

An award-winning former pupil returns to inspire Year 9 pupils considering their Options



Class of 98 Julie Gabbott won a Gold Medal at the World Guide Awards which were held at the Royal Geographic Society in 2018, beating off competition from 2000 other guides.

She was praised for her passion, humour and empathy and Julie has travelled around the world, leading tours in East Africa, the Himalayas, Istanbul and more with her job. But she admitted it wasn't always straightforward for her, which is what she told the Priory pupils:

"My parents were getting divorced when I was at Priory and I could be a little wayward," said Julie. "However teacher Andy Watters supported me and he got me through high school, I look back on what an inspiration he was to me at that time."



"While at Priory I took a City & Guilds qualification which was for those less academic and it was more hands-on. I went out planting trees and into the countryside and it made me think outside the box a little bit for jobs and my future."

"I left school at 16 and went to work in a solicitors, in fact Mr Watters gave me a reference. I did an NVQ in Business Admin but after three years I wanted a change and went into the administrative side of tourism. I transferred my skills from the solicitors into a different industry which I felt suited me more."



"I then learned guide skills and acquired guide qualifications and it was a gradual progression to get where I am now. I explored the options available to me and expanded them. I want to tell the Year 9 pupils about my journey, how you may not know what you want to do but that there are a whole host of different jobs out there."

"It was a bit surreal returning to Priory after 23 years. I have been back once when I was 17, but it's great to see how the school has developed. It's funny as the buildings have changed but it still had the same smell and feel around it. It was great to speak to the pupils and see what a positive place Priory is and what a good job Headteacher Mr Eastham is doing there."

Lead Teacher of Geography, Mr Watters said: "We are very proud of Julie's successes over the past three decades. I have been following Julie's career with regular updates from her about her worldwide travels. When she finally managed to be in the region, Julie was invited to come in and chat with the current Year 9 geographers."

"The pupils are investigating the incredible range of careers and degrees open to geographers. Julie gave a superb presentation sharing her experiences and ideas on how our young people can benefit from life-long learning and being flexible to opportunities."

"The message also included various anecdotes saying how sometimes we need to take steps forward believing in the opportunities ahead. The pupils were fascinated by her PSV driving skills and a funny yet worrying story about a hippo encounter when kayaking along the Zambezi River."

"In Julie we have a true friend of the school and ourselves in Geography. We can look forward to her next visit and further presentations to the pupils."

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