

Inez Sarkodee-adoo

Turning up trumps

From class clown to role model and accomplished public speaker, the UFA gave direction and meaning to Inez from London

At her own admission, 16 year old Inez from Hackney found it difficult to have empathy with her teachers. As a bright student, she also enjoyed her role as class clown, and was often to be found at the back of the class, messing around with the aim of getting laughs from her peers.

"I wasn't a bad person, but I just didn't take things seriously," says Inez. "And it probably would have continued that way, if it wasn't for the UFA."

Vikki Barrowcliff, a new teacher to Inez's school spotted her potential (seeing her as bright and unchallenged, rather than a troublemaker), and invited her and three others along to the UFA's year 2008 residential, to train as Lead Learners. "I didn't know what it was about," says Inez. "But I liked the idea of putting my energy into doing something challenging, so I went along to find out more."

Lead Learners are young people who are trained to run their own learning clubs. Through an intensive learning process the UFA supplies them with the skills and physical resources to put on clubs to benefit the learning of others through engaging and fun learning activities.



Inspiration

"The week was fantastic," says Inez. "I learned so much about how to attract people into a club and how to plan the activities and the learning. And the adults who ran the residential were inspirational. We all learned from them modelling good behaviours, and they treated us like young adults. We had just the right mixture of guidance and responsibility and everything we learnt was reinforced. There's no point in being shown something just once, so it was really helpful to recap on the learning at each stage.

I left that week feeling fully able to cope with the challenge ahead."



The next steps

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Motivate



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Inez then went on to run a club at her school for year 7s, along with the other three who had been on the course with her. “We began preparing our club as soon as we got back to school in September 2008 and we were ready by early October,” says Inez. “We called it The UFA Fun Club,” and it ran every Friday after school until July, with Vikki acting as our supporting adult to assist us.”

The club started with around 40 people, which settled down to a solid core of around 20 participants, and Inez and the other Lead Learners did lots of fun and exciting activities with a learning objective incorporated into each session. “For example,” says Inez, “We had a Junk Challenge – recycling things to build a useful object, which helped to highlight the benefits of reusing materials and cutting back on wastage.

“My involvement with the UFA has changed my life,” she continues. “It’s shown me leadership skills, and helped me being in a teaching/leading role. I moved on from running the club and am now a YoUFA rep – involved in planning the 2010 YoUFiesta learning festival. I feel I’m now a good role model. I’m also confident and at ease meeting people. It also equipped me to take part in a national speaking competition (the UFA also provided space for me to practice for this). None of it would have been possible before this.”

Progression

Currently Inez is taking her GCSEs and feels it’s too soon to decide what her future holds. But she is clear on one thing. “I have learnt a great deal about showing consideration for others through the work that the UFA does, and this may well feed into my future career. I would like to think my newly found UFA skills will lead to endless opportunities, as I have gained so many.”

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