



## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future The Power of Adult Learning**

Submissions to  
Adult Learners' Week Contest  
March 2 – 9, 2009

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 Proclamation: Adult Learners' Week - March 5, 2009**

**WHEREAS** the Canadian Commission for UNESCO has declared March 2 through 9, International Adult Learners' Week and Nova Scotia joins UNESCO and over 40 countries in celebrating a campaign encouraging life long learning; and;

**WHEREAS** the Department of Labour and Workforce Development joins its many partners in providing adult learning opportunities and services to Nova Scotians who wish to upgrade their knowledge and skills; and

**WHEREAS** adult learners take it upon themselves to learn new skills to ensure they are ready to meet the changing demands of the labour market; and

**WHEREAS** Nova Scotians will be poised to meet the challenges leading to a well-balanced, skilled and knowledgeable labour force;

**THEREFORE** be it resolved that I, Rodney J. MacDonald, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of March 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to be "Adult Learners' Week" in the Province of Nova Scotia.

**Rodney J. MacDonald**  
**Premier of Nova Scotia**

## Introduction

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's International Adult Learners' Week, an annual event was especially important this year because of the theme, "Living and Learning for a Viable Future – The Power of Adult Learning".

For the second year Literacy Nova Scotia celebrated International Adult Learners' Week with a contest and an event.

The contest was a culmination of six writing workshops conducted for Literacy Nova Scotia by Jenni Blackmore; 83 learners participated in these workshops held in Truro, Liverpool, Middleton, Port Hawkesbury, Eskasoni and Middle Musquodoboit. The workshop participants as well as learners from other adult learning and English as a second language, seniors and workplace programs were invited to enter the contest. We received more than 80 submissions.

The contest winners were:

- **Adele Abu el hosn**, Cunard Learning Centre, Halifax, for the video category.
- **Marcia Jeffers**, LINK CCA Program, NSCC Truro Campus, for the community college and adult high school category.
- **Anne LeBlanc**, Équipe d'alphabétisation – Nouvelle-Écosse, Clare, for the community based category.
- **Earl Leslie**, Academic Skills Upgrading, Canada Bread Atlantic, Halifax, for the workforce development category.

The four winners of the contest were honoured at a reception held on March 5<sup>th</sup> at the Citadel Halifax Hotel. The winners read from their submissions to an audience of 70 people. Stu Gourley, Senior Executive Director of the Skills and Learning Branch, who represented the Premier, was presented with copies of the writings on behalf of Premier MacDonald.

All of the submissions received for the contest are published here. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all those who shared their stories and their enthusiasm for adult learning. These writings show clearly the power to be gained from learning opportunities and will inspire others for years to come.

## Table of Contents

### Winners

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**Adele Abu el hosn** – Cunard Learning Centre

- Video Category Winner <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RihKu6misw>

**Marcia Jeffers** – NSCC Truro Campus

**Anne LeBlanc** – Equipe d’alphabetisation – Nouvelle Ecosse (French)

**Anne LeBlanc** – Equipe d’alphabetisation – Nouvelle Ecosse (English)

**Earl Leslie** - Academic Skills Upgrading, Canada Bread Atlantic

### Honorable Mention

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**Sharon Healey** – NSCC Truro Campus

**Wanda Davis** – Kings County Adult High School

**Sharon Boudreau** – NSCC Pictou Campus

**Sandra Trapp** – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

**Kari Giles** – South Shore Work Activity Program

**Morgan Hiltz** – South Shore Work Activity Program

**Jack MacNab** – Colchester Adult Learning Association

**Elizabeth Rita Tancock** – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

### Other Submissions

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**Angie Boudreau** – NSCC Marconi Campus

**Katherine Bresson** – NSCC Marconi Campus

**Donna Zinck** – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

**Jolene Leopold** – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

**Yvonne Wilkinson** – NSCC Pictou Campus

**Sylvester Paul Jr.** – Unama’ki Training & Education Centre

**Steven Corbin** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

**Trina Hankey** – NSCC Truro Campus

**Patricia Langille** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

**Joan Reid** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

**Matt Dickie** – Colchester Adult Learning Association  
**Natalie MacDougall** – NSCC Strait Campus  
**Dianne Greencorn** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association  
**Sharon Cunningham** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association  
**Melissa Stevenson** – Colchester Adult Learning Association  
**Jessica Murray** – Colchester Adult Learning Association  
**Mary Knee** – Hants Learning Network  
**Debbie Logan** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association  
**Margaret Whynot** – Queens Learning Network  
**Lynn Donnelly-Burns** – Colchester Adult Learning Association  
**Mary Thompson** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Kathryn McDonald** – Queens Learning Network  
**Bev Reid** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Joanne Gamble** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Shelley Gorman** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Betty Bennett** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Angela Weatherby** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Rita Taylor** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Darlene Hill** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Janice Addicott** – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County  
**Barbara Duco** – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County  
**Ginette Thieren** – Richmond County Literacy Network  
**Jane Marchand** – Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council  
**Alanna Densmore** – NSCC Burrige Campus  
**Tara Bates** – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County  
**Danny Benson** – Dartmouth Literacy Network  
**Nancy Marshall** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Rubin Millard** – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading  
**Ronnie Holesworth** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Tina Surette** – NSCC Burrige Campus  
**Beth Brewster** – Kings County Adult High School  
**Shon Randell** – Amherst Adult High School  
**Lydia Parris** – NSCC Marconi Campus  
**Rayburne Whynot** – Queens Learning Network

**Jamileh Yousef** – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network  
**Eugene Munroe** – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network  
**Roy Allen** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Carrie Morrison** – NSCC Marconi Campus  
**Michelle Francis** – Unama’ki Training & Education Centre  
**Kerry Ann Fitzpatrick** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Kenneth McDow** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Heli Stanton** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**James Kehoe** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Jean Chapman** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Michael Muise** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Muriel Beals** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Sheila Deon** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Brenda Bailey** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Jolene Fitzgerald** – Yarmouth Learning Network  
**Stephanie McCulley** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Stephen P. Burrows** – NSCC Marconi Campus  
**Sarah Holesworth** – Halifax Community Learning Network  
**Bonnie Halliday** – Queens Learning Network  
**Ivan Sampson** – Colchester Adult Learning Association  
**Rachel Murphy** – Colchester Community Learning Association  
**Marlene Underwood** – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading  
**Connie Lowther** – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading  
**Wanda Newell** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association  
**John Hanlon** – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association  
**Lexi Landry** – NSCC Truro Campus  
**Holly d’Entremont** – Barrington Community Learning Centre  
**Gertrude Himmelman** – Barrington Community Learning Centre

## **Learning for a Viable Future**

Adele Abu el hosn – Cunard Learning Centre, Halifax  
Video Category Winner

**Watch the video on You Tube:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RihKu6misw>

Hello, my name is Adele Abu el hosn I was born in Mexico and moved to Lebanon at the age of 9. I was 17 when I got married and 19 when I lost my husband in the war.

I wanted to finish my education since then, so I tried to go back to school but the principal decided that my age and my marital status did not fit the school requirements.

In 2004, I came to Canada with my son to start a new life. Now my son is going to university next September and I am at the Cunard Learning Centre, in Level II of the Adult Learning Program.

First, I'd like to thank my teachers for being so helpful and supportive. This program, it's going to change my life. I can tell my future is going to be better. I have the feeling that I will be a success.

I really want to say thank you so much for everybody who is supporting this program, because there is a lot of people like me, they would like to finish their education and they don't have the opportunity, especially if they are from another countries.

This program, which is going to change my life and hundreds of peoples live whether they are from here or from out of this country. Our education is going to make our future stronger and brighter. We will have more confidence and we will be better prepared to support our families and our kids.

I want to get my high school diploma, to go to university, and start learning to become a pharmacist.

