



## **Celebrating the Right to Learn!**

Adult Learners Celebrate  
Their Right to Learn and Freedom of Expression

Learners' Essay Submissions to  
Adult Learners' Week Writing Contest  
March 3-9, 2008

Produced by  
Literacy Nova Scotia

*Literacy Nova Scotia acknowledges and thanks the following sponsors for their support and contribution to the Celebrating Adult Learners' Week Event:*



# Nova Scotia House of Assembly Sixtieth General Assembly Second Session

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Alfie MacLeod

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Service

**Wednesday, May 7, 2008**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2484**

HON. MARK PARENT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas in recognition of International Adult Learners' Week from March 3<sup>rd</sup> to March 9<sup>th</sup>, celebrations were held in more than 50 countries across the world where what is being done for literacy in Nova Scotia and Canada was recognized; and

Whereas across Nova Scotia the week was celebrated with a writing contest designed to promote the benefits of learning in the home, at work and in the community, and to highlight the many options available to adult learners in this province; and

Whereas Sherry LeBouthillier of Halifax, Kelly Carter of Port Williams, Kings County, and Stephanie Nickerson of Barrington Passage, Shelburne County, were winners of the province-wide writing contest hosted by Literacy Nova Scotia in partnership with Labour and Workforce Development;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Ms. LeBouthillier, Ms. Carter and Ms. Nickerson for their achievements in literacy, and thank Ms. Ann Marie Downie of Literacy Nova Scotia for her constant support of literacy initiatives in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I request waiver of notice.

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Honourable Mark Parent  
Minister of Labour and Workforce Development

## Introduction

March 6, 2008 was an important day for adult learners in Nova Scotia. Three adults who have returned to learning went to Province House to tell Premier Rodney MacDonald and others about their experiences and reflect on how important the right to learn is for all Nova Scotians. In Celebration of International Adult Learners' Week, Literacy Nova Scotia collected submissions from adult learners who wanted to celebrate their right to learn and their freedom of expression by writing about the learning journeys they have undertaken as adults. The three contest winners: Shelley LeBouthillier from the NSCC IT Campus in Halifax, Kelly Carter from the Annapolis Valley Work Centre in Kentville, and Stephanie Nickerson from the Barrington Community Learning Centre in Barrington read from their submissions and presented copies to Premier MacDonald.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Adult Learners' Week is an annual event and 2008 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 speaks to the right of all to have learning opportunities.

Once we heard the announcement of ALW for 2008, Literacy Nova Scotia staff discussed what we could do in a short timeframe that would celebrate adult learning and would help adult learners learn new skills that would help them move on in their programs. Let's do writing workshops and have a writing contest was our conclusion. We could afford to do six workshops and if a third of the participants entered the contest we would get about 40 entries. We could handle that. As with many good ideas, it took off. Soon we were getting entries from all over the province. We had entries from learners in many of the 30 community-based programs, NSCC campuses, adult high schools, family literacy, seniors' and workforce re-entry programs. There were essays, short stories, poems and songs. We heard loud and clear... adult learners in Nova Scotia have something to say about what learning means to them.

There were more than 120 submissions to the contest and each entry added to our appreciation of how important our right to learn is for the country. With the permission of the authors, Literacy Nova Scotia is happy to share some of the writings with other learners.

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## **Education is a Right, Not a Privilege** **Sherry LeBouthillier - NSCC IT Campus**

Mildred Dover, the Minister of Education for Prince Edward Island and Chief Spokesperson for Canadian Delegation on Education, delivered a message at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the UNESCO General Conference on the theme of Education for All. The message from all Canadian provinces and territories is that of inclusion, "a belief that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in their education."<sup>1</sup>

I too have the right to learn; this is not to take away from the fact of how grateful I am for all of the support I have received. Just knowing that my educators and counselors have faith in my abilities and the willingness to help and support me in obtaining my goals means so very much to me.

I attended NSCC Bell Road Campus for the first time back in 1995. I obtained a diploma in Automotive Technology (Motive Power). I worked my way up from a stocker on backshift, to a Division Manager of the Tire and Lube. After eight years with the same company, I suddenly found myself unemployed. I had always wanted to become a nurse, so I chose this time in my life to return to school to obtain that career goal. In order to enter the program I needed to obtain my academic grade twelve. I had a GED but not my high school diploma. Through the Access program, I was now being given the opportunity to not only obtain this but so much more.

Do I feel as though it is my right to learn? Absolutely, everyone has the right to a better education; it is something that will benefit many. Well-educated people lead to a well rounded community.

Do I feel that I have the freedom of expression? I do, and have always had that right. Being uneducated does not take away that right. The benefit of being educated is that when you speak, more people are apt to listen.

I will graduate with my grade twelve diploma from NSCC in June 2008. I will walk across the stage at the convocation ceremonies with my head held high and a sense of pride and accomplishment like no other. It is times like this that makes a person grateful for their right to learn.

I will move to the NSCC Waterfront Campus in the fall of 2008 to begin my training for a career in nursing. Because of all my accomplishments in the Adult Learning Program, I now feel prepared to take on the world, looking at it from a whole new perspective.

When I have completed my nursing course, I hope to be able to bestow back to my community the care and compassion that was shown to me on my road to a

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<sup>1</sup> Dover, Mildred (2005). Message from Canada on Education For All, *Canadian Delegation Report: 33<sup>rd</sup> UNESCO General Conference (Commission 11)*.

better education and in turn a better life. This sense of accomplishment is something that I would wish that everyone had the opportunity to experience for themselves at least once in their life time. Education for all will truly make the world a better place.

## **Learning Never Stops**

### **Kelly Carter - Annapolis Valley Work Centre**

About nine months ago, as I was working in a little take-out in my home town, I was told I would be laid off my job as there was no work. As I checked the job bank for other work in an office, I noticed all jobs required Excel in order to work there. I had everything else but Excel. I had taken an Automated Office Course back in 1991 for a year, but never done the Excel, so I thought to myself "How am I going to get this Excel and not have to go through 2 years of Office Business that I already have?"

I talked to my Employment Support Worker and together we found the Annapolis Valley Work Centre. Here I could brush up on my basic office skills and get my Excel. I took the chance and go into A.V.W.C. I started on Oct. 24, 2008, taking Academics, Personal Development, and Basic Office Skills.

After being out of school for twenty-five years I thought I could never do the Math. I was very surprised at what I did remember. It all came back to me. As I worked hard in Math, I figured out that I loved it. Then I started accounting. I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed doing accounting. My academics instructor suggested I go on with accounting, so I am in the process of applying to NSCC in Kentville to take the 2 year Accounting course.

If not for the chance to take the upgrading, I would be sitting at home doing nothing. Jobs are hard to come by as much as education. Without the education you can't get a good job. The more I can get in my education, the better I am making myself.

Adult learning is just as important as a child's learning. You will never stop learning till the day you die. You learn something new everyday, from a little child learning to tie their shoes to an 80 year old man learning to cook for the first time in his life. It doesn't matter where you are or what you are doing, you will learn something new today, tomorrow and next week. Learning never stops.

## **No Longer an Outsider**

**Stephanie Nickerson - Barrington Community Learning Centre**

Last year I made the best decision of my life. I, after being out of school for 18 years, decided to go back. Life is full of learning experiences not only when you're a child, but for your entire life. I learn things every day - some are small, some are life changing.

Reading a book and returning to school have been goals on my 'bucket list' – a list of goals I want to achieve before I die. Learning to me is like going to a theme park and going on your first roller coaster ride. You're scared at first; you experience many ups and downs along the way. When the ride is over, you're glad you did it, yet sad because you don't want the ride to end.

I know now I had numerous artificial burdens as to not going back to school or to finish reading a book. I used excuses like, "I don't have time because I'm a mother, a wife, housekeeper, bookkeeper, banker, taxi driver..." I simply never had enough time. Truthfully, going back to school and reading was something I feared. I was never any good at it; I feared failure!

Since returning to school at the Adult Learning Center, I had learned that failure teaches success and that fear carries a man farther than courage - but not in the same direction.

No one in my class, instructors included, knew my secret. It wasn't something that I liked to talk about; it was embarrassing to me, especially around the kids.

I remember the morning everyone in the class was sitting around talking about the books they had read and how incredible they were. I quietly sat in my seat, feeling like an outsider, and being totally left out of the whole conversation. I could feel the pressure building inside, and my ears were getting hot, my cheeks felt flushed, and my heart rate was off the charts. I wanted so badly to be a part of the conversation. To my surprise, the pressure inside had built up so much that the words just exploded from my lips, "I HAVE NEVER READ A BOOK!!!!" As soon as the words came out, I panicked, but I soon learned I was not alone.

When you let something like that slip in class, instructors take it to heart. Seeing the sparkle in her eye, I knew I was going to be reading my first book. I was right. Ironically, the book was *The Outsiders*. Through this experience, I now understand the power that words in a book can have.

The learning center teaches you more than school work.. My self-esteem and confidence have boosted. Every bird needs to leave its nest, I know that when I fly out of here, I will take my skills and confidence with me and be able to accomplish whatever I put my mind to. It doesn't all come easy, but the fire of suffering, becomes the light of consciousness.

## **The Second Chance**

### **Bernice Lamont - Annapolis Valley Work Center**

I remember when I was in school; I always struggled with learning. I never got the help that I needed because the class sizes were so big. I did end up graduating by luck, but I wasn't proud of myself.

Over the years there were things that I wanted to do, but I ended up not doing them. I always felt that I wasn't smart enough to get a job or that I wasn't good enough at something to be able to do it. My life felt useless and empty. I had my son and then over the next two years I started thinking about when he starts bringing home homework. Will I be able to help him? I decided to make a difference in my life for my son and for me.

I had a second chance to change things in my life. I started at the Annapolis Valley Work Center, which is part of an adult learning program, I found out things that really surprised me. I was really good at math and other things. The people at the center helped me to understand things a lot more clearly. I know now that I am not stupid, that I am good at things and I owe that to the adult learning program at the Annapolis Valley Work Center.

Every morning when I step foot into the center and I sit down, I like to look around at all the people and think, without this center we would not have had the opportunity for this second chance.

