

Ten Years of SEAs and STEM Ambassadors – Tony Gill

The launch of the then Science & Engineering Ambassadors [SEAs] programme in Cumbria took place at Westlakes Science Park near Whitehaven in July 2002. Yvonne Baker had just been appointed to her SETNET role as Manager for Science & Engineering Ambassadors and launching the SETPOINT Cumbria SEAs programme was Yvonne's first official public engagement [we have a photo that we could scan]

We were asked to set our own targets for SEAs numbers in those early days. No-one knew how it would work out. Our initial target was to recruit 35 SEAs between September 2002 and March 2003. That was thought to be ambitious. It took a long time to get the process started. Our records show that by March 2003 we had the magnificent total of 47 fully fledged SEAs. Large local employers such as Sellafield and BAE Systems had supported with enthusiasm and this support is still there 10 years later.

Our first registered SEA was Liz Temple. Liz has a BSc in Applied Biology and then worked at the Yottenfews Environmental Centre at Sellafield. Liz is still an Ambassador and contributing to STEM experiences for young people in Cumbria [photo in the SETNET Setpiece newsletter issue 5 May 2003].

The programme continued to grow and the numbers of SEAs increased. More companies and individuals became involved and as the SEAs programme moved through its transition to the STEM Ambassadors programme number rose to a peak in March 2011 to just over 800 STEM Ambassadors in Cumbria. This has now settled back to a steady number of approximately 650 in line with the new contractual requirements. We are still getting requests from new companies to join the STEM Ambassadors programme so it has not lost its appeal. It is still seen as a highly valued resource and support for teachers and young people in schools and colleges in Cumbria.

Some SETPOINT Cumbria/Cumbria STEM Centre highlights.

- July 2002 – launch by Yvonne Baker at Westlakes Science Park
- October 2002 – Liz temple becomes first Science & Engineering Ambassador for Cumbria.
- October 2004 – we reach our 300th Ambassador target. This was Matthew Miller from James Cropper plc. Matthew is still an Ambassador.
- March 2005 – the first Girls in Aerospace event for Cumbria. Not notable in itself, but one of the pupils from St Benedict's School taking part [Charlotte Bailey], went on to work in the laboratories at Sellafield, became an Ambassador and then acted as a mentor at a Girls in Aerospace event in 2009. Charlotte also featured in one of the films produced by STEMNET for Teachers TV.
- December 2005 – Pauline Farrell, Education Officer at Sellafield, Alyson Bagguley from the Environment Agency and Tony Gill from SETPOINT Cumbria attend the first SEAs Celebration event at the House of Lords.
- March 2006 – Rod Earl [SEA] persuades Professor David King [Chief Government Scientific Officer] to visit Stainburn School in Workington and be interviewed by students as part of a project called Science4Citizens [S4C].
- March 2006 – Ambassadors and SETPOINT Cumbria staff attend the first North West SEAs Celebration event.
- July 2006 – launch of the Cumbria 'Red Hot Maths' programme run by fire fighters from Cumbria Fire & Rescue service.
- March 2007 - Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service win the 'Most Dedicated Company' Award at the SEAs Celebration event held at the House of Lords. Tony Gill & Wilma Buckley from SETPOINT Cumbria also attended.

- November 2007 – David Williamson [Chair of IMechE West Cumbria] is presented with a STEMNET Award by Kevin Burke for the IMechE's special contribution to the STEM Ambassadors programme.
- March 2008 - REACT Engineering from West Cumbria win the 'Most Dedicated Company Award' at the SEAS Celebration event. Pete Woolaghan of REACT Engineering was presented with the award by Lord Sainsbury. Tony Gill and Wilma Buckley from Cumbria STEM Centre Ltd also attended.
- July 2008 – Laura Bingham 6th Form student from Kirkbie Kendal School attends the National Young Scientist & Engineers Fair in London. Laura's Nuffield Bursary/CREST Gold Award project was only possible because of support and mentoring from Ambassadors at Technical Fibre Products.
- April 2009 – Pauline Farrell from Sellafield Ltd. Nominated by Cumbria STEM Centre Ltd for the 'Most Dedicated Ambassador Award' and Technical Fibre Products nominated for the 'Most Dedicated Company Award'. Pauline attended the Celebration event at the House of Lords accompanied by Tony Gill and Wilma Buckley from Cumbria STEM Centre Ltd who also represented Technical Fibre Products who were unable to attend.
- October 2011 – We nominated Cumbria STEM Ambassador Claire Jones for the WISE Excellence Award. Claire and Tony Gill attended the Award Ceremony in London. Claire won the WISE Excellence Award and was presented with it by Princess Anne.
- November 2011- Cumbria STEM Centre Ltd worked in partnership with the four FE Colleges to put on the first Cumbria 'Big Bang' Science & Engineering Fair. The strong STEM Ambassador links with local companies meant that we had fifteen STEM based business stands all run by STEM Ambassadors. Over 1,000 pupils and students attended over the two days.
- December 2011 – BAE Systems [Submarine Solutions] nominated by CSC Ltd for the 'Most Dedicated Company Award'. They were shortlisted and four Ambassadors from BAE attended the Celebration event at the House of Lords accompanied by Tony Gill from CSC Ltd.
- March 2012 – Students Ben Clarke [Kirkbie Kendal School] and Tommy Moore [Ulverston Victoria High School] displayed their CREST Gold Award /Nuffield Bursary projects at the Big Bang in Birmingham. Ben was supported by Ambassadors from Technical Fibre Products and Tommy was supported by Ambassadors from the Expro Group Ltd. Tommy won the 'The Royal Commission for the Exhibition 1851 prize for Design' and was presented with his prize by Liz Bonnin from 'Bang Goes the Theory'.

The Ambassadors programme opens up so many new opportunities for young people everywhere and in Cumbria, it has certainly made a big difference to the lives of many pupils, students and teachers.