## **It's Like Trying to Explain How Water Tastes**

Marcia Jeffers – LINK CCA Program, NSCC Truro Campus

My voice has this funny way of cracking whenever I discuss my educational background with people. Employers, co-workers - even an old friend from high school I hadn't seen for eight years, because she moved to Toronto to attend university. She had managed to snag the career of her dreams, not to mention a bright, shiny condo overlooking the CN Tower from the southside. Talking to her was especially difficult because her dream job was a lot like my dream job, only she had actually achieved hers. To say I was jealous is an understatement. And when she asked me which university I had attended, my voice mirrored that of a pubescent boy's. "Actually, I left high school early to work and never did get the chance to go back." I told her, and inside I felt the distinct shrivelling of my pride.

I'd always intended to go back to school and finish where I'd left off. But for some reason, although my marks didn't necessarily reflect this, I hated school. The things I hated about it are hard to describe, sort of like trying to explain how water tastes. I suppose I had invisible hang-ups which prevented me from really feeling engaged with school and its challenges. It's difficult to remember at this point why I decided to drop out. I do know that I've regretted that decision nearly every single day for ten years.

Ten years holds a lot of remorse, you know? A decade's worth of repentance and all I'd learned was to be embarrassed by my status as a high school drop out. I wish I hadn't felt that way, and that I'd given myself more credit. I'm a hardworking, loyal individual with a multitude of skills and stellar references. That's nothing to be ashamed of, and yet in my mind it wasn't good enough. I desperately wanted my life to change, and to be able to hold my head up high. I wanted to stop worrying if my voice would split down the middle when I spoke about my background. I knew it was time to make education my priority, and address this struggle taking place within myself. So I took a chance and called the NSCC for an appointment. For better or worse, I'd finally put an end to my shame. And what an end it was.

I have gained exactly ten years worth of confidence in a matter of months, and I find myself practically shouting at people that I am an honest-to-goodness college student. "That's right," I tell everyone within earshot. "I'm in college!" Finally I am doing something worthwhile, and working towards a career that will add richness and texture to my life. A sense of purpose that will shape my future into one I can be proud of. I'm convinced I will bring my hard work to full fruition, because I knew enough to know I needed more.

Oh, and my voice doesn't crack when I tell people how well I'm doing in school.



## **J'ai soif**

Anne LeBlanc – Equipe d’alphabétisation – Nouvelle Ecosse, Clare

C’est tout à fait normal pour quelqu’un, de vouloir apprendre à écrire correctement sa langue maternelle. Pour moi, celle-ci est la langue française, mais ce n’est pas ordinaire qu’on a un tel désir assoiffé pour l’écriture.

Pendant mes années scolaires, je ne lisais pas de livres, qui n’étaient pas partis des matériaux de classes. Je ne prenais jamais un livre simplement pour le plaisir de lire. Une fois devenue adulte, et finie avec mes études, je ne lisais presque plus. J’étais ignorante du fait que j’étais défavorisée de cette pareille richesse.

Après plus de trente ans, ma carrière de coiffeuse fut réduite à un travail à temps partiel parce que mon arthrite était très grave. Il a fallu que je regarde ailleurs pour le futur, en cas qu’un jour je ne sois plus capable de continuer dans mon ouvrage. Je me suis inscrit au cours d’alphabétisation pour adultes. Ceux-ci m’ont ouvert les yeux et le coeur à la langue française. Elles m’ont permis de m’exprimer sur papier, ce qui m’était perdu depuis longtemps.

Parfois, je me trouve en train de rêver à mes aventures du temps passé. Je les revis clairement, comme s’ils s’étaient passés hier. Je trace les pas du voyage de la vie, qu’ont prient certaines personnes, de leur joie, de leur courage et de leur peine. Ma pensée est remplie de toutes sortes d’images vivantes. Je suis tourmentée à n’en plus finir pour les mettre sur papier.

De temps en temps, je suis inspirée par une chanson qui décrit une histoire, d’une manière touchante. Instantanément, je voudrais l’écrire en forme de roman. Autrefois, j’entends une phrase qui crée toutes sortes d’images détaillées dans ma pensée. Elle aussi me donne la soif pour écrire. Mon imagination aux couleurs vives peinture de nombreuses histoires amusantes.

Je me rends compte que toutes ces merveilles doivent leur origine au mot écrit. Je crois sincèrement que l’écriture est la forme de libération la plus forte. Elle permet à tous ceux et celles, qui peuvent lire, de surmonter les obstacles les plus difficiles, en les dirigeant d’une bonne manière d’agir, dans tous les domaines imaginables. Les pays lointains sont rapprochés, grâce aux revues et aux livres qui décrivent leurs caractéristiques distinctement. L’écriture nous donne du plaisir et nous informe de toutes les merveilles de l’univers.

Grâce à l’aide de l’Équipe Alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse pour mon apprentissage, je me suis lancé dans une recherche de fait historique, qui avec espoir, exigerait comme résultat, un vrai beau roman. Je serre très fortement, le rêve de me retrouver un jour sur « Live at 5 » portant le chapeau d’auteur.

## **I'm Thirsty** (English Translation for J'ai soif)

Anne LeBlanc – Equipe d'alphabetisation – Nouvelle Ecosse, Clare

It is quite normal for an individual, to want to learn how to write correctly his or her native tongue. For me this is the French language, however it is not ordinary to have such an insatiable thirst to write.

During my school years, I never read books that were outside my class curriculum. I never picked up a book simply for the pleasure of reading. Once becoming an adult and finished with my scholastic studies, I hardly ever read, leaving me ignorant to the fact that I was deprived of such treasures.

After nearly thirty years, my hairdressing career was reduced to part time work because of my arthritis. I had to look elsewhere for my future in the event that some day

I may not be capable to continue in my profession. At that time, I enrolled in French adult literacy courses. These opened my eyes and heart to the French language and have enabled me to express myself on paper, something that I had lost long ago.

Sometimes I find myself day dreaming of my adventures from the past. I relive them as clearly as if they happened yesterday. I trace the footsteps of some individuals as they walk through their journey of life, at their joy, at their courage and at their grief. My mind fills up with all sorts of vivid images and I find myself anxious to put them down on paper.

From time to time, I'm inspired by a descriptive and touching story found in a song.

Instantly the thought of writing a book comes to mind. Other times I'll hear a phrase which conjures up detailed pictures and gives me a thirst for writing. My brightly coloured imagination also paints many amusing stories.

I have come to the realization that all these marvellous things owe their origin to the written word. I honestly believe that literacy is the strongest form of liberation. It enables everyone who can read to conquer the most difficult obstacles by directing them on the right path in every avenue imaginable. Thanks to magazines and books, far away places are brought closer by describing in detail their distinct characteristics. They give us pleasure all the while informing us of the wonders of the universe.

Due to the help of Équipe Alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse for my studies, I am now launched in a historical facts finding research which will hopefully result in the writing of a great novel. I hold dearly the dream of one day finding myself on Live at 5, wearing my author's hat.

## **Workplace Education: A Reason to Celebrate.....**

Earl Leslie - Academic Skills Upgrading, Canada Bread Atlantic – Halifax

Reflection is a wonderful thing; a measuring tool, if you will. Measuring where we were, where we are, and where we can be, if we choose to embrace a positive attitude and a willingness to learn. As I begun my journey on the road of life long learning in 1999, workplace education gave me hope and a reason to believe that I can make a difference not only in my life, but also; in the lives of others.

As a participant in Academic Upgrading, Computer Basics, and Communication Skills programming, I have acquired skills that have proven to be invaluable not only in the rapidly changing workplace of today, but have become essential on a daily basis in my personal life.

Since 1999 I have been a volunteer representative of the Halifax Boys' Honour Choir, The choir is comprised of boys between the ages of 9 and 12 years, selected from various elementary schools within the Halifax City school system, by a process of auditions.

As their representative; I look after organizing fundraising initiatives, arrange public performance opportunities, maintain and control an inventory of uniforms, as well as; arrange support for the choir. Personally; I feel the choir is about so much more then developing great singing skills, it's about building character, self-confidence, professional behaviour and social skills, all of which are important lasting values.

Since 1999; the choir has grown from 27 boys to currently 52. Through hard work, determination and commitment, they have travelled and performed in all four Atlantic Provinces, Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, Ontario, and most recently; a tour of Southern Ontario.

