



You can taste awards success, just like Digby

Raise a glass to Digby Welch, winner of Attraction Employee of the Year at last year's Pride in Ashford and Tenterden Awards and an inspiration to workers in the tourism and leisure industry across the borough to enter this year's scheme.

A tour guide and sales assistant at Chapel Down Winery, Tenterden, Digby shows visitors all aspects of the operation of the vineyard and works in the shop selling the wine produced there.

"I didn't need any special training for this job, but 45 years of sales experience in the wine trade certainly help," said Digby, who has worked in the tourism industry for six years. "Without satisfied customers a business cannot thrive and survive so customer service is all important.

"It's very rewarding when a customer says thank you following the closing of a difficult and prolonged sale but it can be frustrating if we can't meet a customer's requirements because the wine they want is out of stock and we don't have a suitable alternative."

Digby, who would happily recommend his job to other people, has never come across a rude customer but does have a method for dealing with the more difficult visitors he encounters.

“If someone is proving troublesome I talk to them calmly and quietly,” he said. “I listen to their point of view before putting forward my own view, firmly but politely.”

The Pride Awards are part of the Celebrating Kent initiative led by Visit Kent raising awareness of the importance of leisure, tourism and hospitality businesses. The industry contributes more than £2.5 billion each year to the county economy and supports more than 50,000 jobs.

If you know someone who you think gives exceptional customer service, then the deadline for the 2011 Pride in Ashford and Tenterden Awards nominations is February 28.

For further information, or to ask for a nomination form, contact Visit Kent on 01622 696936, email: celebratingkent@kent.gov.uk or pick up a card from Ashford Tourist Information Centre at 18 The Churchyard, Ashford, 01233 629165/tourism@ashford.gov.uk or The Gateway in Tenterden, 0845 824 7202/TenterdenGateway@kent.gov.uk.

You can also nominate online at www.visitkent.co.uk/prideawards

Caption: Digby Welch, centre, collects his Pride in Ashford and Tenterden Award from Cllr Gerry Clarkson CBE, and Kirstyn Read

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- Celebrating Kent Pride Awards are part of the Kent Campaign for the 2012 Olympic Games, a partnership led and managed by Kent County Council to maximise the benefits and long term legacy to the County of the 2012 Games. The award winning Campaign primarily works across eight sectors, including

tourism, sport, the arts, and education. Further details can be found at www.kentsport.org/london2012

- Visit Kent Limited is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, the district and borough councils, Tourism South East and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent. Visit Kent champions Kent's £2.5 billion tourism industry by targeting UK and overseas markets, improving quality and skills and growing the tourism product.

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