

Artist banks finals spot

A former banker who always had artistic flair has been shortlisted in a national art competition.

Lindsay Pritchard, aged 46, worked in the financial sector for 20 years before quitting in 2007 to pursue her interest in art. She graduated with a Master's Degree in illustration from Wolverhampton University's School of Art.

Ms Pritchard now works in the creative industries running workshops, exhibiting her work and taking commissions. After entering the Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year competition, the ex-banker from Wolverhampton was named among the eight shortlisted artists at a ceremony filmed at Knaresborough Castle in Yorkshire.

She said: "My work is mainly focused on the urban environment with a particular interest in dereliction and decay, so I spend quite a lot of my time in derelict factories and junk yards."

"It was an amazing adventure being shortlisted for such a prestigious competition. All the artists had to set up and complete a landscape painting in one day whilst being filmed so the pressure was really on."

"Whilst I didn't make it through to the next stage of the competition, the experience was incredible."

Dance classes set to resume

A dancing and fitness group will re-start its classes next week.

Dance for Fitness, supported by Shropshire Council's Everybody Active Initiative, will take place on January 9 in the Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley.

Organisers say the classes will be a good chance to burn off calories after the Christmas period.

Sessions will be from 7pm until 8.30pm costing £3 for a whole session or £2 for half.

Organiser Gill Kelly said: "We have brought together an enthusiastic group of would-be dancers who meet weekly for sessions that are fun and do wonders for fitness, serotonin levels and the brain."

"New members are guaranteed a warm welcome. The project has been so successful that we are hoping that these sessions in the New Year will help us all to burn off that Christmas food."

"The sessions will have little routines in them but nothing that takes too much time."

Opticians putting safety in the frame

An opticians wants to help ensure local people can be seen clearly when out and about by donating high-visibility vests.

Specsavers on the Bull Ring in Ludlow has 200 child vests and 50 adult vests to give away to the local community.

Nicola Aubrey, store director said: "We want to support the local community and raise awareness about the part we can all play in preventing tragedies by making our roads safer."

"With dark mornings and nights drawing in, now is really the time to think about making sure we can all be seen."

For more information call 01584 871 210 or go to www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/ludlow

Castle chance to step back in time

Visitors will be given the opportunity to step back in time and learn about the archaeology of one of Shropshire's castles.

The event takes place in late March and Ludlow Castle's resident archaeologist Leon Bracelin will be on hand to dispense his knowledge and expertise about the landmark.

There will be an archaeology pit for visitors to dive into, free activities including tours and talks by Leon and on Easter Sunday and Easter Monday there will be a free Victorian treasure hunt with clues leading to a special prize.

Normal entry fees apply.

Display tells history of LGBT

History boards focusing on Shropshire's LGBT history will be on display next month.

The growing collection illustrates the county's role in the wider context of national events. The event will be at The Hive, Belmont, Shrewsbury, Tuesdays to Fridays, 9.30am to 5.30pm. The even starts on February 1.

School uses £10k grant for health push

Report by Rob Smith
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A primary school is celebrating its 10th birthday in style and with a good cause in mind, after being approved for a National Lottery grant worth £10,000.

Short Wood Primary in Wellington, Telford, bagged the grant to take part in an initiative to promote good mental health in its community.

The birthday celebrations included Lego, bubbles and messy play, all underlined by a push to consider mental health.

The Positive Minds, Brighter Futures initiative aims to provide a good, safe and stable environment for the children to learn

at the school, which has 540 pupils. Deputy head Gail Butele explained: "Nationally there is a growing recognition of the importance of maintaining a positive sense of emotional health and wellbeing. Increasingly schools are dealing with emotional and social issues that have a direct impact on children's lives."

Instead of reacting to situations, she is hoping the new initiative will help head off problems before they become serious.

"We want to be more proactive when it comes to health and well-being and to find different ways of engaging families. We want to maintain a good sense of wellbeing for all."

This is where the Lego therapy, bubbles, messy play and a number of other ideas come in – with parents positively encouraged to get involved.

Gail says: "Everyone loves Lego, but how often do you sit down and do it these days?"

"Bubble play was another thing. We got parents involved and it was lovely to see how much they were enjoying it too. Then

there's messy play. It's messy, of course, but everyone loves it. And if it's done at school, the parents are not having to clean up afterwards."