In June of 2007 I was approached by Jonathan, a former chorister who has since grown into a fine young man on his way to university, Jonathan said "Mr. Leslie; I just want to say that I admire you for all your time working with the choir, you make such an incredible difference in each of our lives", needless to say; I was speechless. I have since learned that Jonathan has received a full music scholarship at McGill University.

In April of 2007; I was the project team coordinator for the first of two workplace education programs being introduced at Canada Bread, a Communication Skills program. The program was a tremendous success and upon completion each member of the class received a "BRAVO" award from the senior management team. I am currently project team coordinator and participant for a second Academic Skills program in our workplace.

As I reflect back on my involvement with workplace education, I quickly realize the benefits of learning new skills and the impact they can have on one's life. Although I do not take credit for the successes of my fellow employees or members of the

Halifax Boys' Honour Choir, I do take pride in knowing that I shared in their successes.

I sincerely believe that workplace education programs can open the doors of opportunity and enhance a person's life, regardless of age or level of education.

**Thanks to workplace education...each day I have a reason to celebrate!!**

## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future - The Power of Adult Learning**

Sharon Healey – LINK CCA Program, NSCC Truro Campus

Something that has always bothered me was the fact that I didn't complete high school when I was young. When you're young, you don't realize how leaving school could affect you in so many ways later in your life. I started working at minimum wage jobs and did ok, or so I thought. I married and had three children with whom I stayed at home with while they were young. As my children progressed through elementary school and then high school, I started feeling inferior and even ashamed of myself for my lack of education, not only in the academic sense, but also in the social and intellectual areas. My self-esteem and self worth hit an all time low. I didn't feel I was able to re-enter the workforce. After I separated from my husband, I was faced with this fact head on and slowly had to re-enter the real world with part time work. By this time, I thought I would never have the opportunity to obtain my high school diploma due to life circumstances, lack of time, and resources. I held various full time jobs that were low paying and had frequent lay offs.

A wonderful opportunity presented itself to me during my last lay off. A program where I could obtain my high school diploma, as well as a certificate to become a Continuing Care Assistant was being piloted. I applied and was accepted.

Although I have only been a student for four months, the positive changes in my life are amazing. My confidence and self-esteem are increasing daily because I am succeeding. At 42 years old, I am now experiencing the power of education. That is affecting every area of my life, informing me, encouraging me, and giving me a new outlook for my future. Returning to school as an adult can be scary, challenging, and difficult at times but the benefits to your whole person is more than worth it!

## **My Second Chance**

Wanda Davis - Kings County Adult High School

Everyone has the right to learn. It doesn't matter the age, or how long you have been out of school. Learning as an adult is not easy, but is something that people need to think about. With the way the world is changing, I decided to take one of the biggest steps of my life by returning to school.

I am 37 years old; I thought I was too old to return to school. When thinking about my life and where it was going, I realized that it wasn't going far with the education I have. Thinking I knew all I needed to know was wrong; my life was at a standstill. When I had found out that I had a second chance to go back to school, there was no hesitation about going. I made the decision to enrol at Kings County Adult High School where I found an atmosphere conducive to my learning. It was the best decision I made in a long time. I soon realized there was much I had forgotten and so much I needed to learn.

Since being back in school, my self-esteem is higher, and I feel good, which puts things in a whole new perspective for me. I take pride in the work I do. I have a better understanding of what needs to be done to improve my life. I am doing well so far, making 80s, 90s, even 100s, which I didn't think was possible.

There is not a day that goes by that I regret making the decision to further my education. More doors will open when I achieve what I need. Having a dream helps the process; it gives me a sense of focus. Once I receive my grade twelve diploma, I plan to go to the NSCC in Kentville and take a Business Administration course so that I can complete my dream. I want the chance to run my own ranch for I have a horse already and that is just the beginning. The more educated I am, the more I can help.

The sky is the limit,  
There is no doubt.  
The knowledge today,  
We can't do without.

## **Sharon's Story**

Sharon Boudreau – NSCC Pictou Campus

My name is Sharon Boudreau and I am a resident of Stellarton, Pictou County. I am a single mother of two grown children and have lived in here for over 14 yrs now; I have a grade seven education and have always wanted to get my grade twelve. In the summer of 2008 a good friend and fellow graduate of NSCC encouraged me to go back to school.

As I stood in the main lobby I remember thinking I have got to be out of my mind to think I can go back to school at my age. I couldn't have been more wrong that day was the first step to a new journey. The day of orientation was one filled with emotions; fear, anticipation, hopes, confusion and determination. Looking back over the year this was most definitely the best decision I ever made for my life.

I soon came to see why this campus was such a success, the faculty and structure of the Adult Learning Program was the best I have ever seen. I soon got over my fear of being too old to go back to school and embraced this great opportunity with an open heart and mind. There were six subjects a day including science, math, communications, career skills, computer, and social studies. Some of these subjects I breezed through with little or no problem others such as math gave me great difficulty.

I never worried too much about the problem areas as I knew I had supportive and understanding faculty that were right there to help me out. It wasn't long before I could see how certain subjects would help me greatly out in the work force. Career skills for example taught me how to do a professional resume and how to find the right job fields for the experience and qualifications that I already possessed.

I now know skills such as excel, spread sheets, power point, word and much more. I find being an adult learner has given me the confidence to move forward in areas I would never venture before. I've learned to appreciate through adult learning the power of learning and the commitment it takes to succeed I have also learned the value of networking. I'm confident that this journey in adult learning will give me the tools I need to become a successful business woman, and obtain the career I am searching for. I now know there is no such thing as the impossible. I now have the education, skills and confidence I need to move forward in my life. Adult learning has enriched my life in so many ways not only in school but in my personal life as well.

## **Sandra's Story**

Sandra Trapp - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Hi my name is Sandra Trapp. I am 46 years old and I never thought in a million years that I would be back in a learning program and be excited about learning again.

As a child going to school was a nightmare for me because I struggled everyday to learn what came so easy to others. I was not popular and I was teased everyday which made it even harder for me to learn. As I reached the higher grades I entered an adjusted class which wasn't any easier for me. With all the frustration I dropped out in 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Years later, I wanted to continue my education, but had a son and got married so I had to put it aside again. Now my son is grown and out on his own. I thought I would try to continue on where I left off years ago. On a good friend's advice I returned to a learning program. I have come to the Adult Learning Program and I really enjoy it. My teacher is great. She cares about each and every one of us. I also find myself eager to learn more each time. Now I have the chance to accomplish something I've wanted to do since I left school years ago which is to get my high school diploma. This is my first year in the Adult Learning Program. I'd like to continue on and maybe do something with this chance I have.

Education is one of the most important things to have in life. Everybody should have the opportunity to learn. For me I'm glad to have the chance to continue my education. Maybe someday I can help someone else.



## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future- The Power of Adult Learning**

Kari Giles – South Shore Work Activity Program

Before I graduated high school, I did not know where I was going to go with my life. There were a few ideas given to me, and one of them was an adult learning program. The program is called South Shore Work Activity Program, SSWAP for short.

Here I am learning about four basic work explorations. It also helps me to learn Math and English skills. There are a lot of different things I have learned from being in the program.

SSWAP is also a help for me in finding a part-time job. It is more difficult for people, like I, who have disabilities to find a job. This program is helping me to overcome my barriers, one of them being my disabilities, and to work out in the workforce doing something I enjoy.

This learning program is also helping me with going to college. You may ask “*HOW* is it helping me with going to college?” Well, by being at SSWAP I am getting hands-on experience from the four different work exploration areas. I am also getting hands-on experience from doing a job placement I enjoy.

SSWAP is really helping me overcome the barriers I have. Thanks to this program I feel more confident in finding a job that will accept my disabilities. The program is helping me to be more confident when it comes to my disabilities. Before I went to SSWAP, I was basically dependent on everyone or so it seemed. Everyone was treating me different and over-protecting me, but thanks to this program I am able to get a chance to do things more independently than I would have if I stayed home or went straight to college. Of course, before I even finished high school I was scared to death of going to college and moving away from home, but again it is SSWAP that is giving me more confidence every day. I will soon be able to move out on my own with cooking skills I never got at home that much and lots of other skills such as problem solving and computer skills.