I believe in my heart that the adult learning program is the greatest program for people who want to take the opportunity for that second chance because without that second chance people would not be able to learn new things. The adult learning program can help people out in a lot of different ways. For instance, people who never finished high school can get help to prepare them for the GED. Another thing is for people who are tired of the same old job and want to see if they are interested in maybe starting a new career. Of course, the most important reason that the program is good is for people who can't read or write. Well the program actually helps people with that.

My mother is not good at reading and writing and she might be joining the Annapolis Valley Work Center so that she can get help with reading and writing. I can see that if she gets help then she will be able to read a story to her grandchildren one day.

While writing this essay I got to thinking that maybe one day some of the next generation will want to have the same opportunity that I got for this second chance. If the program happens to get cut then I think of all the people who would not be able to try new things or learn how to read and write.

I am really glad that I got this opportunity to write this essay about the adult learning program. I never knew how important this program really was until I came to one.

## **Defeating Dyslexia**

### **Michelle Snook - NSCC Truro Campus**

As an adult learner, I face many challenges. One of these is dyslexia. Finding out that you have a learning disability can be devastating but there are several different ways to defeat the dyslexia dilemma.

The first thing you have to do is accept that you have a disability and understand that this is not a weakness but a difference in learning. I do not see myself as being disabled. I think that we all have differences and acceptance of these differences in an educational setting is very important.

Setting learning goals is helpful. When you set your learning goals, remember that this new journey may take longer for you than other students. Be kind to yourself and be willing not to accept defeat but to move on and set new goals.

Seeking out assistive technology can be a daunting task, not every program works for every person. Many companies are willing to send out demo DVDs, so that you can try out a program before purchasing one. Using a lap top is helpful in that wherever you are, you will have access to the programs that you need. There are also speech to text programs, where you speak into the computer and it will actually write the paper using your words. Using a gadget called a Franklin is not only useful but fun too. After typing a word into this hand held technology, it will not only pronounce the word verbally but also will display the meaning of the word. For those of us who struggle with spelling, this is a wonderful tool.

Asking for help can be scary sometimes, but it's the first step to your success. Many of us are lucky to be able to work with a tutor who can help set goals, celebrate successes and show us ways to work independently.

Being a self advocate is something I have had to learn very quickly. I realize that in some circumstances, I have to actually educate someone before I can access the resources I require for my learning. Struggling with my course load is hard enough, but I now find myself spending a lot of time explaining why I may need to have certain programs and why I need extra help sometimes. Through my experiences, I am now working with other students who are discovering their own differences. I am encouraging them to seek funding and I give them tutorials on using the assistive technology. It can be intimidating especially to someone who is just learning to use the computer.

It's hard some days but I have some important goals to reach. I want to be a role model to my children and I have something not only to prove to myself, but to the world, that dyslexia can be defeated.

## **The Joy of Learning**

**Jack MacNab - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

Looking back on my lifelong road of learning,  
Some like myself, have fallen through the cracks.  
Yet, my heart kept yearning,  
Knowing now the tools that were needed, I lacked.

I am fifty-seven now,  
With old age creeping at my door.  
To be, to it, a victim I will not allow,  
For I decided to ask for a little more!

Thinking back to my youthful years,  
It's true I failed to achieve grade four.  
Should I wallow in self-pity-tears?  
No! I've decided to knock on that learner's door.

The day came when I entered the seventh class,  
Finding I did not have those basic tools needed!  
It was quite apparent that I would not pass,  
From the schoolyard I was weeded.

Into a special-help-class I was placed,  
With a new teacher who gave to me her caring time.  
As I moved along like a small snail at slower pace,  
Until I reached grade nine.

I decided to take up bricklaying.  
At that time vocational schools were made available.  
Lacking the tools needed, in loss I had to pay.  
If only I had memorized my multiplication tables.

As the wheel-of-time turned into nineteen-seventy-one,  
I wrote a test to attend the Collage of Art.  
The questions seemed beyond my reach, and then some.  
To my surprise I passed and with that I felt pretty smart.

Sad now to say,  
For personal reasons at the time.  
From it I walked away.  
To this very hour it continues to gnaw in my mind.

Within a new vocational school I made another effort.  
The Trade of Certified Upholster I attained.  
Often I feel like a lost soul in the desert,  
Longing for knowledge as if needing water to ease the pain.

The secret for escape is found in more knowledge.  
Day after day I would write upon the dry sand.  
Asking for a little help to attain the needed-inner-edge,  
Only to have the wind blow away what I had wrote with my hand.

Each time it would remind me of my youthful years in school,  
How I struggled in silence with that nagging pain.  
As I missed those needed pieces of basic golden rules,  
Wishing for time to stop and to shower my desert with rain.

To me my therapist explained,  
The wind does not have the right to take this away.  
You deserve it, to be on the road of learning,  
To the desert your soul you need not pay.

Now as I begin to write with ink upon this page,  
A new chapter I have just started.  
Even though I am fifty-seven years of age,  
Unlike sand these new words cannot be parted.

Whenever the wind blows across my path,  
I can look out over the sand dunes and hills.  
As my teacher unlocks the secrets of English and Math,  
I now can see my dream, I can succeed and I will.

My quest in the beginning was for knowledge,  
As the pages on this pathway stream keep turning.  
My new teacher has helped me to gain that needed edge.  
I have finally found the secret that lies in the joy of learning.

## **Common Threads**

### **Betty Ann Childs - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

In pockets across our province adults gather. Their quest, skills, the place: your nearest Adult Learning Centre (ALC).

Every student will work at their own pace, each with a different curriculum. Providing individualized training is instrumental to it's success.

A more eclectic mixture you could not find. Ranging in age twenty to fifty-five, it would be difficult to recognize any similarity at all. A closer look reveals some parallels and insight to the realities of ALC.

One man, an absolutely brilliant historian spends a large amount of time concentrating on math. The continuous hum of a keyboard as a middle-age man familiarizes himself with a computer. In his 50's , a talented writer sorts through a gauntlet of study areas. A single mother of two diligently prepares for college acceptance.

Center stage, an instructor. His ability to encourage without being cumbersome is uncanny, a character trait needed if he is to provide these learners with the structure to finish this program. With every student at a different level of study, he must be consistently aware of each learner's strengths and weaknesses. Some move through the curriculum rapidly, others more gradually.

The program coordinator oversees the daily events and will provide learners with a structure and timeline to attain their desired outcome. Both instructor and coordinator are well aware that for many they have homes, jobs, and children while attending the program. Priority is given to accommodate each learner's personal as well as academic needs. The system is implemented in such a way that success is achievable.

Although their differences are obvious, a sense of camaraderie is apparent. This group needs no encouragement to begin the tasks at hand. All are decidedly here to achieve their goal.

If the student body is the heart of your ALC, then it's the staff that breathes life into it. Success of its students is a measure of their success as an organization. At a time in society when bank tellers are being replaced with interact, voice mail has reinvented talking, and computers supersede postage, there are still some jobs that must be done for the people, by the people.

The remaining constant is a group of adults, young and old, with a willingness to achieve and a staff to support their efforts.

Over the past years there have been graduates from Colchester Adult Learning Association. Our alumni include individuals who have gone on to Trades and

Training courses with the college, Victorian Order of Nurses and homemakers alike.

Adult Learning Centres are providing our communities with a more skilled labour force and strengthening our ability to compete in an ever evolving job market.

As individuals pass through its doors, each will be given the opportunity to enrich its community in varied ways. My name is Betty Ann Childs and I am one of the "common threads" that will invariably create a quilt that adds to Nova Scotia's ability to thrive in today's economy and am being furnished with the skills to do just that.

## **Going After a Dream**

### **Karen Augustine - NSCC Waterfront Campus**

I have spent my whole life having people tell me I won't amount to anything. From an early age, I was told I was too dumb to do anything and I believed that. I held onto that throughout my whole life. In school, I never fought to get good grades because what was the point? I was too dumb. So why bother?

I don't remember much of my education in elementary. I come from a broken home so learning was never important to me. I never had a role model. I had to do what I needed for myself. When it was time for me to go to high school, I found it very difficult to concentrate because of what was happening at home. I was never into school. I felt I was wasting my time and the teacher's time. I was just a student filling a seat that someone else could have used.

My parents never gave me any feedback about how important it was for me to have an education. I was all alone at a school I really never wanted to be at but, on the other hand, school was a safe haven for me. The troubles at home were too much for me to deal with, and riding on that bus was like saying goodbye to that.

I have found it hard to keep on track on my studies. I spent a lot of time focusing on other things rather than my school work. I was sent to a Special Education school. I wasn't happy there either. The teachers weren't really helpful, and again I was alone. At 15, I had to quit because I was having a baby. I never went back because I wasn't ready.

After 25 years, I've decided to go further with my education, I was uncertain as to where I was going and how I was going to get there. I started at Dartmouth Works Activity and I'd applied for NSCC. I felt my chances of getting in were slim. I never finished high school so I had no credits to back me up. Was I ready to deal with the pressures of college?

Out of eleven children in my family, no one has ever passed Grade 10, let alone graduate from college. How was I going to deal with this? Was I smart enough? I knew nothing of Science, Math, Communication, or Computers. What was I getting myself into? I have never wanted anything so badly. My education was what I was fighting for.

After five months as a Level 3 student in the ALP program at NSCC Waterfront, I am able to look at myself proudly for what I've achieved. I have completed all my assignments, and I am doing extremely well in all my courses. My teachers are impressed with my work and I expect to be in Level 4 in September. I have come so far and I am glad I allowed myself to come back to school. Anything is possible if you put your heart and soul into it. To all the people who told me I couldn't do it, I definitely can!

## **L'apprentissage, du berceau jusqu'à l'âge d'or**

### **Anne LeBlanc - Equipe d'Alphabétisation Nouvelle-Ecosse**

Que j'étais chanceuse d'être venue au monde dans le beau pays du Canada, lorsque tous les gens ont le droit d'être instruits. Mon apprentissage m'a donné de gros cadeaux tout le long de ma vie, en débutant dès ma naissance avec ma première petite chanson que j'entendais ma mère chanter. Je ne connaissais pas l'importance des affaires de la vie, et je regardais seulement envers ma nourriture et mon confort.

