

# MCARTHURGLEN™

DESIGNER OUTLETS

PRESS RELEASE

30 April 2009

## **Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy becomes one of the UK's first skill shops**

- *This follows McArthurGlen's link-up last year with SDA Bocconi in Italy to launch the Luxury Retail Academy.*

Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy (CORA), based at McArthurGlen's Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet near Chester, was officially named on 29 April as a founder member of the National Skills Academy for Retail, a UK government-backed network of training centres designed to increase productivity in the sector.

The National Skills Academy for Retail has been hailed as a key way to help retailers to develop their staff's potential, improve their performance and prepare for the economic upturn. This is especially important in Cheshire given that the retail sector in the North West employs 324,798 people – or 14% of the total retail workforce in England.

CORA was founded in 2003 by McArthurGlen, Europe's leading developer, operator and manager of designer outlet villages, together with West Cheshire College, and Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council (now Cheshire West and Chester Council). CORA has already trained and up-skilled more than 1,300 people of all ages and backgrounds in retail, and helped 140 retailers at Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet, the UK's largest, to recruit skilled employees.

As part of the new national network of training centres, CORA's services will be expanded to include the Diploma in Retail Business and the new National Skills Academy Master Classes spearheaded by TV fashion and retail guru Mary Portas.

Julia Calabrese, CEO McArthurGlen Designer Outlets, says: "This recognition reaffirms our position not only as the leading developer, owner and manager of designer outlets in Europe, but also as a very important resource for retailers, including our brand partners, in developing and training their staff. "

Colin Wilding, General Manager, McArthurGlen's Cheshire Oaks Designer Outlet, said: "Under the National Skills Academy for Retail, we have the potential to offer Cheshire retailers incalculable benefits in the form of staff development and retention."

The National Skills Academy was officially launched by *Dragons' Den* star Theo Paphitis at a London event. Mr Paphitis said: "Training is vital to the success of retail, and the Cheshire Oaks skills shop will help all employees and employers find the right training solution. Whether it is an apprenticeship, retail customer service programme or work experience opportunity, it will be an important part of local life, and provide a timely boost for the retail sector."

Jane Rexworthy, Head of the National Skills Academy for Retail, said: "We are all excited to launch the National Skills Academy for Retail and welcome the Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy to the network. Together, we will now begin our mission to drive up the skills levels of everyone within the diverse and large retail sector."

The number of skills shops in the National Skills Academy for Retail is set to rise to 60 by 2010, with the project backed by big-name industry names including the John Lewis Partnership, Marks & Spencer and the British Council of Shopping Centres.

CORA's appointment as a founding member of the National Skills Academy follows the partnering last December of McArthurGlen with Italy's SDA Bocconi School of Management, one of Europe's oldest and most renowned business schools, to set up the Luxury Retail Academy in Italy.

The Luxury Retail Academy offers an Executive Programme in Retail General Management, specifically designed by SDA Bocconi for McArthurGlen. The programme is exclusively for store managers at McArthurGlen's Serravalle Designer Outlet near Milan, Europe's biggest designer outlet village, with 173 stores.

## **Notes to Editors**

To find out more about Cheshire Oaks Retail Academy, go to the National Skills Academy for Retail website at [www.nsaforretail.com](http://www.nsaforretail.com)

## **About the National Skills Academy for Retail**

After four years of planning, with backing from big-name industry partners including the Learning and Skills Council, John Lewis Partnership, Marks & Spencer and the British Council for Shopping Centres, the National Skills Academy for Retail will oversee a network of one-stop, walk-in and web-based retail skills shops on high streets and in shopping centres across the UK, all run by local stakeholders including developers, training providers, Jobcentre Plus and retailers.

These skills shops will provide access to world-class skills solutions and help drive a step change in skills levels for the retail industry. Member skills shops will all gain National Skills

Academy for retail accreditation and become part of a network providing access to world-class skills and business support for retailers, employees and the future workforce.

ENDS