Learning is an on-going, everyday thing. You are always learning. You learn to pick up things with your hands when you are a baby, and you learn all through school. But, learning does not stop after high school; you are still learning new things every day. You will never stop learning at all in your life. An adult learning new things is no different than a child learning new things. Learning new things can lead to success. Not one person knows everything in the world around us, and no one should expect us to. Learning new things helps us to grow as a person. Without the ability to learn, things would not change, people would not grow...and things would be pretty boring. Just remember, “Learning helps us to grow as a person!”

## **Adult Learning**

Morgan Hiltz - South Shore Work Activity Program

A few years ago, I wasn't thinking about getting my education, school was never for me. That had made looking for a job difficult. I had passed out resumes and applications to a lot of different places. It doesn't look good on a resume having just your grade nine.

I was talking to my boyfriend at the time, and he had just graduated the South Shore Work Activity Program and suggested that I look into it. I called the program and they set me up with an appointment. A few days later, I got a call, telling me that I could start in a couple of weeks. The same day I had a job interview, and I believe that starting the South Shore Work Activity Program had helped me out already.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 I started the South Shore Work Activity Program. Since then, I have learned so much. They set me up with my own councillor, who sat down with me and helped me write out a list of goals that I want to accomplish. The classes they teach have taught me skills that I now use everyday.

If it weren't for this program, I wouldn't have had as many opportunities to do things with my life. They have helped me accomplish things like taking The Food Handlers course, and my customer service skills have greatly advanced. I am currently taking First-Aid, studying for my driver's license, and the most important thing to me right now is that I am studying for my G.E.D. Once I get my grade twelve, I plan to further my education by going to community collage, so I can work in a day care.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Jack Mac Nab – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I would like for you to come back with me to the fall of 2007. It was my first day in school at Colchester Adult Learning Association (Cala). What I did that day was to take one of the biggest steps of my life. At 57 years of age, here I was face to face with my teacher. Looking around at my fellow students, I felt that my self esteem was at its lowest point. As the days moved forward I began to see a new person developing inside of me, a new awareness that I had value, value to share with others. At the time my goal was to become a good writer in the field of poetry, short historical stories, and news columns.

One day we were invited to read poems and stories to a group of teachers and other invited guests. Before reading my poem, I had mentioned to the lady who represented the Department of Labour and Work Force Development that I felt like I was standing at the bottom of a huge intimidating mountain. She turned to me and said: "No, Jack, you are now standing on top." The reason why I felt that way is due to the fact that I had failed grade four. Later I was removed from grade seven and placed in an extra help class. Eventually, I attained the equivalent of grade nine. Following that I went to a vocational school to learn bricklaying, but found the math classes too hard, so I dropped out.

A few years later I was accepted into the Nova Scotia College of Art. Due to personal reasons at the time, I regretfully declined. My last try in a vocational school was to become an upholsterer. With pleasure I received my trade certificate at the end of the year.

As the months rolled along in Cala class, I started to bring together writings that I had always wanted to master. I was able to put the finishing touches on a history book that I had been working on for years. Also, a poem book that I was working on was completed. To my good pleasure both books are now on the shelves at the Colchester East-Hants Regional Library. During a summer computer school program at Cala with two fellow students, we learned many computer skills and were able to produce a short digital video of Truro's Victoria Park. Also, I was taught how to work a digital camera. I am pleased to mention that a variety of my photos are on display in a couple of Cafes for year round viewing.

Well, here we are into my second year in class, and I have had several short historical photo stories placed in our local newspaper. Also, I am from time to time invited to sit in on writer circles to share ideas and the reading of poems.

As I am writing this essay, I should mention that I am also publishing a book about our town called Old Maps & Truro Past. The response to my writing this book has been overwhelming. The people at the Truro Colchester Historical Society Museum and Archives are very excited. There has been suggestion that I should consider becoming a member of the new historical committee that is being formed at the archives.

In sum, I would have to say there is more power in adult learning than what I had ever anticipated. I am now on a new road in life; my self esteem has been elevated to whole new level of awareness. I am now truly reaching the threshold of my dreams. I have climbed that big mountain and I am standing on top looking out over the land of higher learning.

## **My Barrier**

Elizabeth Rita Tancock - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

What kept me here so long ago  
hidden within myself?  
Restraining me, containing me.

It's my pain, it's my shame  
that holds me here,  
keeping me from my growth.

I am getting older now  
and want to cross this barrier  
so I can feel complete.

If I could enhance my reading skills  
I would read to the young and old alike.  
I might even be a writer or poet yet!

## Reflections

Angie Boudreau – NSCC Marconi Campus

The world of the Adult Learning Program (A.L.P) at Nova Scotia Community College (N.S.C.C) is a far cry from the world I once knew in the regulated learning environment known as school. Elementary, junior high, high school, it's all nothing compared to the A.L.P. Granted, the A.L.P is in a college environment, but that is acceptable, for after high school you go to college. Allow me to fill your mind with knowledge as I attempt to explain.

You see, the regulated learning environment (public schools in particular) is not always the best place for a young mind to grow. When I was in elementary school, I was teased and picked on a lot. At the time though, it hardly mattered (at least until I was nine), for back then, school for most students was about the fun times we had at recess. Whether we were indoors or out, we played and laughed and generally had a good time. As a child, I learned lots of the basics of things like math, English. I was quite good at it. The teachers were friendly enough and helped us when we needed it. Those were the good days.

Junior high school, however, was complete and absolute torture for me. The children I was once pals with now became my enemies. These pre-teens delighted in picking on my more sensitive nature, especially one girl who made it her mission to make my school days nothing but a misery. I had learned to fear them and stayed away when I could. As for my learning and grades, well, they had begun to suffer. Most of the teachers hardly cared and assigned us lots of homework night after night. I could hardly keep up, and they barely helped me. Puberty and hormones, lots of homework from uncaring teachers, kids who called me names and took my (quite tasty) snacks while torturing me, it was all just enough to send me into a spiralling depression at the tender age of twelve. By the time I had reached high school at the age of fourteen, I decided I had had enough of it all and quit school for the first time.

High school wasn't much for me. After I had quit for about a year, my mother, brother and I moved to Moncton and I attended school that year. My time there was interesting. I learned well enough and had done some interesting activities, such as when I built model cars in French class, or when I took PAL CALM for the first time. I was a bit lonely, shy and isolated, but, for that time, I had gotten by. In the summer, we had moved again back to Cape Breton, but this time, in Sydney River where I currently reside today. I went to a high school in downtown Sydney, and I liked it there. I had made some wonderful friends and learned lots of things (as well as taking PAL CALM again), but old pains and memories wouldn't go away. They haunted me during the day. It became harder to concentrate on my school work. Although my grades were ok, my attendance was slipping. Once again, my depression came back and I had quit for the second time, much to my dismay.

While I was writing this, I realised that public schools tend to focus on grades and performance rather than making sure the students understood the content. However, in this A.L.P course, that isn't the case. Yes, there are grades to care

about, but the teachers focus more on helping each of the individuals, including myself, to understand their lessons. They allow you to work at your own learning pace rather than a time limit that most schools tend to use. Not only that, but they care about you as a person rather than another student that they have to put up with. You can talk to them without fear of being the 'teachers pet'. It's not just the teachers that are better, but the students are too. Because they're all adults, there's no fear of rejection, no paranoia of ugly rumours being spread, no phobias of being the center of everyone's joke. I actually learned to feel good about myself again and rekindled my love for learning and knowledge. I still have plenty to work on, but I know it can be done, and I know that I can accomplish whatever I choose to. To those who helped me get here, there is only one thing I want to say.

Thank you. Thank you so very much.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Katherine Bresson - NSCC Marconi Campus

I left school when I finished grade 10 to enter what was then called a trade school. Upon completion of the course I worked for a few years and eventually opened my own business. The business became quite successful and grew profitable.