Pendant mes années d'enfance, j'ai grandi dans le petit village acadien de Concessions, où j'apprenais du nouveau tous les jours. J'ai fréquenté la petite école, et je me suis rendue à l'école secondaire, où toutes mes classes étaient enseignées en anglais, sauf le cours de lecture et de grammaire française. Même si ma famille était pauvre, et que je n'avais pas toujours des articles à la mode, j'avais le droit d'aller à l'école, tout comme mes quelques camarades de classe, qui étaient riches.

Comme adulte, j'ai encore une soif insatiable pour apprendre. Je veux pouvoir bien lire et écrire en français, celle qui est ma langue maternelle. Ma fierté acadienne déborde sur tous les côtés. Mes ancêtres ont travaillé tellement fort pour garder leur précieuse langue, c'est pourquoi je ne veux pas que leurs épreuves étaient pour rien. Grâce à la Loi gouvernementale, qui donne à tous les Acadiens, le droit d'être instruit en français, j'ai maintenant, l'occasion de prendre part à des classes d'alphabétisation, dans ma communauté. Celles-ci me permettent peu à peu d'améliorer ma lecture et mon écriture.

C'est avec une grande joie que je me suis lancé dans le domaine des écrivains. Le voyage est, parfois plus beau et enrichissant, que la destination. Je me rends compte, que la langue française est encore bien plus belle que je la percevais. C'est aussi énormément satisfaisant, quand on peut accomplir une œuvre qui semblait autrefois impossible. Je suis très reconnaissante envers l'alphabétisation, pour m'avoir ouvert la porte, qui serait autrement restée fermée.

Dans mon voyage de la vie, je tiens avec espoir un rêve qu'une fois rendue à l'âge d'or, que mes œuvres seront nombreuses, et qu'il y en restera toujours un à finir. Je sais, que c'est impossible de tout apprendre, mais c'est très épanouissant d'essayer de l'atteindre.

## **An Adult's Right to Learn According to Tara Tara Bates - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County**

It doesn't matter how young or old you are it's never too late to learn. But sometimes it's easier to come back to school and learn as an adult. There are different reasons for this. People may give up on school and learning when they are younger because they may have a disability and are unable to understand their schoolwork. When this happens they usually fall behind their classmates and become frustrated. This causes them to quit school. Teachers can be cruel and less than helpful and not have the time to be helpful because they have too many children to teach. Sometimes the other children at school can be bullies and make fun of their classmates. This can cause people to give up on learning too.

When people come back to school as adults they don't have to worry about things like this. They are able to learn in a positive setting with an understanding instructor and other adults. Going back to school can be scary because some adults have been out for so many years. They may be afraid of being judged by others or the schoolwork may be too hard. But as adults, people often realize how important it is to have an education. Getting into college or looking for a job is hard to do without a high school diploma. Not knowing how to read makes life difficult. Asking for help and making excuses is embarrassing.

When people return to school as adults and get the right kind of help for their disabilities their self-esteem gets better. Because of this they have a better chance of finishing school and going on to college or getting a job. Some adults go through special education classes as children and receive a high school diploma but are still unable to attend the colleges that they wish they could. They are turned down because of their history in school. I feel there should be a place for everyone and everyone should have a chance no matter what his or her past was like. Young or old school can be for everyone with the right tools and supports. It's never too late to learn. It will be hard at first but once you get use to it the benefits will be worth it.

## **My Personal Experience with Adult Learning**

### **Brian Pye - South Shore Work Activity Program**

I am forty-two years old, and I live at home with my parents. To most people I would be an underachiever, and that would be justified if you didn't know my personal history. I, like most people, went to a regular school, was in a regular classroom and did what regular children did. So, what went wrong with me? Well, also like so many who had problems as a child, I found it difficult to complete my schooling. I myself don't have high school. I also have no skill or trade. This makes it hard to find fulltime employment. Why do some make it without education and others don't? It could be that some jobs, mainly physical labour intensive ones, don't require a lot of book smarts. But, where does that leave people, like myself, who in addition to lacking education and skills are also unable to perform physically intensive labour?

Even with the knowledge of how important education is, it is not easy for some people to go back to school. In some cases the person still has the same problems they had as a child, and age only compounds their problems. That's why places like the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) are so badly needed for people who often have other personal, physical or social problems along with their lack of skills and education.

Why am I here at SSWAP and living where I do? The answer is that I have a disorder. In fact, most of my family has it. This disorder is called schizophrenia, and it leaves some more functional than others. That is why some of us can work, and others can't. Some, who can function in all other ways, find relationships with other people are their biggest handicap. Others find managing money the worst. Others find addictions the most disabling.

Now, I'm not asking for pity, or even understanding, but what I do ask for is people to see that not all we, or I myself, do is done by choice. Sometimes it is a disease that can't be cured nor totally understood.

One day, if it is ever cured and I am still alive, I would like someone to video tape my family as we are right now and then video tape us after we got the cure. Then we could compare. I wonder if we would be that different. If all of our waking hours were spent either coping with our own disease, or someone else's around us, how would we know what was normal? Its better that way; no hard feelings. It is hard to die with a broken heart or a grudge. I wish the best of luck to all of us suffering with schizophrenia, to all my fellow participants in the SSWAP program and to all families everywhere who are coping with disease. Remember, live and let live because everyone is coping with their own unique set of situations.

**Only Believe**  
**Scott Vaughan - South Shore Work Activity Program**

(verse 1)

I remember when we were young  
Living in a small, small town  
Sitting around thinking about the good old days  
Trying to learn and capture our abilities  
Achieving goals and wondering where  
We are going to go and say ...

(chorus)

If you take a look in my eyes  
Tell me what it would be like  
It's like reaching for the stars  
Only believe

(verse 2)

As we are getting older,  
time and times are getting harder  
Studying and learning about life  
Still believing in which is the true meaning of feeling  
Proud of knowing who we are  
Let's all take the time to stop,  
and think what can we do  
to make things better  
Whether or not we are ever going to make it.

If you take a look in my eyes  
Tell me is it going to be alright  
Cause we all need to know it's  
Only believe  
Let us believe  
Only believe

**Michael Leaman**  
**Michael Leaman - Cunard Learning Centre**

Well I have been attending the Cunard Learning program about half a year now it's been tough my difficulty has always been math.

And even in January I almost dropped out because it was hard but I did come back and I will keep trying.

I tried to come here a few years back but it was so hard I gave up and never looked back I'm glad I'm back here trying again.

I know a couple of friends who have either went back to school doing an ALP program. One of them Shauna Dwyer came to this program the first time I came here and though I had dropped out and lost contact with her. I heard though that she had moved on to NSCC and actually eventually graduated and got her grade 12. She always had a hard time remembering things she learned so it was a good step

For her to move on now I think she is trying to become a nurse.

My other friend Katie white lives in Enfield she started going last year To an ALP program in Elmsdale and the last I heard she was doing really good. We of course cant take all of the credit a lot of also has to do with the excellent jobs the teachers that come and teach us. They try to recognize where are problems are and then tries to help us focus on them in away we don't become overwhelmed .In the stuff we are learning does eventually stick and we move on.

I know that when I was here the just before Christmas 2007 I was certain that I wasn't learning the math I wasn't able to remember it. I found out though just a couple of weeks ago when I went for my orientation at the waterfront Campus in Dartmouth that I have infect remembered more then I thought I had. I passed the orientation test and I will be moving on to level 3 next September that's a big step for me. I know I owe a lot of it to the teachers who keep helping when I need it. I also have made so many wonderful friends here as well in my class that's a big thing for me as well since I've always had trouble making friends.

I would say that time that I have spent here has been well spent. For someone to who had basically nothing and living in a group home. I have managed to crawl myself out of the gutter and now I have a chance I didn't know I had before so I would just like to say thank you to everyone who has helped me get to this step.

## **Lifelong Learning**

### **Lisa DeViller - NSCC Burridge Campus**

From every walk of life we came  
Strangers at the start  
Ready to begin a new chapter  
That was what was in our heart

We came together with one purpose in mind  
To celebrate our right to learn  
But throughout this journey  
So much more did we earn

Through our life experiences  
Many things we already knew  
But a grade twelve diploma  
We were long overdue

That's where the NSCC ALP program  
Thankfully came into play  
A whole new world opened for us  
And so we began without delay

With books in hand to class we went  
Nervous, shy and scared  
But what we found to our relief  
Were instructors that really cared

Words of advice, a pat on the back  
A gentle push, each and everyday  
What they have given each of us  
We will never be able to repay

Everything we have learned this year  
Didn't necessarily come from our books  
Straighter we stand, our heads are held high  
A smile on our face, that's how self confidence looks

The strangers at the beginning  
Are now our closest friends  
And will be forever  
Even when this journey ends

So with graduation close at hand  
With our peers we'll proudly stand on stage  
We'll lovingly close this chapter of our lives  
But eagerly open a new book and start a fresh new page.

## **Me as a Learner**

### **Tanya Cole - Annapolis Valley Work Centre**

As a child I was always told that I couldn't do it, I was stupid, and that I would never make it. I made it through school, as well as Community College, but only just by the skin of my teeth. I feel that due to the large number of students in the classrooms I was just pushed through, and not seen.

As a result of my recent separation I knew that I had to further my education to support my children and myself. So with the help of my Employment Support Counsellor, I was enrolled at the Annapolis Valley Work Centre.

So with butterflies in my stomach, sweaty hands, and shaking knees I entered the classroom. I didn't think that I would be able to learn at my age, I couldn't do it in school so why should I be able to do it now? As we started the work I was amazed how well I was doing. I thought to myself, "Is this really me doing this work?" It was, and still is, and everyday, thanks to my teachers at the Annapolis Valley Work Centre, I am achieving my goals.

It feels so good to be able to show those that for years told me I couldn't do anything that I can do it and I am doing it! Before attending the Annapolis Valley Work Centre I was certain that I was stupid and that my future wasn't worth fighting for. Now as I look inside myself I know that I am and I know that I am not stupid, far from it. I am learning so much every day. Things that I should have learned in school but didn't. I have learned that you are never too old to start your life over again and programs like the Annapolis Valley Work Centre make it all possible.

With the knowledge that I have been given I know that I am successful. I can make it in the "real world" even though it seems impossible. The Centre has given me a new start not just for me but also for my children.