Mrs Mustafa, a parent with three girls at the school, said "It is great to have the opportunity to do things with the children. We especially enjoyed the messy play, that was really fun."

The aim is to help the children identify their emotions, what may be troubling them, and helping them to develop strategies for coping with any problems before they get out of hand.

Last baby boy born at RAF Cosford trains for Atlantic challenge

Man born to be a high flyer in oar-some feat

Report by Tom Oakley
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HE was the last boy to be born at RAF Cosford's hospital in 1977 before going on to join the force himself.

Now, Fraser Mowlem is taking on the challenge of a lifetime as he works towards the world's toughest endurance race rowing 3,000 nautical miles across the Atlantic.

The 40-year-old from Newport is part of a team of four taking on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge 2018 in an attempt to raise £100k for the British Legion.

The Row4Victory team will start in December in La Gomera, Canary Islands and finish in Antigua marking 100 years since the end of World War One.

Fewer people have rowed the Atlantic than have travelled into space or climbed Mount Everest.

With storms, adverse weather conditions, hunger and sleep deprivation, the challenge pushes participants to the very extremes.

Despite the hard conditions, Fraser says the team have the world record in their sights.

"We want to win our race and if we've got good weather a record isn't unachievable – given the two years worth of training we'll be in a good position," he said

"We'd like to raise £100,000 for the Royal British Legion with it being 100 years since the end of WW1."

"It will be a nice number come the end of the whole campaign."

Capsized

"There's been four or five boats rescued in this year's race, people are getting capsized and there's been a battery fire on one of the boats."

"I am looking forward to it but I'm nervous. That's just going to build and build as time goes on. I get more nervous every time people give me money."

"It makes you nervous but that's good motivation in the gym when you don't feel like doing another session."

"I'm not having another drink until I get to Antigua."

"We're currently balancing training five or six days a week around full-time jobs."

Before the group can race they need to raise £100,000 to take part in the campaign and pay for a boat and equipment.

So far they've raised £30,000 from fundraising.

The race could take between 35 and 70 days with the team rowing two-hour shifts in pairs.

Previously, Fraser, who has been in the RAF for 18 years and now lives in North Yorkshire, took on a 874-mile challenge



The rowing team will have been in training for two arduous years once they set off at the end of this year



Fraser and the team will tackle the challenge in early December



Fraser Mowlem – the last boy born at RAF Cosford

running from Lands End to John O'Groats but admits Row4Victory will be much tougher.

The father-of-two added: "The better we can do then the more money we can generate for the British Legion."

"It costs about £100,000 to do the campaign but the more awareness we raise, the more money it will generate for charity."

"It's all fundraising at the moment and one sponsor even donated £15,000."

"In the same race one team raised

£660,000 for their charity which is the race record for fundraising. It would be great to get as much as possible. I have done about six tours of Afghanistan and been in perilous situations where we've faced rocket and mortar attacks."

Oldest

"In terms of being away from home and being in a difficult situation I've done that."

"I'm the oldest man in the team so I do feel like I've got a lot of work to keep

Volunteers needed to represent NHS patients

The Welsh Government is appealing for people to come forward to represent patients in the health system.

Community Health Councils across Wales are looking to appoint volunteers, who represent the independent voice of patients and the public regarding NHS services. Volunteers will act as the eyes and ears of patients and visit NHS services

to speak to people to hear their views and experiences.

Successful candidates will be given training and support to enable them to carry out their role and any out of pocket expenses such as travel will be reimbursed. A statement advertising the role reads: "It is the policy of the Welsh Government to promote and integrate equality of opportunity into all

aspects of its business including appointments to public bodies.

"Applications are welcomed and encouraged from all groups and we ensure that no eligible candidate for public office receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, or pregnancy and maternity. The

principles of fair and open competition will apply and appointments will be made on merit."

The closing date for receipt of applications is January 22, with interviews held in the week commencing February 26.

For further details or to apply go to wales.gov.uk/publicappointments or for queries contact the Shared Service Helpdesk on 029 20825454.

Listen to stories told in library

Storytelling will be the theme when a group meets for the first time in the new year.

Time to Listen, Read, Reflect, will be held in Bishop's Castle's Library tomorrow.

It will be an opportunity for visitors to listen to a story, read a piece or article, or participate in a play reading. The meeting takes place 1pm to 2pm.