I was satisfied and more than happy with my career choice but even though I was employing several people and making more money than most people I still felt inadequate and even embarrassed by my lack of formal education.

After 20 years in a business that I loved, a life changing medical condition forced me to reinvent myself. Now was the time to go back to school.

I entered the ALP at Marconi campus. I knew that education would open doors for me but what I didn't know was that the program would open my eyes as well as my mind. Along with gaining the confidence that only an education can bring, I'm developing an understanding and an appreciation of human character.

During my time at Marconi I have had the opportunity to meet extraordinary people, classmates, starting a second career others struggling just to get a decent job or start a career, some facing tremendous hardships just to attend class. Whether dealing with a disability or certain social situations, each student with a story to tell and each one with the courage it takes to start over. (Learning is not just about the 3 Rs). I have met amazing instructors and councillors, without their dedication, direction and constant encouragement a better future would be impossible for us (the students).

Not only is the ALP providing us with confidence and the skills necessary to obtain better jobs/careers, but also the knowledge that all obstacles can be overcome, each one of us has something to offer and by helping each other we can help ourselves.

Armed with all these skills we can create a viable future not only for ourselves but for our communities as well.



## **My Dream**

Donna Zinck - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

When I first started at the Adult Learning Network I was really nervous and scared. I didn't think I would fit in and I didn't think I could do the work, but I stuck with it and felt accepted right away.

I made a lot of friends and was glad I went back to school.

I enjoy coming here and meeting new people. I think I have accomplished a lot so far. My goal is to finish here, go on to Community College and then into a C.C.A. course. I am soon starting employment with Care Choice; it will be part-time for now because they want me to stay in school. That's what I want too.

When I finish classes in May I will be working full-time with Care Choice until September. I hope it works out; this is my dream and that's what I was put on earth to do... to help to look after the disabled and the elderly.

My son is autistic and looking after him is a challenge. I'll be coming to school when I can, after I soon start work. I will be busy, but that's what I want to do to accomplish my dream.

## **Back to School**

Jolene Leopold - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I came back to school to get better at my math and science so I could take a nursing course. I want to take good care of my girls and have a better life.

With my husband things were very bad. He never wanted to work, and was always drinking and doing drugs. He was abusive and always put me down; he would get the girls to do the same.

I wanted to go to school and become a better person for my girls and for myself, and to prove I can do it. Leaving my husband and coming back to school is the best thing that I have ever done. I was down to the lowest anyone can ever go and I hope that I can make my way back up to the top.

I want to give my girls a better life. I want them to be successful, and in order for that to happen they have to see me do well.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Yvonne Wilkinson – NSCC Pictou Campus

I put these words on paper to thank Adult learning Programs everywhere for giving me the opportunity to make myself, my family and NSCC proud of me. The multitude of learning experiences that I have had was wonderful. I left school in grade eight at the tender age of 14 and did not return for 34 years. I always wanted my grade twelve although I never thought that I would be able to do it with everything else that is life.

Then I heard about the Adult Learning Program available with the NSCC and thought that I would check it out. As soon as I arrived for my appointment I knew that this was the place for me. The faculty and staff were very friendly and it wasn't very long before I was starting classes. At first I was a little nervous but then I started to realize that everything that they were teaching me was making sense.

One of the courses that I am taking was in computers. I was computer illiterate when I first started and now I am knowledgeable in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. My average for this progress report was 98% overall.

The way that the instructors teach is what I give credit to. They call it teaching from the back of the room as compared to a teacher that is at the front of the class. I also like the fact that everyone works at their own speed and test when you are ready for it. The reason that I like this type of instruction is because as adults we are all at different learning levels.

One of my favorite courses was Career Skills. In this class you were taught how to put together a portfolio and how to have a proper interview. At first I didn't see were this class could help a person like myself who had been in the workforce for over 30 years but I am so glad that they offered this class, it has taught me some very valuable lessons about life and career skills.

One more experience that has helped me tremendously is in communications. I have always wanted to write a book about my life and now I have the knowledge that it will take for me to do that properly. The name of my book is "The Life of a Gypsy, Pieces of Me" I have learned so many things from every one of my instructors and would love to tell you something that I have learned from each one of them.

Unfortunately I am running out of space according to your contest requirements. One thing that I would like to say before I close is thank you NSCC for taking the time and patience that it took to make my life a better place to live.

## **For Once Was Two**

Sylvester Paul Jr. - Unama'ki Training & Education Centre, Eskasoni

Meeting under a brilliant Sun  
Catching one's glorious gaze to another  
Forever is always shorter than it seems  
Working in harmony without never in mind  
Holding unto their goals they grew whole  
Unfailing time reveals many changes  
The veils covered their perception  
Venom grew deep unto the hearts of two  
The lost souls called their names and succeeded  
Once again the pit of darkness was revealed  
Finding demons the two bled within  
Raging actions found no end for the two  
No more shall the hands of time be felt  
Nor the various afflictions hold grip  
Peace is buried forever more  
Nothing can undo the hearts of men  
Two roses will lay for the two  
For once there was freedom  
For once the ecstasy was tremendous  
For once the sun shone  
For once was two

## **Red Skin**

Sylvester Paul Jr. - Unama'ki Training & Education Centre, Eskasoni

My Ancestors lived in Harmony  
Not Too far away was the distant Nightmare  
Darkness had spread throughout the World  
It creeps closer as we sing to Mother  
They believed in blood for Father  
Where shall we live when we aren't welcome  
My skin is red and my ancestors are dead  
I am too far from Heaven to believe in Hell  
The Mother tastes our essence now  
We could not hold them back  
My skin is red and my ancestors are dead  
Red soaked dirt surrounds our children  
We pray to Creator to save us from this  
We ask Creator for strength and hope  
They did not know that their prayers will not yet come  
Years pass as we get weaker  
No longer in Harmony yet we strive for peace  
My skin is red, we are not dead  
Too many times has life denied me love  
How has my red skin been a waste  
It is not too late to save the weak  
Unity under Love and Harmony is bleak  
When the moon rises, remember my skin is red  
When the sun calls for me, do not wait  
We must fix our mistakes  
My skin is red and I am not Dead

## **Steven's Story**

Steven Corbin – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

Hello, my name is Steven Corbin. I am 29 years old and I live in a little fishing village along the eastern shore called Coddles Harbour.

I am presently attending the ALP GAP Program that is offered by the Guysborough County Adult Learning Association in Guysborough, NS, working towards finding some meaning in my life.

Prior to being referred to this program and after leaving high school, I felt that my life had no meaning.

While going through school I was under a lot of stress and pressure especially from being bullied day in and day out. It was absolute hell, but I did manage to force myself to go through grade 12. However, I wasn't able to graduate because I was short on credits.

Over the past few years I have been employed at many different places but only for short terms anywhere from two days to two months. A few reasons for that was family illnesses, funding for transportation and training courses, and trying to squeeze every penny to get by from month to month.

My parents are seniors and they rely heavily on my brother and I to do things for them around the house and it makes me feel guilty to go out and try to find a job and make a living for myself. I always think of the worst case scenario in the sense that something might happen to them like falling down the stairs or a slip and fall. Then with every new job, there are new pressures and stresses added to the family illnesses and financial stresses and I find it hard to focus on the tasks at hand. I don't multitask very well because I do get mixed up a lot. So when I do start something I always try to finish it before moving on to something else.

Between each of the jobs I've had, when I wasn't working, I was always depressed and trying to think of what I did wrong or what I wasn't doing. Then I would feel that I was no good for anything and there was nothing to live for. But there was, it was just being able to find it.

Thanks to my employment councillor at Community Services who referred me to the ALP GAP Program, I have built a lot more self confidence and made 8 new friends to boot.

It was interesting to find out that I am reading at a level IV and, along with participating in the 10-week workshop on portfolio development, I learned a wide variety of skills, some of which I knew and a lot more that I had not known about until that time. I guess it was the list of skills that showed me what abilities I had. I thought to myself, "Hey, I can do this", or "I can do that", they were probably skills that I never knew of and they were stored away in the back of my mind. Going over the different skills brought them to light.