My children look at me differently now as we get ready for "school" together every morning, and we do homework together every night. I know that as they get older they will see that I have improved myself for them. Without the Centre I would have never have been able to do any of this. The support from the teachers and counsellors is amazing and they are here to help me. Their goal is to help me reach my goals. I think everyday, "Where would I be with out them?"

The Centre has given me the chance to start my life over again with a new page. It has opened so many doors for me the choice is mine which door I walk through. I do know that what ever door I choose I will be successful and I can make it on my own for myself and my children.

So with the self-confidence that I have built and the help of the Centre, I am ready to face the world head on. I know that I am successful, and I know that I can provide for my children and myself with hard work and dedication.

## **To School and Back to School Rayburne Whynot - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network**

I am 57 years young. Here I am back in school at the Adult Learning Network. The Network gave me the opportunity to do it all over once more. At the age of fifteen I left school to go off to work with no idea of what was ahead of me. My parents, I know, pleaded with me to continue on. But I found it hard to give in. Then, of course it was marriage. Times were hard, but life went on as usual.

As the years went on there were children, three all total. Watching our children grow up and go off to school, it made me think back on my school days. As my kids went through the higher grades it got harder for them as well, but they went on and got good grades. The funny thing about this is that we, as parents, went through the same thing my parents went through, trying to get me to go to school and study.

Now my children are grown up and have pretty good jobs. There are five grandchildren and I believe they go through the same from time to time. Out of the five, we have three going to school and I see their parents going through the same situations as my parents, and my wife and I went through over the past years.

Knowing this, I feel we have to try to preach to our grandchildren, and also to each other, the importance of education. I believe everybody, at some time in life should go back and refresh the skills in education. Knowing now how I feel, this is important to me. There isn't a day that goes by, that I don't think of telling my grandchildren what I went through and am still going through. With the education I have, it is hard for me now, but it is getting easier. I just hope they take it all in and listen to what I have to say to them.

## **My Journey**

### **Sharon Klaver - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network**

I lived on an island called Zwicker's Island, off of Indian Point. When I went to Blockhouse School first, I was six years old and I didn't have any friends. I was teased about living on an island. My next school was Mahone Bay School, and I was not treated any better, so I was pushed along in grade seven, eight, and nine. Then came graduation and my sister and I, and my friend went to our graduation.

Then I went to Park View in Bridgewater for four months. I was pregnant and left school. My parents thought it would be better if I got married. Well, I got married and it was not a good marriage. My husband would put me down every day, and tell me I was not a good mother to my son. We lived together for six months in Lunenburg.

Then one day my husband really got mad and started to throw dishes at me. He started to call me names and he chased me around the living room. He rolled his fist up to hit me. I got away, went to the bedroom and locked the door behind me. Two hits and the door came down. He came after me and I ran to the bathroom. He knocked another door down. I ran out the door and started to go to my parents. I walked from Lunenburg to Indian Point that night. It took me all that night. In the morning I was home in Indian Point.

Now, twenty years later, I'm back at school again. I have friends and I have a nice teacher and I love being back in school! I have more support than I ever have had. I can't wait to come to school in the mornings. I'm doing better than I ever did. I tell people where I'm going, and they say, "That's great!" I'm having a great time!

## **Adult Education**

### **Linda Kaizer - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network**

Here at the Adult Learning Network

Living the dream...

For now that I've been here,

Education is important for a

Better future.

Learning, Knowledge, Strength...

Passing it down to our children,

For growth and nurture.

## **My Dream**

### **Donna Zinck - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network**

Two and a half years ago my daughter came to me and said that she was going back to school. She went to Community College to take her Continuing Care course. I was so proud of her; that is what inspired me to go back to school.

So last year in February I called the Adult Learning Network to make an appointment. I came down for an assessment and got started right away. I was so nervous and scared; I was starting from scratch. I found it hard; I was going to give up a few times, but my daughter wouldn't let me. She said, "I am going to tell you Mom, what you always told me: "Go to school and get your education."

So I stayed with it and I am so glad I did, because right now the math that I am doing, I didn't think I'd ever be able to do. I want this so bad, just to show my family I can do it. You're never too old!

In September, after I get done here, I want to go to Community College for my levels 3 and 4. After that, my dream is to take my Continuing Care course and work with disabled adults. I've always wanted to help people; that's my job to fulfill my dream.

**Treasure**  
**Cody Wright - FLEC Schools**

Beneath that crystal blue sky  
Holding onto your hand  
We calmly watched the sunset  
With each passing moment

Our feelings are always strong  
We have nothing to hide  
You spoke those wonderful words  
That buried in my mind

Those precious moments  
Felt like eternity  
Your delicate touch  
In the depth of my heart

My desire is only you  
My precious treasure  
Until daybreak comes  
Never let go of my hand  
Stay with me always, until the end

Your warmth always surrounds me  
Soothing my deep sorrow  
You taught me to walk forward  
Hope was back in my heart

Those precious moments  
Felt like eternity  
Your delicate touch  
In the depth of my heart

My desire is only you  
My precious treasure  
Until daybreak comes  
Never let go of my hand  
Stay with me always, until the end

We'll hold our love together  
Protecting each other always  
Surely this is peace

My desire is only you  
My precious treasure  
Until daybreak comes  
Never let go of my hand  
Stay with me always, until the end

## **Following My Dreams**

### **Heather Wilmot - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

Hi my name is Heather Wilmot,

I am a daughter, a wife, a mother, a grandmother a learner. I have two daughters and three grand-children. My husband Randy is so supportive in my choice of going back to school; he helps me. If I find things hard, my daughters help me too. All of my family supports me. It makes the learning so much better.

Being in school and learning to read helps me do my ATM banking and use the computer to e-mail my grandchildren in Grand Prairie, When my mom passed away, I thought my world had come to an end, but the love of my family made me see that there is a place for me to go back to school. I feel so proud to be here.

The teachers at CALA are so helpful. They help me follow my dream to read and do the things I thought I could not do. Here I am getting my education, working, running my own business making clothes, and getting a better education. I feel that I am a better daughter, wife, mother and grandmother for coming back.

I am so grateful to be a part of CALA.

Thank You

## **Life Long Learner – Education**

### **Diane Campbell - Valley Community Learning Association**

Education is an important learning tool and can be very challenging. I know because I had to struggle with it during my high school years. From the time I entered Grade 7 in an adjusted class and going through Gr.8 and 9, it didn't get any better. I felt like an outsider with a lot of frustration and other feelings. There I was sitting in the classroom completely feeling out of place, trying to do my best at the subjects and ended up failing all of them. I never had someone like a tutor to help me out with my schoolwork and say okay you can do this.

I never really made any friends at the time because everyday when I went in that classroom, the students would pick on me and they thought they were smarter and better.

When I finished school, I went to the Flower Cart in 1978 and was an employee there working in the bakery. I worked at that place for over a year and after that, I got a new job in 1980 working for a cleaning company. Over the past ten years, I have had various jobs and the idea of going back to school never crossed my mind. I had someone who was very important to me, and that was my son. Here I was unemployed raising a child to the best of my ability so he could have a good life when he grew up. At the back of my mind, I knew I wanted to do something more with my life. I needed to find someone who would help me on the way. As part of this experience, I got my GED in 1995. Three years later, I found out about an advertising place that was hiring. I called about the job.

I went for the interview and immediately got hired to work in the mailroom. I found following the instructions and the responsibilities to be a challenge during that time. I was then employed with this publishing company for five years.

One day I was talking to Joy Power and she mentioned that I might be interested in coming to a workshop. Then she brought up an idea that I liked better. She said that the Learning Center was beginning a five day a week class. I was happy about this idea and

I spoke with one of the people who works there. Since then, I have come a long way and now I am attending school at VCLA in Kentville, an Adult Learning Program. I learned about this program through a friend who told me that the course was starting in October. This was my one chance in a lifetime to further my education. This has been an overwhelming learning experience to grab the chance to better myself. Now I have friends who accept me and I feel that anything is possible once you set your mind to it.

## Me as a Learner

### Ida Iqalukjuak - Valley Community Learning Association

"Me as a learner" caught my attention, to me, learning has been life experience; I have gone through three stages; first Inuktitut, introduce to English, and then I move down here to live.

I was born in an Igloo, the month of February, and it's the coldest time of the year (-50). You probably guessed it, when I mention igloo how did she sit in a class room in an igloo. There were no class rooms. I wasn't introduced to modern life and education till I was eight years old. The government ask my parents to move to little hamlet now called old M.O.T. There wasn't very many buildings, few match box housing. But the old M.O.T. people had bigger housing, so they use one of their buildings just for classroom.

I still remember the first time I've every step in a classroom; I hid behind the coal stove and I stayed behind that stove all day long; there was no way I was going in front of this alien. This alien spoke different language and he was all was very different human being (no color) very light skin complexion; he spoke different; it was all jibber, jabber. I was happy when the day was over at that awful place. As I had to go back next day it didn't make it easier, thinking how am I suppose to understand this person, or where did he come from.

Next day came, when I entered the classroom, he handed me a very colorful book (looking back, that book is called Dick and Jill went the hill). I looked at the pictures because what ever was written on those pages had no to me.

By the time I was fifteen, I pretty much knew, what education or sitting in class room was all about, but yet I had no concept about grammar, literature, social study, science and mathematic, but yet I wrote them five days a week.

My teacher never explains, what they were teaching us. They just taught, the teachers were send from down south.

In my late sixteen year I became pregnant, so I my early seventieth, I became a mom, so I put education a side till all my children got old enough.

My marriage was over down here and I had to look after four children on my own with no education, what I to do am.

I had to get help from social assistance I talked to one of the workers there and he told me about this adult education program I was scared, thinking I am too old to be sitting in the class room, with an attitude that I already had been in school in my younger years. (I know it all attitude), I was send to Annapolis Valley Work Centre.

There I took cooking course in the morning from 8-1 pm and in the after noon I was being taught grammar and math and so on from 1-3pm, for me too learn grammar and math , the time wasn't long enough, so much to learn in little time.

It wasn't long enough. So much to learn about proper grammar, and to learn to speak proper language and write.

