

NOMINATION DETAILS

Who is being nominated?

Individual

Please provide the name of the person being nominated:

James O'Donnell

Job title:

Student

Organisation:

Cantraybridge College

AWARD DETAILS

Which category are you entering?

Category 2: Bright Spark

Please confirm that the work carried out relates to the last two years (up to January 2018):

Yes

Please confirm the age of the Bright Spark you are nominating (age range is 16-26):

23

Q1. Overview: (max 200 words)

James is a student at Cantraybridge College, a rural Skills College for young people with learning difficulties.

James is an inspirational young man, who has faced many personal challenges but always full of encouragement and goes the extra mile to help others.

He swam 26 miles to raise money for the Highland Hospice earlier this year, he was delighted at this achievement, resulting in him being much fitter and slimmer!

His main goal has been to work with children and despite his learning difficulties he is determined to fulfil his dream and in the spring he began Volunteering at a local nursery.

It was immediately evident to the staff that he's naturally gifted with children, he is sensitive to their needs, great fun to have around and is a positive male role model for the children!

The nursery is now very keen to offer him employment and he has now been given the opportunity and they are putting the support in place for him to do his SVQ2 Social Sciences, Children and Young People, which will give him the qualification needed for his career.

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Q2. What did you do? (max 500 words)

I am always first to volunteer when help is needed at the college, even on a day off, everyone says I'm always smiling, well-mannered and friendly.

I love to show visitors around the college and I have learned a lot of knowledge about each department.

In the spring I volunteered to help out when we had a group from Highland Young People with Diabetes coming for a day out. They were split into three groups and I took them round the Aviary and Small Animals Department and then down to see the sheep and the goats. I am pleased that the staff are able to trust me with such a responsibility, having done my health and safety training and Animal Husbandry qualification and I am very competent at handling the animals.

This gave me the confidence to suggest to the Nursery where I do my placement that I could arrange for them to come out for a visit and I organised everything from transport to healthy snacks and the children and I had a brilliant time and the staff were appreciative of me taking the initiative and organising the trip!

During the lambing season it used to be the case that the Agricultural Enabler/Farmer would have to come out during unsocial hours to deliver lambs. I am now confident and able to see to them and am willing, living on site to check them through the night.

I feel I have made fantastic progress during my time at college and am delighted to have learned a variety of new skills and have been supported to try out different options till I finally discovered what was right for me. Initially I was interested in car mechanics and did some work experience at Halfords. They were very impressed with my work and even offered me an apprenticeship but I knew in my heart that it wasn't the career for me and It took courage to turn down a great opportunity to go after what I really wanted to do.

One of the best things in my life was becoming an uncle, I adore my sister's children and my love for them inspired me to pursue a career in childcare.

This has proved to be a challenging journey that I have had to persist in with great determination and an attitude that never gives up to overcome every obstacle I have faced.

Q3. What did you achieve? (max 500 words)

I have a work placement in Junior World, Nairn. I work with Megan, Senior Childcare Practitioner in her classroom. I have been involved with play and early learning and love to get involved with making things. I helped the children in the group to make a huge rocket with tinfoil body and wings. We made it out of cardboard boxes and paper and it looked fantastic. The children played in it for days and we made up stories about rockets, space and aliens!

Most recently I supported two groups of children to visit where I live, Cantraybridge College. I was supported to do this by Junior World staff and by Jon, from Cantraybridge, who I work with as part of the Maintenance Department. With Jon I learnt about Risk Assessment and I helped book the college's minibus. With Jon, I made plans as to which departments we would visit, how long we would stay and what the children would see and do. The visit went really well and the look on the children's faces when they met our cows, goats, sheep and hens was fantastic. Some of the children had never seen animals up close and I supported them to touch and hold rabbits, collect eggs and even hold our Bearded Dragon, 'Spike'. The children were so happy and it really meant the world to them. They drew pictures for Jon when they got back to say thank you and were all really we excited about going back to see the animals again.

The next visit was to help plant trees in our new orchard. I worked with a small group of children to dig holes and plant apple trees. After the planting we visited the animals again as they had worked so hard. I have learnt so much working with Jon and the team at Junior World. I have become much more confident and positive about learning new skills and not being afraid to show the skills I already have. The visits were such a success that the Junior World Management team are now planning on regular visits and maybe a base at the college. Jon took pictures of the visits and did a press release which got into the local Inverness papers. I am so proud of what I achieved with support and have the press cuttings on my wall.

Some people might think it's not a man's job, working in a nursery with young children, but I love it. When I first mentioned it to Jon, he was very supportive and positive and helped me get in touch with Junior World. I love seeing the children every time I work there and helping them grow as little people. They also support me. They make me realise I can do anything and can achieve far more than I thought. I now have a plan and a direction for my life, a future, and I am proud to work in childcare.

Q4. Why should you receive an award? (max 100 words)

I have been proud to be an ambassador for Cantraybridge College as they have helped me out so much and I want to give something back as this award isn't for me it's for everyone who has helped me to make a difference.

This award is more importantly to inspire other young people with learning difficulties not to be defined and held back by a diagnosis but to be determined to follow their dreams and in doing so to make a positive impact in the lives of others!

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Please confirm you have checked the following:

- I have checked I have entered the correct Category
- I have answered all the questions
- I have entered my Registration details

Are you sure you want to submit now? No more amends will be possible once you've pressed SUBMIT.

- I am Ready
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