The ALP GAP Program facilitators are a great help to anyone who has trouble reading, writing and doing math. They will work with you individually for as long as you need them to. They will not force you to do something in a certain amount of time like they do in a high school setting. The ALP GAP Program has helped me find out what my strengths and weaknesses are throughout the many workshops offered along with the 20-week academic portion of the program.

After I complete the ALP GAP Program a few of my goals include writing the Nova Scotia GED test, improving my writing skills, working toward a full time job and increasing my self confidence so I won't be afraid to try new things. Guysborough County Adult Learning in Guysborough County has no problems in helping anyone through their journey of learning. I am really glad they were there to help me out because I don't think I would have been able to do it without them. For that I am very grateful.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Trina Hankey – NSCC Truro Campus

This is a story about how I came to be an adult learner. My name is Trina Hankey I am 33 years old. I am a mother of two children. I have been working in dead end jobs for 10 years. I decided to go back to school and better myself and my family. So now I am in the links program at the NSCC.

When I was younger and in school .I was a student that struggled with math. I had a few great teachers that went out of their way to help me ,but I had a lot that did not and just pushed me through. When I was in grade seven I was put in a program called Alternates. I was in that program until grade nine. I really liked that program I did pretty well. I had a really great teacher. In case you don't know what that program was it was for the students who were having a hard time in the regular class. We were put in smaller classes and did the same work as the other students, but at a slower pace. The teacher was able to work one on one more with you and the class was not very big. Then I went on to CEC and had a terrible time in there. I struggled so bad in there that I hated going. I made it to grade eleven. Then my life changed and I was dealing with a big decision for a girl of seventeen. I was pregnant.

I did stay in school until I was five months along. I was finding it really hard so I quit. I told myself I would go back after I had my baby, but I never did, life just got in the way. So I went out to work and I did that for years. I always felt I was missing out. I was Sick of those dead end jobs. I thought about going back to school. But I never got the courage to do it.

I got laid off from my job in June of 2008 which hated. I decided to try and go back to school. I found out about the links, program from my employment counsellor. He helped me get into the program. I have a friend of mine that decided to take the program to. So that was a big help having a friend. So this is where I `am now I never thought it would happen. I wanted something better in my life. I was living from pay check to pay check and I was never getting ahead.

I am scared to death this is such a big step. I hope I don't fall on my face. I just want to better myself and my family's life so this is how I became here. I hope I `am able to pull it off and not fall flat on my face. I just keep thinking in May 2010 I `am going to graduate with my grade 12 and CCA course and it will be worth all the tears and hard work. I have to think positive that I can do this. I have great support and great teachers so I will be able to do it. I have to remind myself when things get bad I can do it. So that is my goal to finish this program, get a better job and to support my family better.



## **Patricia's Story**

Patricia Langille – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

Hi, my name is Patricia Langille. I am 41 years old, and a single mom with a daughter, Shiann, and son, Patrick. Shiann is in grade 5 and Patrick in grade 11. I have completed grade 9 and went for half the year in grade 10. I quit because I didn't feel I was smart enough to continue, and other personal reasons.

So here I am at age 41 and no education to get a job. I heard of the ALP GAP Program at GALA from my case worker. I thought, finally, here is my chance to better my education and get a job. I was excited about starting the ALP GAP Program, but also a little apprehensive. Who would I get to look after my daughter, and what effect would this have on her, where she is so used to having me around all the time? Then there was the transportation issue; with no vehicle how was I to get to this program.

So I talked to my daughter and she thought it would be a great for her mom to do something like this. I got on the phone and started making calls for my transportation. Everything started coming together. There was someone to take care of my daughter, and I had transportation.

So off I went on September 15, 2008, and started the ALP GAP Program at GALA. Since then I have learned a lot about myself and education. Now I am able to help my daughter with her homework, which I couldn't do before.

I will be entering the work force in March for my work placement. I am very excited and a little nervous about this.

I really couldn't have done this without the encouragement from my instructor Jina Jeans. She taught me that whatever I set my mind to do I can do it. She also gave me lots of positive remarks, which helped a lot. I'm really glad that I gave this program a go. It really changed my life for the better.

I have another goal that I would like to achieve. I would like to get my G.E.D.

I would like to thank everyone at GALA for making this a great experience. It was great to be with the other class members. I made lots of great friends.

## **Joan's Story**

Joan Reid – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

My name is Joan Reid. I am going to the ALP GAP Program.

Before I came to GALA my life was kind of down in the learning area. I was put into a special class in between grades four and five. I had trouble all the way through school. I felt like I wasn't going anywhere so I dropped out in grade seven. Then I went to work at the fish plant for seven years.

I wanted to improve my reading, math, writing, and self confidence. I can not drive a car so I had to get someone to drive me to school. It is hard to get a drive. There are no taxis or buses in our area. Also, I have family stresses, like getting the kids ready for school and trying to pay bills with no money. But I wanted to better myself by getting an education and a job.

So, I started coming to GALA for upgrading. I have had many successes. I have improved my math spelling, reading, and computer skills. Also, my self confidence is better. I find it relaxing and comfortable to come to classes.

My goal is to get a full time job and continue my upgrading.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Matt Dickie - Colchester Adult Learning Association

Adult learning is beneficial to all who will take the time and effort to do it. I strongly believe this statement because anyone who is willing to better themselves can never be doing a bad thing. Every step forward, even if it's a little bit, is still progress made. These days a high school diploma or equivalent are very important when finding a job. That being said, adult learning is an excellent way to further your education and continue on the road to learning.

G.E.D. or high school diplomas are in such high demand now that it is hard to find a job that does not require it. Writing and completing your G.E.D. can take you lots of places and open many doors of opportunity. A lot of community college courses, actually almost all, accept a G.E.D. certificate to enter their programs. Even if you already have a career, furthering your education will always be a benefit.

Adult learning programs such as C.A.L.A., adult high or the G.E.D. program are all great opportunities to improve your learning skills. This can better your life by opening up a lot more job positions available to those who have obtained a diploma or equivalent. You feel good when you know you have accomplished something. Math, reading, writing and comprehension are all around us on a daily basis. Working on these skills betters our knowledge of the world around us.

We can consider ourselves somewhat lucky as Nova Scotians, because all adult upgrading to high school completion is absolutely free. In some provinces there is a charge to the student to upgrade. There are approximately thirty networks of adult learning across our province, all of which are offered free of charge. In many places of the world adult learning is not common and in a few countries it is almost unheard of. We all have the option to better our education, and our future. All it takes is a little time, effort, and the desire to learn.

With all these benefits to adult learning, there is no reason why any one should say they "can't". If you have the ability and energy to better yourself, take it and run with it. There are really no limits or boundaries when it comes to upgrading. Also, with all the different programs this province offers, there is no reason and one should ever say they cannot further their education. The skills you learn and the benefits you gain are absolutely awesome. Now that's the power of adult learning!

## **The Best Decision of My Life**

Natalie MacDougall – NSCC Strait Campus

I was a shy child growing up and when I hit grade seven, I went from a small school classroom to a large classroom in a big high school. I never asked for help, so I got lost in the shuffle. There were too many students for one teacher, so in return, I barely passed from one grade to another. I had my first child early in life, so I did not get my high school diploma.

There are so many things going on in a person's life that you forget to do something for yourself, not for anyone or anything else, but for you. After I had my first child, I got married and had my second child, who was diagnosed with autism when he was three years old. The next number of years was focused on helping our son develop his communication and social skills. My family and their needs were more important to me than my own, so I was willing to put mine on hold, with no regrets.

Two years ago, I passed the GED the second time around, but it wasn't enough. I wanted to learn more.

I finally realized when my oldest son turned eighteen, graduated from high school and was heading to college and my other son was almost sixteen and doing great developmentally, that it was time to make my move.

