

# **UNICOM PRESS RELEASE**

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## **UNICOM DONATES BURSARY TO OUTWARD BOUND TRUST FOR FOURTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

**Money donated will go to Parklands High School, Wythenshawe**

**Photographs available at [www.unicomimages.co.uk](http://www.unicomimages.co.uk)**

As the numbers of school trips are reported to be dropping because of overly bureaucratic health and safety rules, Unicom has partnered with Parklands High School, Wythenshawe, Manchester, to help provide 'learning outside the classroom'.

Northenden-based Unicom, which specialises in telecoms for small business, has donated a £13,000 bursary to The Outward Bound Trust and has specifically identified Parklands High School in Wythenshawe as the recipient of the donation.

"Most adults have fond memories of the school trips they went on when they were kids, but sadly the numbers of school trips are falling due to health and safety regulations, and kids aren't able to experience life away from home or school as readily," said Chris Earle, Operations Director, Unicom.

"We wanted local kids to benefit from the bursary – and as we have a number of Unicom employees that are ex-pupils of the school, it makes sense to partner with Parklands High."

Wythenshawe can be described as a deprived area – and the school's demographics show that the kids are likely to be from low income families eligible for free school meals, with a significant percentage having special educational needs and poor educational attainment.

The bursary will mean that 80 students from year seven - the majority of the school's new intake for academic year 08-09 - will be able to attend a residential Adventure & Challenge course at The Outward Bound Trust's Aberdovey centre in North Wales.

"It's realistic to say that many of the kids have never experienced the outdoor learning associated with the courses run by The Trust," said Phil Fitzpatrick, Head Teacher, Parklands High School.

"Health and Safety regulations are making it increasingly difficult for school trips to take place, but with the bursary from Unicom and a fantastic organisation like The Outward Bound Trust, we're able to offer students the chance to see some of the countryside and experience time away from home and the classroom.

"Learning outside the classroom is important for building relationships and it emphasises that whilst academic achievement is important, so is having fun."

Chris Earle, Operations Director, Unicom, said. "It's a key responsibility of businesses at all levels to make contributions to the welfare and development of the wider community – and where better to focus it than on children who wouldn't otherwise be able to experience time away, having fun and developing their confidence and characters in spectacular and natural environment."

### **About Outward Bound**

The Outward Bound Trust makes a huge difference to young people's lives. From the Trust's centres, located in Britain's most stunning landscapes, young people are taken on a journey – one that will push their boundaries in so many ways. The skills they develop at Outward Bound® are vital to life, success, personal development and of course the environment. Outward Bound® gets young people outside, active and thinking.

### **About Unicom**

Unicom, a trading name of Universal Utilities PLC, is a telecommunications service provider specialising in the small business market. It currently provides telecom, broadband and website services to 70,000 small businesses throughout the UK. Unicom has an annual turnover of over £42m, and employs 500 people at its 10 regional offices situated around the UK.

Unicom has attracted its business customers by offering discounts of up to 60% off BT's prices, at the same time as keeping customers on the BT network. Unicom currently supplies in excess of 450 million minutes of call time to its customers each year. Unicom differentiates itself by offering a high standard of personal customer service, with no premium rate 0845 or 0870 numbers, no recorded messages or menus, and no overseas call centres. Unicom boasts one of the highest customer retention rates in the industry.

This year Unicom launched a new directory enquiry service, 118 777. Based on calls from a BT or Unicom telephone line, 118 777 is 34% cheaper than 118 118, and 30% cheaper than 118 500 and 118 247. Calls from other networks may vary.

Unicom was ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2006, 89<sup>th</sup> in the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 index in December 2006 and 96<sup>th</sup> in the Sunday Times Profit Track 100 listings in April 2007. In September 2007 it achieved a ranking of 95<sup>th</sup>, and in September

2008 a ranking of 88<sup>th</sup>, in the Sunday Times Microsoft Tech Track 100 index. In October 2008 Unicom became ISO 9001 certified.

For the year ending April 2008, Unicom reported pre-tax profits of £9.8m on a turnover of £41.6m (with profits up 29.2% and turnover up 12.3% from April 2007). Unicom expects profits to be in excess of £11m on a turnover of more than £45m for this year.

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