

## YOUNGSTERS GO FOR THE GOLD IN GERMANY

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Whilst the idea of working outside in Germany at the start of winter may not appeal to most, a group of teenagers from Stirling recently did just that as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.

Amy Styles, Pru Rodgers, Jenny Hawthorn, Liam Faulkner and Philip Westland went into the nature park Dubener Heide to help build a reconstruction of a 16<sup>th</sup> century bakehouse.

They stayed at a village in the nature park called Authausen, where an organisation called the ARCH network had already reconstructed some Saxon-age buildings.

The bakehouse that the Stirling young people helped to build will eventually be used by the local people as a meeting place as well as a place to bake traditional celebration breads – at Christmas or when there is a village wedding.

During the two-week trip they prepared the wood, built the framework for the building, and also made the pegs to fix it together with mallets they had made themselves.

They also made a prototype bread oven, based on the traditional ovens that the bakehouse would have had in the past.

As well as working hard alongside professionals to build the bakehouse, the young people went on day trips to Colditz, Leipzig and Berlin, and spent a lot of time socialising and improving their German.

They also visited a fish market to pick live fish to eat.

The young people involved had a lot of fun and all said that they would go back again – even if they had to pay their own money to go instead of volunteering.

However, they didn't just go for the experience – they went to Germany to work towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is currently celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and it is now more popular in Stirling than it ever has been before.

This year around 380 young people started the award, with 69 people receiving a bronze award, 20 receiving a silver award and five receiving the top gold award. The figure doesn't take into account the work the award is doing for young people who wouldn't normally think it was for them.

There is a stereotypical view that the award is all about hill-walking, but there are three other equally valuable sections – service, skill and physical recreation.

An important project, called The New Start Project, focuses on these elements.

The New Start scheme works with a wide range of young people to gain experience and support, and works particularly with young people who would not normally become involved in the award.

It supports young people who have not fully engaged in the traditional school process, and also works with young people involved in education, training, personal and social development programmes such as the Compass for Life programme.

The New Start Award also works with young people who may be involved in anti-social behaviour, at risk of, or currently involved in offending behaviour.

It is a flexible way of working with the award, which, in conjunction with many other agencies, helps the young people to gain essential life skills (such as budgeting and cooking) and work experience.

One group made a cookbook for their award, and another group will be starting a community gardening project soon.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award works through all the schools in the Stirling area, thanks to their relationship with the Skill Force scheme.

It also works with young people with learning difficulties and through the Baptist Church and the Prince's Trust.

With plans in the pipeline to also start working through the university, as well as plans for another group from Stirling to go out to finish the German bakehouse project in the next few months, the award is simply going from strength to strength in the area.

For more details about how you can get involved, contact The Youth Involvement Team, Youth Services, Stirling Council on 01786 432211.