

PEOPLE: A FIRST FOR ST MICHAEL'S HOUSE AS SERVICE USER GOES TO COLLEGE

Glenn's leading the way to help special needs education

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GOING to university is a huge achievement for anyone. For centuries, and even up until a few decades ago, higher education simply wasn't attainable for most people, regardless of whether or not they deserved it.

The good news is that things are changing and attendance numbers at universities are increasing every year.

Dublin City University (DCU) is breaking these boundaries even further by introducing its Ability courses for individuals with special needs.

Glenn O'Conner (28) is the first service user of St Michael's House to attend

DCU through this programme, but his attitude proves that he certainly won't be the last.

It's easy to put people into boxes and label them. Glenn has special needs and was diagnosed with autism as a child.

However, every

Wednesday and Thursday, Glenn goes to DCU to study new skills for work experience.

He is one of 11 students in the second batch of DCU Ability courses and will attend lectures for three months before getting work experience.

The course gives Glenn skills that will stand to him in the working world, such as how to communicate with the customer and manual handling.

When asked what his favourite thing about the course was, his answer was simple: "Everything".

It is a preconception that those with any kind of special needs have to have everything spelled out for them and repeated multiple times, but this is not always the case.

Does Glenn take in the information his tutors give him the first time? "Yes, of course," he says. "I think I find the course pretty simple."

Glenn chose to become a user of the St Michael's House training centres

shortly after graduating from St Paul's Special School in Beaumont, and is currently in the Omni unit.

Whilst the unit has enabled Glenn to attend university and gain work experience, it has also enhanced Glenn's personal independence.

Glenn recognises that

his attending DCU is a massive step for others like him and he is honoured to be the first from St Michael's House to attend.

He advises all would-

be students thinking of going to college: "Don't be nervous. DCU is a big deal, but just breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. I'm very proud."



Trailblazer Glenn O'Conner has settled into his DCU course very well, setting an inspirational example for people with special needs thinking of further education