When I started at the Adult Learning Program at the NSCC, Strait Area Campus, I was scared to death, but I was also surprised and impressed. Going back to school is so different from high school. In high school, I only cared about my friends and how I looked. I got lost in the crowd and never received any help. In ALP, the classes are smaller, which makes it easier to learn, and the instructors, well they are great! They are so patient and when I need help, they will help me in any way they can. My fellow students are so friendly and they accept everyone for who they are, no matter how different you are. I am a quiet person, who likes her space, but also likes to be part of the conversation. I love to put my thoughts down on paper. Some of my instructors are suggesting I take up a career in writing.

I am not sure what I want to do yet, but I'm sure I will figure it out with the help of my instructors and the career counsellor. I am so happy that I came back to school after being out for twenty years. The best decision I've made was going to ALP. This program has the best atmosphere for learning because of the small classes and how far the instructors will go to help you achieve your dream. I have so much admiration and gratitude for counsellors, instructors, and staff. They are the educators who make ALP what it is.

Thank you all so much.

## **Dianne's Story**

Dianne Greencorn – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

I am Dianne Greencorn; I am 46 years old and a mother of three, one boy and two girls. I am a grandmother of one little boy. David, my son is in NSCC in Dartmouth and Erica is going to the NSCC in Port Hawkesbury, my youngest girl Jessica is going to Guysborough who is in grade nine, she has ADHD, so I can't leave her alone to long. My daughter Erica was living at home. I had to drive her to the NSCC by 8:30 am and than go to my school in Guysborough to GALA which started at 9:00 am then at 3:30 pm leave and go pick up Erica by 4:30 pm, I did this for a while until she moved to Port Hawkesbury.

My husband, who works away and home on the weekends, he can't read and his writing is not that great, I have to read everything that comes into the house. My reading was not that great, so I made up my mind and I found out about GALA.

I've been attending from 2007- 09 and my reading, typing and also my spelling has improved a lot. With a grade nine education you can't find a good job, so that is why I came back.

The roads in the winter are very bad some days and I can't come in or the schools may be closed.

My reading is improving a lot. I have been slowing down and starting to understand what I am reading. Also, I used a phonics program called Lexia; it has helped me a lot.

Reading and writing go hand in hand; as you improve one, you improve another. I went to a workshop about writing; it taught me I can write anything, the way I feel or the way I see things. Since I've been learning more, I write more on my own, both at school and at home.

I met new people and made new friends and having fun learning.

I would like to get my GED and get a job.

## **Sharon's Story**

Sharon Cunningham – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

Hello, my name is Sharon Cunningham, and I'm 54 years of age and proud of it. I have been blessed with two beautiful sons, who are my pride and joy. Craig is my oldest son, now married to a wonderful person and has a precious son that God has blessed them with.

As for me, one obstacle in my life was finding out I had Epilepsy first, then Diabetes. It was hard to get used to it at first, but once I knew how to handle the situation it became easy as pie. There are other obstacles in my life such as finding transportation, education, and funding.

The benefit of learning has affected me in a number of ways. I have made new friends through the course. Believing in myself that I can demonstrate the way I feel, and how to write out an essay but not repeat the words. I would like to know more about the computer, as in Indenting.

My goal in life is to find a decent job that can help me out and pays equal wages, also I like to socialize with people, and not be put down by any co-workers, in any work situation that I don't understand. Also, I would like to try new things in jobs I take in the near future.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Melissa Stevenson – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Sometimes in life you say that you have all kind of time to go back to school if you want to. I do have my grade 11. I left school after that because of a teacher and as I got older I said that I will some day have to go back to school and get my grade 12. I put it off for a long time. I did not like school, so I was not looking forward to going back. I as most said that I have time.

That was until September 26, 2006 when my brother Wayne got very sick. It was his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday when he got ALS he was told that he would not live to see his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. He did live until September 12, 2008, 2 weeks before his 31<sup>st</sup> birthday. Because of Wayne, I took a look at my life. I said I do need to go back to school. I need my grade 12. Watching Wayne fight for his life for almost 2 years made me want to fight to get my grade 12. Going back is not as hard as I thought it would be. Some times in life, you need a wake up call and I did get mine.

Sometimes in life it takes losing some one so young and so close to you to make you see that you do not have all the time in the world. I just wish I did not wait so long. I am now 29, the same age Wayne was when he got sick. I now tell people that life is too short. I do have friends that did not get their grade 12 and I now tell them that going back was one of the smartest things I have done. I do know what it is like. You cannot make someone do something that they do not want to do. They need their wake up call. I just hope that it will not be like mine.

But I am now happy that I am back in school and I have the love and support of my family behind me. I know that Wayne would be proud of me, too. If school seems too hard I think of Wayne fighting for his life and I keep on fighting for myself. It may have taken me a long time to get here but I am here now and that is all that matters.

## **How Adult Learning Gave Me the Power**

Jessica Murray – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Learning in general is very important. You start school when you're about five years old, and from there to your first year of high school most people are still learning. Once you hit high school, a majority of people will drop out each year.

Some people will drop out because they have really big issues going on in their life and being at school can add more stress to them. Others will stop going because they're not interested in the courses that they are made to take, and everyone else just says, 'It's just not for me.'

I can relate to the dropping out because I wasn't really interested in the courses. That was two years ago. Last September, my grandmother had done some looking and found the CALA course. When she told me about it, I knew that my luck had changed. I was being given a second chance to better myself with education, to prepare me for a better job in the future.

Today I am currently still attending the CALA course, and it's giving me that push to strive for perfection. I have a five month old son and I know that since I am able to have education once again, I can get that good paying job so I can support him. If I didn't have this second chance, I'd be stuck working a dead-end job for the rest of my life, but knowing that I am going to school and I can do what's best in the future has really made me a much happier person.

The more education a person receives the more power they will have towards controlling what they want in life. As the saying goes: "The teacher gives the test before they give the lesson," which really when you think about it, the real test in life is to see how far you are willing to go to be successful with your life, even if that means taking that step, going to school as an adult, and actually getting the happiness you were longing to have by graduating out of high school.



## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Mary Knee – Hants Learning Network

Have you ever wanted to have a second chance to get the education you always wanted? I am trying to upgrade mine as I never had a chance to when I was younger.

What adult learning means to me is trying to get ahead of yourself and finding things to do on your own and just keep on working on what you need in life. A good education means a lot to this generation and to the young ones that come into this world. There may be a lot of work and studying, but if you keep at it, you will succeed in life.

I started this program feeling unsure of my ability to do anything like this. It didn't take long for me to realize that I knew a lot more now than I did before.

With adult learning you can achieve your goals when you are too old to go back to regular high school. Many of the courses offered are the same as when I went to high school in my younger days. Some subjects are really hard for me like math, science, geography, but I try to do them. I especially like spelling, reading, and writing.

You need a good education to get a good job. If you want to learn the computer, you have to take a computer course. If you want to work in a bank, you have to know math skills. If you want to take a course, you might have to go to a community college and take special courses to qualify.

Adult learning gives me a second chance at an education. I was embarrassed to admit that I didn't know how to do math. I got so frustrated that I didn't know what to do.

Fortunately, along came Brenda Hare, my math tutor, and she is helping me. She started to tutor me about three months ago, and I am slowly getting used to it.

It was a big step for me to admit at first that I needed an education. I wasn't sure that I could do this. I'm beginning to realize that I am not the only person actually going back to school or getting tutored. I now see that there are a lot of people who can't do math any more than I can. I started feeling comfortable enough to admit that I didn't know how to do something.

I began by doing math on the chalkboard, but I was always getting the wrong answer. I kept trying until I got it right.

I try to earn my achievements which in turn raises my self esteem to a higher level. I am going to help my grandchildren with their work, and tell them to stay in school. I deserve a pat on the back despite the barriers I face.

I still am getting tutored in math. I have a struggle but I still try hard to get it done. I like to tell everyone that you can get a second chance in life if you put your mind to it and do it right. So, stay in school!

## **Debbie's Story**

Debbie Logan – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

My name is Debbie Logan. I am 31 years old, married, and the mother of two girls. I quit school after completing grade 10 because I had a hard time in some classes with the teachers. What I wanted to take they would tell me I was not able to do. It seemed like they didn't believe in me. I felt if they didn't believe in me why should I believe in myself?