Inuktitut is my first language and that how learn I learn to write, we need alphabet to write next page is our alphabet in Inuktitut.

<http://www.rrss17.gouv.qc.ca/en/nunavik/langue.aspx>

When I first started this adult Uteracy education, I thought no problem, I done this before after six month being at V.C.L.A I realize that I still got long ways to go.

Thanks to our very passionate instructor, Karen Cloghesy and her boss Peter Gills and the secretary Lorna Marks. Those people have taken their time to answer my million questions about English language.

As I have gone through adult education last eight years, my children have been behind me all the way, my oldest daughter, Deborah has been my teacher, since I cant take my teacher with me when I leave my classroom, I have to turn to my daughter(Deborah) for help, she helps me on the grammar.

When I started adult education, I had grade five levels, even though I finished grade nine level up at home (Clyde River Baffin Island).

For that I thank all the people that have taken their time teaching me on grammar, math and everything else to do with education.

## **Me as a Learner**

### **Audley Pineo - Valley Community Learning Association**

As a youngster, it was very hard for me and for my family as we were poor. This made my schooling hard. I found it hard to fit in and also found it hard to focus and did not seem to learn as quickly as the other students. Although I struggled no one seemed to want to find out why it was harder for me at school. When I didn't do well, nobody at home pushed me to do better.

As time went on at school, it seemed to get harder and harder as I tried to cope. I found myself getting into trouble and trouble really found me; this made things in school go down a different path, and it was not the right one. Although I made many good friends, I also made bad ones. I felt soon after that the school just gave up on me. Eventually the school just kept moving me along to get rid of me. At least that's how what I felt. I continued to "be a body" only in the classroom for some time. In high school I thought that I was finally starting to understand some of the work, then some of my peers would laugh or say something like I was stupid, and then I would fall into the old pattern again. This made me somewhat of a fighter. If someone would say anything to me, I would take offense and lash out. This would often happen in the school that I was going to. Many of the students came from different backgrounds and some did not understand my situation.

This seemed to continue in my personal life as well. Instead of the teachers trying to find out what was wrong, I was singled out as a trouble maker. Eventually, I decided to drop out and go to work; but the same kind of experience seemed to also follow me at work. I found that the lack of education was hurting me out in the workforce. I just bounced around from job to job. Most of the jobs that I got in the beginning were just manual labor jobs. I got into the construction trade and as I liked it, I continued to work in the trade. With my lack of education, I couldn't move any further.

Now I was married and had family obligations, so I felt it was necessary to put up with whatever was said to me. This seemed to be the normal way to do business in the construction trade, as many of the people or workers were in the same kind of situation. Or at least I thought that. One day, I decided not to put up with being singled out and spoke up about the degrading way I was being treated on the job. This made my employer look at me as a troublemaker and lead to me leaving my job. On different occasions, I would go the unemployment office, trying to get help. I did not get the help I was looking for. Either I was not asking the right questions or the programs were just not available.

Finally, frustrated with everything going on around here with work, I decided that maybe I would just go out west to "find my fortune." I took a course that allowed me to go out west to work. Unfortunately, I ran into the same situations out there that I found here and added to the fact that I did not have the proper

education I also found being away from my family very hard. When I came back from out west is when I decided to further my education, or at least try to!

I was on EI and went into the Career Resource Center in Kentville. I was just looking for information on what my options were. I met with one of the councilors, Patrick Brush; he was very helpful to me. I explained to him my story and he understood where I was coming from and suggested I attend some programs at the Center. I signed up for a seminar that evaluated your career goals and looked at the different personality types that were best suited to certain careers. I also found this difficult as I had trouble reading all the materials needed. I had discussions with Patrick concerning my difficulties and he thought I might have a learning disability. Patrick made arrangements for me to be assessed by an Educational Consultant with the Kings County District School Board, Dr. Emily Freeman. Dr. Freeman confirmed that I had "severe dyslexia of the auditory linguistic type", which meant that I was unable to "phonetically decode words". This was very shocking to me. All along I thought I just could not be taught and I believed that I was not capable of learning. So this changed the way I looked at myself and made me realize that with the proper training and equipment I could finally get the education that I had missed out on.

The Career Resource Center pointed me in the direction of the Valley Community Learning Association (VCLA), which is basically for adult learners. At the VCLA I met Peter Gillis. Peter did an assessment and recommended that I attend the regular classes taught by Joy Powers. These classes were being held at the Nova Scotia Community College, Kingstec Campus. I was finally back in school and working towards my level 2 - grade 12. I immediately felt accepted by Joy and the class. She helped me understand what was needed that first year.

I am now in my second year and continuing to work towards getting my grade 12. I have a lot of people to thank for that, Patrick Brush, Peter Gillis, Joy Powers and Lorna Marks (Peter's assistant), also the new addition to the team Karen Cloghesy. Karen is the teacher this year and our classes are now being held in the VCLA building in Kentville. Karen is a great teacher and I am looking forward to completing this term and achieving my goals.

## **My Right to Life-long Learning**

**Jolena Cassidy - Barrington Community Learning Center**

I appreciate my right to learn; it's a gift I will always treasure. I can not imagine my life without education.

I am grateful that it's free, and I'm proud of myself for taking the first step. My instructors are great and understanding. They push me when I slow down, help me when I'm not sure, and send words of encouragement when they're needed most. I have the right to learn and I'm worth it!

My confidence as an adult learner has exploded. I feel so smart. I realize how much I need this; what a great life I'll have with my education. I'll have so much more to offer the world, to offer my children. I'm showing my children how important education is. Young or old, when you put your mind to something, you can accomplish it.

I'm encouraging others around me to give all they have to life-long learning. I hope that I'm setting the example that if I can do it, they can do it.

My children themselves are a life-long learning experience to me. Every day, I learn. I learn how to cook, how to play new games, how to deal with life's unexpected challenges.

I love to learn and hope that I will always have the ability, interest, and love for it until the end of time.

I am an adult learner. I am a role model!

Equality

Diploma

Understanding

Communication

Adult

Teaching

Instructions

Opportunity

Knowledge

## **Me as a Learner**

### **Robyn Miller - NSCC Cumberland Campus**

They say that from the second that you come in to the world you are a learner and that you continued to be a learner all your life. Each and everyday that goes by, I know that for myself that this statement is true.

First, I know my reasons for continuing my education. Be able to answer the question: 'Why am I doing this?' In this way I am properly motivated to reach my goals. I needed to decide what materials I may have needed for the journey. I found that much had changed since I last stepped into the classroom I started to feel that I won't fit into the college, that it maybe too expensive, that there may not be enough time in the day to get everything done, it would take forever to complete what I needed for the ALP, what if employers won't view the degree (or certification) as credible. After a time I learned quickly that those fears were actually unwarranted. By taking each fear one by one, I began to understand what these current students now know and how glad they are that they didn't let their fears hold them back and I wasn't going to be one of the students to let the fear hold me back

Second, I started to set realistic goals for myself. I needed to give myself a little time to reacclimatize myself to the educational environment. I didn't and don't apply pressure to myself to be the class valedictorian. I also take the time to determine how much is too much. I am a single mom with many medical problems. So I prepare to make wise use of my time each and everyday.

Third, I use my advantage as an experienced adult. I have chosen to use the avenue of education to better myself. I am not intimidated by those students who are half my age cause each and everyone learns different than anyone else. I have definite reasons for attending my classes. I remain focused on them each and everyday I am not in school just to earn a grade, I am there to define a part of my life. In fact, I am not surprised when and if the instructor calls on my for real-life examples of classroom material. I have a distinct advantage over some other students because you can associate the education with real experience. I am pleased at the number of younger students who want to know me better for what I know better.

Fourth, I use all of the resources at my disposal. This includes getting to know my instructors and counselors and always ask questions. Teachers expect students to ask questions and often use feedback to direct subsequent lectures and class exercises. I remember the old adage 'the only stupid question is an unasked question'? It still applies!

Fifth, I always try finish what I started! Sure my medical problems may stop me from time to time but I push myself to finish what I started. However, for me it is still important for me to complete the program, even if it means 'toughing it out'.

Believe me; I know that my satisfaction upon successful completion of my goals will be well worth the effort.

Sixth, I plan to look ahead. That's right! I can see what I can and have accomplished with a little extra effort. I know that one day I will have the degree that I am wanting and be able to use that degree for the job that I am wanting.

Seventh (and last of all!), I enjoy what I have done! So I didn't get an 'A' on that assignment. That's ok. I know more now than I did before? I always take a little time to celebrate and reward myself (and the family that has put up with me for the past few months). After the celebration I make an assessment of where I stand as a result of my new education. Later I will decide if more is better, or if I am content with my current status. By the way, I can't enjoy this if I don't complete#5!

## **As Time Goes By** **Douglas Oakley - Cunard Learning Centre**

Hi, I would like to write about myself. I am a man with two grown kids; one has two kids of his own. My daughter is getting married in October. They both have a good education; my wife has a good education, why don't I have one? I worked hard all my life. I always tried to better myself by going to night school; I tried so many times at different courses.

I hurt myself in ninety-seven and couldn't go back to work; I was in lots of pain. I spend a lot of time by myself just sitting around rocking in the rocking chair. I didn't want to do anything because I was in so much pain. I had to keep a diary for  
Compensation so I was doing lots of writing and reading.

I was reading a newspaper one day and saw an ad at Landmark East School for an Adult Evening Class. It was a good course. I had to drive up to Wolfville four nights a week. I did that from September to April. It was a long winter. The funding only lasted that winter, so I tried to go back to work. I didn't last too long before I hurt myself again.

So I was back home again in that old rocking chair. Someone told me that the library had some people that would help me, so I went and got a tutor. We lasted three years together. I was sad when she left; my whole dreams seem so far away.

Now I am attending the Cunard Learning Center. I have been going there for some time now; they have some good instructors there. I hope to go to the Community College in September. I already have a trade, I was lucky to get into it way back a long time ago. Now you need a good education to do just about anything. I would like to be a tutor some day or a motivational speaker but you can't be one of those things until you have a grade twelve education, I hope to get it in the next couple of years.

I just had my sixtieth birthday and I am still dreaming.

