping that all private hire companies in the district contact us if they are not yet licensed," he said. "It is a really simple process and being licensed could help attract more custom."

"We are also calling for residents to ask private hire companies whether they are

licensed before booking them, as people could be risking their safety getting into a car with a stranger." Steve Mallen, owner of Select Chauffeurs, said: "I found the district council very accommodating when discussing how to licence my stretched limo."

"I was concerned the licence badge would be too large and could detract from the overall look of the vehicle, but the licence is small and very acceptable."

"It is so important for people hiring limos to know they are in safe hands and will be looked after."

To find out how to get licensed call the council's licensing team on 01543 308747.

Artists produce winning pieces

Four artists have won prizes for their sculptures which adorn the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley.

Their work, which has been inspired by their environment, features in an exhibition currently being held at the tourist attraction.

The Collaborations One: Professional Artists Programme competition brought together local artists to share their skills and creative ideas.

The award for Creative Spatial response, which rewarded artists for a piece which interpreted and most suited the environment, went to Robyn Smith and Robert Foxall Colley.

Their winning piece, entitled Seeing Through The Ages, is a glass curtain supported by ironwork.

The prize for the Makers Collaboration, which rewarded artists for working together and drawing on their different skills, went to Lynn Baker and Dave Ward.

Their winning piece, entitled Taking Wing, features glass birds on steel rods flying out of a canal tunnel.

The prizes were awarded by Henriette Lytle-Brewkellar, head of tourism at Advantage West Midlands, one of the sponsors.

Guide to council services

Adoption, buses and childcare are some of the services listed in a new A to Z guide for people in Worcestershire.

The guide, the first of its kind to be produced by Worcestershire County Council, lists all of its main services and the 16-page booklet has been designed to make it easier for people to get in touch with the right people they are trying to reach.

It uses the same categories as the council's website and also includes contact details for county councillors.

Officials believe it will help people and local organisations and the guide is being distributed to households across the county during September.

Councillor Alwyn Davies said: "It's very important that everyone in the county can find out what their local authority does and how they can get in touch."

Proposal for apartments

A Tipton company is seeking permission to build a 20-home apartment block on the site of an abrasive company works.

A plan for the Swift Abrasives site in Toll End Road, has been put in by Swift & Whitmore.

The plan is to go before Sandwell planning committee on Wednesday.

Planning officer Tony Rice said the site was not well-suited to industrial use and he is to recommend approval, although he believed the company's aspiration on the number of homes might be unrealistic.

Asbury's home open to public

The boyhood home of Francis Asbury, first American Methodist Bishop at West Bromwich, is to be open to the public as part of the national Heritage Open Days scheme. People will be able to get into Bishop Asbury's Cottage on Newton Road free under the scheme.

Bishop Asbury grew up in the West Bromwich and Great Barr areas.

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