

Modelling win just a bonus for teen who turned her life around with mentor's help

News in Brief

Facing the future with confidence

By Helen Aird
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SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Caitlin Stroud did not like school — she admits she “hated it” — so she did not go.

“I just couldn't be bothered,” she said.

A year on, Caitlin, of Woodlands Grove, Westhill, is about to start a course in art and design at Inverness College and is revelling in her success after being named the Face of Bella — a prize which includes a professional modelling contract with UK agency Colours and her runway debut at the Scottish Style Awards.

It is a transformation she owes to the Inverness-based mentoring charity, Day 1.

The former Culloden Academy pupil was introduced to the charity when co-ordinator Corrin Henderson visited her school.

“It probably got me back on track,” she said. “It got me more motivated and has helped me lots, getting into college and stuff.”

Last September, Caitlin was paired with mentor Cheryl McDonald, a personal assistant



Corrin Henderson of Day 1 — helping young people find confidence and self-esteem.

with Lifescan Scotland who came across the charity while looking for volunteer opportunities.

“We meet as often as we can, it is supposed to be once a week, and just spend time together,” explained the 26-year-old, of Moray Park Place, Culloden.

“It is about being there for Caitlin if she needs anything, just being a friend, and about getting her to follow her own

dreams and supporting her on her big decisions.”

“The relationship has been an important one for Caitlin, who admits without it she would probably still be at school, not turning up.

Importantly, Miss McDonald encouraged her to create a portfolio of work to get into college, as she had no art qualifications, and is helping her find part-time employment.

“She has worked hard to get into college and has showed determination and has certainly matured in the year we have been together,” said Miss McDonald.

The teenager's confidence has also grown and this month Caitlin was named the Face of Bella at the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival, near Beaulieu — the competition was sponsored by The Inverness Courier.

She attended auditions at the Eastgate Shopping Centre with Miss McDonald.

“I felt like a proud mother, she didn't even have make-up on, apart from some lipstick, and still looked beautiful,” continued Miss McDonald.

Caitlin was named the Face of Bella at the festival, although



Face of Bella winner Caitlin Stroud with her mentor, Cheryl McDonald.

Pictures Gary Anthony

she admits she was not quite prepared, not knowing she had to wear her own clothes for the final, where she had to walk down the catwalk and answer some questions.

“I just had my yellow shorts with me, my high socks and wellies,” she said. “I had to borrow a friend's top. I was just shocked when I won. I couldn't speak. You don't really see models with short purple hair — it was such a huge shock.”

“Day 1 has definitely made me more confident.”

Although she does not know the details of what modelling work lies ahead, she cannot wait.

“I have always wanted to be a model,” added Caitlin, who has already done some model-

ling for clothing stores Quiz and Internationale.

Mr Henderson said the teenager was typical of others who progress with the charity.

“It has been an upward curve, with little footholds along the way,” he said.

“The difference between Caitlin now compared to a year ago is significant. Her confidence has increased, she is now starting a college course and is really positive about her future. The Belladrum thing is just a bonus — maybe she wouldn't have had the confidence to go in for that before.”

Day 1 works closely with six local secondary schools including Charleston Academy and Inverness High School.

“We work with young people

who have got potential but, for whatever reason, are failing to achieve that potential,” explained Mr Henderson. “It is a one-year mentoring programme and the hope is they build up a trusting, non-judgemental relationship with their mentor.”

The aim is to help young people find sustainable employment, boost their self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as providing volunteering opportunities.

It works with around 30 youngsters in the Highland area, but Mr Henderson would like to see it expand if more funding can be found.

For further information, or to find out about mentoring, visit www.day1.uk.com



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Day 1 co-ordinator Corrin Henderson

Celebrating the apple

APPLE tree and orchard owners are being asked to support a new event in the Highlands.

Apple Day was first held in 1990 but will be celebrated in Inverness for the first time on Saturday, 22nd October, at the Floral Hall. The day will run from 1pm to 4pm.

Jonathan Willet, Highland Council's biodiversity officer, said there will be an apple expert on hand to identify varieties, apple recipes to browse and apple trees for sale plus apple-themed activities for all the family.

“We are keen to create an apple map to locate where old orchards used to be and if the trees are still there,” he added.

Send details to jonathan.willet@highland.gov.uk or 01463 702274.

Black Isle all set for its BIG day

THE fourth biennial Black Isle Gathering takes place on Saturday, 24th September, between 11am and 4pm.

For the first time it will fill the ground floor of Fortrose Academy, with stalls stretching from the old front door through the school and into the community theatre and library areas.

The free community fair brings clubs, societies, small businesses, churches and community groups together.

This year it will focus on the needs of older Black Isle residents and those caring for them.

Entertainment includes Avoch Sea Scouts, Nick Martin's collection of rescued reptiles, plus music, dance, crafts and sports activities.

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