## **My Journey in ALP**

### **Michelle Myra - NSCC Akerley Campus**

Over the years, I remember driving by the Akerley campus so many times and staring up at it and wondering what it would be like to be part of that experience. I had a grade seven education, so attending NSCC was only a dream.

In 2004 my life changed when I separated from my husband and moved to Fall River with my three kids. I was scared and nervous and I relied on my family for support. I decided to make the best out of my situation and better myself, not just for me but for my kids as well. I started to research different avenues and found the Adult Learning Program (ALP).

On January 5, 2006 I walked in the doors of the NSCC, and man I was nervous, and I was only here to pick up an application. I procrastinated bringing my application back I thought I am not smart enough, and I would never be able to understand or do any of the high school courses. I had very low self-esteem. My family convinced me to send my application. Sometime in March I received a letter that stated I had an appointment with Joy Coldwell on June 7, 2008.

When June came, I was a nervous wreck right up until the day of my appointment. I will remember that day for the rest of my life. I walked in that day apprehensive, excited, and squeamish. Then Joy walked out and had the most amazing persona, and right away I started to relax. We went into her office and talked. Joy gave me equivalence test and it wasn't as hard as what I thought. The algebra through me off, I had never done it before. Joy asked me to read some vocabulary words and we talked at great length about what my goals and plans were for the future, and at that point, my only plan was to get my grade twelve. As I walked out of her office, I knew right away that I had made the right decision to go back to school. That day I walked in to the school hesitant and anxious, and walked out a Nova Scotia Community College student.

September 5, 2006 couldn't come any quicker. I felt like a real high school student. My kids laughed and teased me about getting ready for school that day; my entire family was gleaming with pride. I arrived an hour before orientation just so I could look around. I was amazed at how many adults were coming back to school. I remember on the last day of orientation Ray Williams was speaking and he asked us to close our eyes and imagine walking across the stage at the Rebecca Cohn receiving your grade twelve diploma. As I closed my eyes, I visualized that moment and felt my entire emotions rise and had a tear run down my cheek. I still get emotional thinking about graduation.

Monday was the first day of classes; I walked into communications and immediately sat in the first row. I looked around the room and felt comfortable because everyone was here for the same reason. Ray Williams was the instructor he gathered us all together and took a picture so he could put names with faces.

That was a great ice breaker. All of my instructors that first year were so helpful, they explained everything and that helped me from feeling so overwhelmed.

Everyday I looked forward to coming to school, and for the first time in my life, I enjoyed learning and didn't feel stupid. I live in Fallriver and we have no buses, my journey to school starts at 5:45am. At 6:15am my drive picks me up and takes me as far as Sackville where I catch the 87 to Dartmouth at 6:51am and then the 10 Westphal bus to school and I arrive at 7:20 am. I travel the same way to get home only I don't arrive until 5:30pm and then it's supper and homework, both for the kids and myself.

I have made a great group of friends in ALP we study and work together in class, lunch and every free period. ALP wasn't just about getting my grade twelve; it was giving me back my self-esteem and helping me find myself.

My first year, I completed level three and most of level four in that one year with an 80 or above average, and that was just unbelievable. Not only did my confidence start coming back, but I also became class rep for ALP. I attended meetings and became involved with school activities, I had become part of the college, and I felt important. Soon after I planned a Meet & Greet Social for the ALP students and faculty, I had become a social butterfly in school, helping anyone and everyone I could. The year ended, but my friendships with everyone lasted over the summer, as we talked about how much fun we were going to have in September. Over the summer, I decided to run for President of the Student Association.

September 10, 2007 couldn't come fast enough for me. I was back in my element this is where I belonged. I was stronger and more confident than ever. As I walked down the hall I saw all the familiar faces and everyone laughing and smiling. I ran for president and won I had now accomplished something else that I never thought possible, and I was the first ALP student in the Akerley campus to win President of the Student Association. I want the ALP's to be more involved and feel as important as I do.

On June 23, 2008, I graduate from ALP, and I have mixed emotions. I'm excited to finally have my grade twelve and yet a bit sad. ALP has helped me to grow as a person and find the strength to continue on to a career I have chosen in human services. I will miss all my instructors and fellow students. Choosing ALP was the smartest choice I have ever made. I plan to attend the Human Service course this September 08. My long term goal is working with women in transition and helping them find their way back into the community with job training and their grade twelve through ALP. It's funny I always thought I was getting to old to go back to school, but now I realized my life has just begun at forty.

## Learning for Me

### Lynn Donnelly-Burns - Colchester Adult Learning Association

Learning for me is a goal I've set for a long time ahead. I want to read and write better and to get my grade 12 in 5 years. This is my future and walking back into learning has been a long road. The door to learning by getting over my shyness and a disability has been hard. Most of my classmates don't know and I don't tell them too much about it. I've found learning has made me more outgoing and things I'm learning have improved so much. With higher self-esteem, I can accomplish most anything I put my mind to. I have a positive attitude and will never give up no matter what happens. A better education is with a wonderful teacher who helps me. The best motivators for learning are interest and self benefits. I enjoy writing and have contributed to some books:

In *Over the Mountain 2*, the title of my writing is "The Man in the Picture". In the book called *IN OUR WORDS* volume 3, the title is "Reading to the Moon". Also, I had a recipe in the cookbook called "Food for Thought" put out by students in the adult learning program of Colchester Adult Learning Association and General Arts and Science Program at the Nova Scotia Community College, Truro Campus. My recipe is called One Pot Soup. There will be a story of mine published by We Learn, Women Expanding Literacy Education Action Resource Network in the USA. I would love to go to New York on March 7th to the Celebration of Student Writing, but I'll not be going. However, I will receive my copy of *Women Perspectives* in late March. I wrote about Women and Money and my writing is called "Kindness of a Neighbor".

I still need my dictionary for all my writing but that's ok. I'm enrolled in a computer course and that will help with my goal to be in a computer business someday. My future goals are to read out loud in class and learn to do online banking and write cheques. It's never too late to learn if the door is open. If I never walked through that door of learning I never would be where I am now. This is a very big achievement for a shy lady with a disability. I can apply my new skills to my life and read more books, magazines, recipes, and work bank machines. So many doors have opened to me by learning and setting goals. I've read this little writing by Jane Evershed.

"To read is to empower  
To empower is to write  
To write is to influence  
To influence is to change  
To change is to live"

This really makes me think how learning helps change my life.

**Returning to Learning has done for me.....**  
**Ron Higgins - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

Returning to learning has done for me; it opened my wings and let me soar free.

I was given a second chance to look at the "world" through my mind with books in a way I never before got to see.

Life long learning is my personal legend, for when the time comes the future will reveal what I am truly meant to be.

As I said in the beginning it opened my wings wide by letting me soar, for I see not challenges, but opportunity.

In the end I am proud to show each and every one of you this is what returning to learning has done for me.

## **Success as an Adult Learner**

### **Tanya Jones - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

Going back to learning as an adult has done more for me than I ever dreamed it would have. I wish I have taken this step long ago, but I always said things happen for a reason.

I went through many difficulties and tried to make the right decisions with out doubting myself. But I was so good at struggling along. It turned out that by doing this I had let myself down from my own education.

I finally became tired of these emotional feelings of being abnormal, and lacking self esteem when looking for work. I've always been hiding behind anything where success might be. I was great on underestimating what I was good at.

My self worth so low that I came to recognize that it really came down to believing in what I could do. If I didn't believe in myself, then who would? This time around I have more motivation and determination to reach my dreams. My goal is to go for my academic grade 12 by attending CALA- Colchester Adult Learning Association.

Now the difference in learning is clear. I'm a single mom and that has made me the person who I am today. It makes me want to reach even harder for my dream. Learning as an adult has brought me to my life long dream.

## **Supporting a Dream**

### **Heather Smith - NSCC Burridge Campus**

As I started in the ALP Program at NSCC it was a huge challenge for me. The problems of learning how to study, write tests, do assignments and keeping a schedule was a serious obstacle for me. With the help of NSCC having different workshops available to teach me how to handle these obstacles, I was able to settle in a bit easy.

The first assignment I passed in was very “nerve wracking”. Before the teacher graded it I left the class because of my fear of being marked on an assignment. It had been years since I had been graded on anything. When I returned to the classroom, to my surprise, I passed! In fact, I passed with a very high mark. A 95%. This was such a relief. Now my fears of being unable to complete and writing tests without going blank, would be overcome.

The faculty and staff at NSCC were more than accommodating. If a test was to be written, I would have access to a quiet room to study for and write the tests. There were no distractions. As for my fear of tests, that soon disappeared too.

It seemed every obstacle in my way was disappearing. The faculty would help me to get over these. Therefore, I have a team in my corner at school. There was nothing to stop me.

At home there are three children and my husband, who help and support me. We share responsibilities so long as I take weekends off for them. With all the love and support backing me towards my goal, I must move forward and give it my all for my dreams to come true.

Obstacles dropped behind me as I moved over them. It's with the support and my own determination that a diploma will be put in my hand. On that day of accomplishing my dreams I will remember the faculty, staff, friends and family that supported me through it all.

When my secondary course comes around all these challenges will be faced again with a more positive attitude. For now I know what is expected from me and how they will be met. With my English teachers from ALP preparing me for the future year and my secondary course, Continuing Care, there should be no excuses for me falling behind.

The NSCC – ALP course is not only adult learning; it is an enormous support system that actually became my left hand. Again, another goal will be achieved as I walk across the stage again and receive another well-deserved diploma, giving me a certificate to enter into continuing care.

I will have a huge sense of accomplishment of having two of my dreams come true.

## **How Adult Learning Has Helped Me!**

### **Kendra Jodrey - Hants Learning Network Association**

Adult learning has helped me through a lot of things. I now know how to do most math and I know how to write sentences.

It is sometimes easy and sometimes hard, fun and lots of laughter

I was scared to come to school because I was afraid of people making fun of me. When I was in school before, people made fun of me and I got mad and I would do really stupid things and I would get kicked out of school.

I really like it here because no one makes fun of me and I have lots of fun. I would recommend to the older people who don't have an education to go back to school because they would have lots of fun.

## **Me as a Learner**

### **Theresa Cavanagh - Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council**

Hello, my name is Theresa Cavanagh and this is my story. I was born in Ontario and had problems in school with not being there that much because I was in and out of the hospital. (I was born with cerebral palsy).

When I was growing up, it was hard for me to learn reading and math. I got help a lot in school. Because we moved so much, I was in five different schools in Ontario. I went for Primary to Grade 2 at the first school, then I went to my second school and it was called J R Wilcox. The level that I went to was Grades Three to Five. I went to Tom Payne Public School. I went there from Grades Five to Eight. Frank Oak Secondary School was for Grades Nine to 10/11. I went to Hayden Park Secondary School to work toward credits in Grades 10 and 11 and get Grade 12 credits in Merchandising and Food Preparation. I traveled an hour and a ½ to get to school and I ended up getting sick.

I was 21 when I went to the Niagara Regional Literacy Council, and told them that I needed some help in my reading and math. They suggested that I get some testing and then they put me with a tutor named Tom. I spent four years with him and then we had problems getting together.

The second year I was with Tom, I presented a certificate to him for being there for the Literacy Council when I needed him. Tom made a difference in my life when he was with me for 5 years. He was proud of my accomplishments and he was a good tutor. I wish that he did not have to leave.

Then I met my husband, Mark, and he has helped me with my reading and math and life in general. Our son came in to our lives in 2001. I spent my time with him for the next three years. I read to him and when he started school I tried to help him with his homework, but it was hard.

I started work at a three-star hotel in Port Hawkesbury in 2004. I was a dishwasher and they moved me to food preparation before I left. I had difficulties doing my job after a fall so I had to leave.

Once again I found myself in need of a literacy upgrading program. I contacted the Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council to upgrade my reading and math skills. My goal this time around is to attain my GED so I may improve my employment skills and be better able to help my son. I would like to have my own business and put my disabilities behind me.

## **The Rights of Adults**

### **John Bermingham - Colchester Adult Learning Association**

Adults all have rights. An adult often does not realize some of the rights that they have. I was unaware until I came to Colchester Adult Learning Association [CALA] that I had the right to learn. I believe that I am having a good experience as an adult learner. I have a passion for information and learning new things. That's one of the reasons that I came to CALA.

I think that people should understand that education is one of the most powerful tools in this world.

Education is like a standing army inside your head. Each part of knowledge is a way to influence people and a way of passing knowledge onto other people.

When we pass on our knowledge and our students become very good themselves then we know that we are a good teacher. People get too caught up in their knowledge that they often forget their past. In the past not everybody could learn. I would like to pass on knowledge about the bagpipes. To teach other peoples the pipes. If a teacher sees a student who is happy in class then a teacher can have a good feeling.

In the Western world we take education for granted. We should not have this view. People in Africa and Asia want to be educated but cannot afford to be educated. This is terrible. It seems that Africa can be educated if a government decides to educate. The governments spend too much time purchasing their AK-47s and do not bother to educate their populations.

I like to show people new ways of learning or different ways of thinking about a subject or a fresh way to learn something new. Too many people do not try to look at the good things in life. I know that myself. I am often negative. But I just do what I can and I try to take life one day at a time. If somebody asked me how I would live then I would say day by day. I do not want to be a loser when it comes to my education. I want to work hard and be a winner. If I can learn the value of human life, then so can everybody else. Never give up on your education. Always fight to the end.

I know that Winston Churchill is my idol. Churchill did not do well in school because he was dyslexic and he was depressed. Churchill still became a famous leader, he never gave up. He kept working hard. One of Churchill's secretaries Marian Holmes said that he used to stay up until 3 to 4 am in the morning reading and writing documents. At the time Churchill was already 65 years old, but he did not let old age stop him from working hard. Churchill once said that, "If I snap at you it's not because I am thinking of you, it's because I am thinking of the work". Churchill is the way all of us should lead our lives. Hard working and diligent right up to the end of our lives. Never give in. I had to work hard at writing this essay.

Writing is one of my favorite activities. It is a way to record my thoughts. Then I can look back at my thinking. I would encourage everybody to write a journal.

I taught myself how to read when I was 3 years old. I started on National Geographic. A parent should read to their child every night before bed. It's a very healthy activity for a parent and child. Children should always read. People who can read should.

Never ever forget these words of wisdom. Keep reading. Never be afraid to voice an opinion. Take your time to educate your mind. But don't wait too long because life is short.

I am trying to have an unconquerable spirit where my education is concerned. We all must embark on the lifelong journey of learning. It's never too late and we are never too old to learn. I think that my horizons have broadened since I came to CALA. I feel proud of adult learners and the fact that they are willing to go back to school long after they had finished public school. I believe that if adult learners educate themselves they can inspire other adults. The more adults we have in school the better.

People don't realize that even after we are retired from our jobs we are still learning new things. I would encourage adult learners to educate themselves about other cultures as much as possible. Knowledge is the key to life. Start learning.

## **Never to Old to Learn**

### **Tom Dooley - NSCC Pictou Campus**

Being classed as an "older worker" these days, and at the same job for thirty years, makes the all familiar statement, "You must be getting ready to retire soon," annoying. I am 54 years young and a part time student in the Adult Learning Program at NSCC, Pictou Campus. It is a refreshing and self rewarding experience. Learning a new set of skills and carrying on life long learning is a great way to reintroduce one's self to the job market. We older workers have much to offer potential employers, such as life experience and work experience. This makes for great flexibility in an employee for those employers who require this.

I am often referred to as a "Baby Boomer." When you hear this term, the next thoughts are about the aging workforce and retirement. About eighty-five to ninety percent of the workforce my age are not ready to retire, and like myself, are hoping for something new. I am referring to meaningful work that offers an opportunity to show potential employers there is much older workers and ALP graduates have to offer. I don't speak for all adult learners but I suspect those that attend any Adult Learning Program, do so because there is a desire to learn new skills. We, as ALP students, are encouraged to take that second kick at the can, so to speak. Just being in a learning environment where teachers always have the time to offer advice and direction, is important and necessary for life long learning to be effective.

The teachers are the heroes of this story as well as the students themselves, because without the teachers' and their dedication to Adult Learning, we would become discouraged. It doesn't matter whether you're out of school for one year or thirty years. What is important is the desire to carry on and pursue learning. This has many benefits, including setting examples for our children and grandchildren. Future employers of those graduating from the ALP program can be assured that there is a level of integrity that would prove to be an asset for any company offering things like: on the job training or apprenticeship programs.

Employers of Nova Scotia will hopefully get on board with the idea that older workers and ALP graduates offer old fashioned work ethics and can make for great employees. It is unfortunate that so many of our young people are travelling to the western provinces but ALP graduates from NSCC, will offer a pool of workers to choose from that is second to none. It is not easy these days for some of us to be competitive in the workforce and compete for jobs. Being twenty years old or sixty years old, learning has no boundaries and the only requirement is the desire to learn. The task of learning has no age restrictions and knowledge is not heavy to carry around.

## **What I Think Of Adult Learning**

### **Jude Johnson - NSCC Waterfront Campus**

When I was at school before as a teenager, I didn't like the rules and the teachers were not helpful to me. Because of this I stopped going to school and I didn't get my high school diploma. Without school, I felt like I wasn't going to be anybody important. Years passed. I got older and realized I needed to clean up my act. With my parents' encouragement I thought about going back to school and made the right choice on coming back.

What I think of adult learning program is that all the teachers are very nice and they try to help everyone who needs it. This is very different than what I had dealt with before, and because of that I will probably stay in school this time. The teachers are very competent and assured about the way they teach to the students. I think that everyone who hasn't finished Grade 12 should come back to school and enter this program to succeed at getting their diploma to make a better living for themselves. I like the program very much because there are very good people here and they help anyone who is struggling.

I am doing very well in the program because I am keeping up with the work and the teachers are not so pushy at trying to get things done so that I can work at my own pace, still succeed and not get kicked out of the program. The program can be very difficult at first if you haven't gone to school in a couple years, but the way the teachers teach and show you how to do things makes it a lot easier to understand what you are trying to focus on in a certain subject.

I am very happy with the program and the pace that I am moving. Because I am very comfortable in the program, my attendance and my behavior are good. I am not getting into trouble and therefore am succeeding. I think that we have the best teachers that anyone could have. Every student has confidence, because the teachers never let anyone fall behind. In the ALP Program, every person is important.

## **Becoming an Adult Learner**

### **Billy Wood - NSCC Waterfront Campus**

There are many reasons why I chose to become an adult learner; from dead-end jobs and very little income, to the joys of welfare. NSCC is allowing me the opportunity to gain my high school diploma and further my education in hopes of achieving meaningful employment and providing a secure atmosphere for my children.

Making the decision to return to school as an adult an adult learner was not easy. The little bit of money which I was used to making was not going to be there anymore and school would be taking a large portion of my time. Coming from a family that did not graduate from high school took the pressure of finishing away from me, but I now realize how important it is to get that diploma and to continue on with your studies. When it came down to it, I knew that I had to make this decision for my children because they deserve to have the best possible future and I will do whatever I have to do to provide for them.

I feel that being an adult learner, returning after more than three years away from a school environment, poses many challenges. It is one thing to come to college right after high school graduation while your student skills are still intact, but it is an extremely challenging task to reapply yourself to a classroom setting and to apply yourself to your studies. There are times when I sit in class and question my being here. There are many other things I can picture myself doing; many other things that sound a lot better than what the classroom is offering, but the reality is, that if I leave now, I will be here again in a few years' time and it will be harder then.

So here I am – Nova Scotia Community College – the Adult Learning Program. I am making this commitment for myself because I deserve a better life. I made this commitment for my children, not only because they deserve the best life can offer, but because I want to be a positive role model for them.

Returning to school as an adult learner has changed me in a lot of ways and all of them are positive. I am more confident in my skills and I no longer doubt myself as often as I used to. I feel that I am more useful to the working world and that I will be more useful as a father when my kids start going to school. I feel that I can be a better person in life in general. I will be an adult learner for the rest of my life. I actually have an interest in learning new things. I realize how important it is to be a lifelong learner and I will apply that attitude to everything I do in my future. I have no regrets about becoming an adult learner. It will benefit me and my family forever.

## **Second Chance to Last a Life Time**

### **Patricia Burgess - NSCC Waterfront Campus**

Ever since I was a little girl, I dreamed of being a nurse or social worker. I worked hard and struggled to stay in academic courses. I was also involved in a variety of extracurricular activities and baby sat to earn some money.

To be the only one in my immediate family to graduate high school put a lot of pressure on me to succeed. I struggled. My grandmother, with whom I was very close, died of a stroke a week after my sixteenth birthday. It was like losing a parent; she was there all my life. I had a hard time dealing with this and decided to move to Halifax with my boyfriend and his parents.

I moved thinking I would have better chance at a successful life. I continued to struggle through school with no help from anybody. I did not graduate and my options were limited. Without work experience, jobs were hard to find. I began working at two restaurants to make a living. The only way I got the job was to tell my employer I'd work for experience not pay. He agreed but paid me at the end, amazed and impressed that I was actually willing to do this. For the first time in my life, someone who had nothing to gain, helped me get ahead. I stayed there until my daughter, Ocean-Lee was born. I stayed home with her for a few years and worked in a few places in good positions. However, with no high school diploma, wages were low and there was little chance to get ahead.

Deciding I needed to do something, I contacted NSCC for information on programs to get my high school diploma so I could enter a program that would lead to a career. I was directed to another agency where I got more helpful information. Again, I found there were people out there wanting to help instead of needing something from me. It was their positive energy and direction that encouraged me to make this big step; my second chance to last a life time. I enrolled in ALP. I knew that I faced drastic changes with child care, finances and home life and was very nervous yet excited at the same time.

I am confident that the strengths I bring to the program will help me get the most out of it. I have great communication skills and work well with others. I am a fast paced worker and work independently. I take pride in a job well done and motivate myself to complete whatever project I may be working on. The teachers in this program are clearly here because they want to be. Some of them have their doctorates, some are overdue for retirement, and most have a hundred sick days racked up. This again shows me that people are there for me and not themselves.

I recommend ALP to anyone without a high school diploma. I wish I had had this program and these resource people to help me when I was twenty years old. If I had, I would be further ahead. Now I am at a point in my life where I don't just want this diploma, I *need* it and it makes it very important to me.

## **School's Cool**

### **Lana Brown - Dartmouth Literacy Network**

I left High school in grade 11 when I was 19 because I had become pregnant. I had a lot to plan for so school didn't fit into my schedule at that time in my life. Up until then I always had a hard time learning in different schools because I was moved around a lot. Also it didn't help that some of the teachers I had didn't work with us one on one.

September 19, 2005, my son was born. My life was completely turned around. I began to take everything seriously, and thought a lot about how important education was to me in so many different everyday issues. As I had to learn how to be a mom, I needed to know how to care for an infant, how to multi-task. I needed to know how to handle money like to keep a solid budget. I needed to know how to plan for our future, achieve goals, and have a scheduled routine in life.

I am now attending the Dartmouth Literacy Program. I would just like to say that it is a more positive experience than the previous one, and I am learning and understanding my work like I never imagined I could. I plan to complete this program and move on to Akerley, to attend the Adult Learning Program and get my adult high school diploma. I would like to study my options for University, then continue on to my future career.

## **Lifelong Learning**

### **Nancy Horne - Guysborough County Adult Learning Association**

Life may begin at 19 for some, but in some cases life starts at 40. Don't ever think or give up on your hopes and dreams. You will realize one day that life goes on. You always continue to learn and grow, making changes throughout life.

I used to think that my life consisted of staying home raising three children and looking after my home. Having no social life I was trying to do the best I could for my children.

Then I met Patricia MacDonald. Patricia is compassionate, understanding and a good listener. We talked about what would interest me as my long term goals, and what was holding me back.

She introduced me to portfolio and it showed me many skills that I had. I was afraid at first. By the end of the course the more I learned about myself, the more I wanted to continue learning.

I started to set small goals for myself by taking a couple of computer courses.

Then my older sister became involved with GALA (Guysborough Adult Learning Association) and I made a comment that I would like to some upgrading. I was determined to start at the Nova Scotia Community College in September 2008.

I took the first step on applying to NSCC for Office Information and Technology. Never would I have expected to hear from them so quick. About a month later I got my acceptance letter saying that I got into the O.I.T. program. All I had to do was send money to hold my seat.

While I waited to start at NSCC, I decided to take courses to re-educate myself. I forgot everything after 20 years of not being in school.

I assure you I cannot wait to get his ball rolling so that when I graduate I can finally get a job I can enjoy.

A special thank you to Patricia MacDonald who always knew I was able to fulfill any goal that I set myself to do, and gave me the self-confidence I never had before.

Just because I am 40 does not mean the options of learning lessen for me. You may have to put every bit of effort towards it, but in the end you will find your self-worth.

## **Three Tries at My Education**

### **Wayne Baltzer - Valley Community Learning Association**

I was held back until I was six years of age because I had a speech problem. Then I got to grade two and had a very troubled teacher who disliked boys. I was having visual problems, and I was very shy. Because of that I couldn't proceed to the next grade. I went through grades 3, 4, and 5. At the end of grade six the school was not going to let me proceed to the next grade, but I was given an option to take a new program held at Horton High School. I only had a grade two literacy level when I was in grade six, so going through the 7,8 adjusted classes was very difficult for me, but I got through and made it to grade 9. Only three days into grade nine, I was told I had to write a composition and then stand up and read it in front of the class. I wasn't ready for this and ended up getting frustrated. I left school.

In the winter of 1991 I took the 40-hour course for preparation for G.E.D, but I found it very difficult and didn't try again for another nine years. Then in November 2001 I went and got tested to see what level I was at. I was lined up with a tutor and we worked together for a year. We used to meet in his truck because there was nowhere else to go.

I was asked if I would like to be tutored in a group of people or one on one and I chose one on one because I would be too nervous with a group. In Jan. 2003 I was matched up with a new tutor and we worked on the Laubach Way to Reading Books 2, 3, and 4 then the Voyager book for reading and writing also Focus on Phonics 1, 2, 3.

I took a test and was put in level 1 and then, I was moved to the level two classes. On Feb. 04, 2005 I had to quit the classes and find a job so I could support my family.

I wrote my G.E.D. in April 15 and 16, 2005 but I didn't pass. I kept on with my tutor two nights a week.

In 2005 when I was on Unemployment they sent me over to the Valley Disability Partnership Society. I was tested for Dyslexia and I was diagnosed with Dyslexia

June 21, 26, 27 I wrote my G.E.D again, but this time with tapes so I could hear the words better and I passed all of them but one (the essay) - I missed that one by 10 points. So I started to get tutoring in that one subject Language Arts, Writing. I wrote that final exam Nov. 28, 2006, and passed it.

With my GED certificate I was able to get an interview with Michelin Tire, and on Feb. 12 2007 I was hired!

## **Back to the Future**

### **Anne Landry - NSCC Waterfront Campus**

When I decided to apply for the Adult Learning Program, I remember saying to the counselor, "I think I might be too old to go back to school." She looked at me supportively and said, "Anne, you're never too old to go back to school for education." I will never forget what she said. So, now I'm back to the future in our classroom at the Waterfront Campus – room 4020 – enjoying the ALP. I chose this program because it was recommended to me as one of the best programs available.

I never finished high school and I felt I was missing something (that piece of paper). I wanted a career change as well. I worked for B.C. Ferries for nine years. It was a great government paying job. I just didn't want to do it all my life.

I have two wonderful children who are both in high school. I'm a single parent, so having older children in high school makes it easier for me to attend school on a full time basis so I can reach my goal of getting my high school diploma. As well, I would like to develop more skills and acquire knowledge in the program so I will have the ability and qualifications to explore more career choices. I would like to have a career in something I love to do. I don't want to settle for something I have to do.

Believe me. Returning to school has not been a 'bouquet of roses'. There have been many obstacles for me to cross and I'm sure there will be more. I discovered I had a learning disability and had to find resources to help me through the program. I also had a knee injury but determined, I attended class in a wheelchair while I recovered. I have a chronic back injury, financial stress and more, but I will not give up.

There have been times when I didn't want to come back, but with the help of faculty and my own determination to graduate, I'm still here. There is a lot of opportunity in the world but to succeed, you must have the courage, self-confidence and belief in your abilities to reach new goals.

After graduating from ALP, I plan to enter the dental field as a hygienist. I am very excited to complete ALP and enter this new field next fall.

I have come back to school to better my future. I am here to finally get my high school diploma and gain the knowledge I need to prepare me for my chosen career. Because I made the choice to come back to school, I hold the future in my hands.

## **We All Have the Right to Learn**

### **Barb Pottier - Halifax Community Learning Network**

When people look at me, they see a very confident, strong person. But inside, I am hiding a secret. For most of my life, I could not spell, or even read very well. Here I am, middle aged, in literacy classes.

Around this time three years ago, I was talking to my husband, about my problem. The next day, he brought me home a newsletter, from the library, on literacy classes. I thought about it, for a few weeks, should I call? I decided to. It was the best call I ever made.

So I know how people feel, when they make that decision. I could not even write a few sentences without feeling, "I cannot do this." Today, I am writing a lot more, reading, understanding and also using the computer. A whole new world has opened for me. I can communicate with the outside world, find information, go to learning sites, and just explore. Now I am 50, learning and I will never give it up.

As an adult learner, I know it is not easy. To admit you have a learning problem is like telling the world that you are stupid!!!! WRONG! SO VERY WRONG!! We all have the "right to learn" no matter if we have a problem, or life just got in the way. As a learner, I would like tell you I started with small goals, with each goal come some challenges.

I have a bigger goal now. I would like to help others, with learning problems. I may never be able to teach, but somehow, some way, I will get the word out. There is help out there, just do not give up. Believe in yourself. With faith the darkness, will turn into light, in our hearts and minds.

These days, I am more confident, and ready to move on with my life. I have just accepted a promotion at work, after 20 years, of being too scared to even apply. In these last few years, I have a new appreciation for writing, telling stories, reading letters and getting the word out there. I say to anybody with a learning problem, or who just got left behind, there are programs out there "free' for the taking, loving teachers to offer encouragement every step of the way.

I am now a life time learner!! It has not always been easy, but life is not easy. With a little help and faith we can have our dreams come true!