So I dropped out and tried to get a job. I could not get a job because I didn't have my grade 12.

Before I came here I had to face a few obstacles for me to do the ALP GAP program because you need money to pay for transportation. I don't have a car so I have to depend on someone else to travel with. Child care is another one because if my husband has to go away or gets a call to go to work I would have to find someone to baby sit my kids. There is not many around that I could get to look after them. Most people don't want to get into babysitting. So I either have to stay home or my husband has to. I have been doing this for a few years now.

I heard about GALA so I contacted them to ask for some information on their programs. When I received their information I was really excited to get started. GALA taught me I could do whatever I set my mind to.

This really changed my life. I am really glad I had someone to turn to. GALA has the most amazing staff. If I hadn't done this I probably would be sitting home doing nothing. I have made new friends while being here. There is a good positive atmosphere here.

Now at least I can help my kids with their homework. Also, I was able to improve my skills. Without GALA I wouldn't be able to do this. Thank you GALA for believing in me. After I finish this ALP GAP program I will be able to go out and get a job and go write my GED.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Margaret Whynot – Queens Learning Network

When people hear or see the word 'literacy', it tends to scare people. Most people look at the word literacy as not being able to read or write, when in fact, it is much more than that. The meaning of literacy is considered to be the ability to read and write. Literacy also is a term used to refer to a basic level of education. So, as we see, literacy doesn't mean we are dumb. To me it just means that maybe we haven't educated ourselves to the best of our ability for one reason or another - maybe by dropping out of school or not being able to go for one reason or another or maybe just because we figured we didn't need an education. This may all be fine for awhile or we think it is until one day when we decide we want to get a good paying job and we find out we need more education than we have. Then comes the 'I wish I would have stayed in school'.

Now through Adult Learning Programs offered everywhere, we can change the 'I wish' into 'I can'. The Adult Learning Programs offer you a chance to further your education by starting you off at a level right for you, after being tested to see where you fit and at what level you should begin at. I joined the Adult Program in 2005 and I am still there. The program has had a positive impact on my life since I began.

To me learning has always been what you wanted to make it, and with the Adult Learning Program, I have found that it is more of what you can do - work at your own pace rather than deadlines to meet like in school. Also, with this program unlike school, the pressure is not there, which makes learning that much easier. Over the past four years that I have been in the program, I have done a lot of work in many different subjects and enjoyed it and I still find yet today there is still more and more to learn.

We all work and learn at different levels that's why this program was my answer and maybe it might be yours too. I have found this program very rewarding, unlike school. To me, it doesn't seem to bore you or expect the un-expectable from a person and we are all treated equal whether we are a newcomer or an oldie like myself. I think anyone who has been out of school for a long time and wants to further their education for one reason or another should seriously think about joining one of the many Adult Learning Programs offered in many places. Go ahead. You will not regret the impact it will have on you.

## **My Blessings in Learning**

Lynn Donnelly-Burns – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I've always wanted to have my High School or Grade 12 certificate. I looked into going back to class and found my first blessing in the Colchester Adult Learning Association program. In January 2006, I started the second level of the program.

That was 3 years ago. I've come to know the blessing in the classroom setting that benefits all learners. I have learned from other students in the class, teachers, one - on - one tutoring, as well as the volunteers who come to help.

I've also done a computer program in the past two years and I have learned many computer skills. This year I actually helped my instructor in class. Both programs have helped me become a stronger and more confident person.

One day, we started reading a book out loud in class. I could not do it, but went along with the class and really enjoyed it. The book was called "Alchemist " . From this, I started reading books in lightning speed. In the past 2 years, I've read 4 books - 2 times each (which to me is 8 books). I'm on my 9th book now.

My blessing in this learning is I enjoy reading a good book.

If it was not for a volunteer, I would be stuck on fractions. She helped me understand them. With her help, I can understand them now.

I've had so much success with going back to school and my teacher has told me , so I'm starting to get up in front of our class and talk on a project I'm doing as a fundraiser for Big Brothers and Big Sisters Bowl for Kids . You see, at one time, I really could not stand up in front of a classroom and talk.

My blessings in learning will always be something I did years ago...  
That is, going back to school.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Mary Thompson – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Mary Thompson. My daughter, Rhonda, said one day, "Mom, you should go back to upgrading." Then I asked Erica Butler at the Halifax North Library for help. She got me a tutor. That was in September 2001. This has been a very good experience.

People in Adult Learning study different things. Sometimes we take longer, but in life it is good to keep learning. Some study reading or upgrading. Some become engineers or teachers or carpenters. It is not only in the class room that we learn or not only in books. Women's groups help us learn about ourselves and our community. We learn about Black History, health and safe neighborhoods. The Salvation Army is another group that helps my adult learning. They teach me Bible Study, crafts and take us on outings.

Adult Learning gets you going and encourages you to keep going. You meet new people. You learn to read better.

The real power of Adult Learning is what you feel in your heart. It makes you understand other people better. It makes you feel good. It makes you have a better day. If I have a good day, it is better for other people too. The power of good feeling spreads. The power of Adult Learning spreads!

## **About My Education**

Kathryn McDonald – Queens Learning Network

I am a mother of two teenagers, Jessica and Joey. My oldest one is my daughter who is going to be seventeen this June and will be going into grade twelve in September 2009 and she lives in Liverpool with family members. My son lives with me in Caledonia and is going to be fifteen in July and going into grade ten in September 2009.

I have been doing my upgrading since 2001 and finished level one and graduated in 2001. I moved to Bridgewater in October 2001 and started level two at Lunenburg Adult Learning Network in Bridgewater in 2002, 2003 and graduated from level two in 2004.

In July 2004, I started the South Shore Work Activity Program and graduated in 2005. I started another program, "Success For Living" in 2005 and graduated in 2006. I moved back to Liverpool and started level three at Queens Learning Network in 2006, 2007 and 2008, until I moved to Caledonia in 2008 and travelled back and forth until June. As I don't travel back and forth any more, I go to the Network in Caledonia and started here in September 2008 and still go to it.

I hope to finish my level three so I can go on to level four or do my GED to get my grade twelve.

## **How Will I Know**

Bev Reid – NSCC Truro Campus

I thought I saw it, I thought I heard it.  
Does it walk or does it run  
Is it big or is it small  
Will someone catch me if I fall?  
Is it black or is it blue  
Did it leave me a clue?  
How will I know?  
Will it disappear if I open my eyes?  
Did someone show it to me?  
Did I need to unlock it, did I have the key?  
Did I pass it; was it right in front of me?  
How will I know?  
Do I keep looking for it?  
Will it come and go?  
How will I know?  
Was it here?  
Will I ever know?  
Here it is; in front of me  
It always was and always will be.  
I just keep looking up  
It will be waiting for me.  
I think I now am holding the key  
Is it what I have been looking for; Am I sure this is it?  
I know I can see it, I know this is it.  
I am going to succeed!



## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Joanne Gamble – NSCC Truro Campus

Going back to school was a choice I was unsure of, I wondered if I was making the right choice or not. My job I worked at for sixteen years was going to close down soon, so I would have to get out there and apply for a new job. I had great concerns over this. One of my reasons for going back to school is to get a better job with a better salary and I wanted to feel more confident in my field of work.

I attended a meeting in Debert about the new Shannex development, it was going to be close to my home and they desperately needed CCA Students for the Link Program at the NSCC in Truro. People were there for information about starting a new career. I was interested in this program. For years I wanted to finish my grade twelve, this was my chance of a life time to accomplish my goal. It was scary to go back to school, I wasn't sure if I could sit still and actually take all this information in, especially when I haven't been to school in years.

I always wanted to try and learn new things but my confidants were keeping me back. I was afraid people would think I wasn't smart enough. I had to make up my mind that I could do this. After word of encouragement I decided to go back to school. The first few days were exciting at school. I was not in my comfort zone, but I kept telling myself one step at a time. I have been in the NSCC now since October and found out that learning can be fun. I get up in the morning and feel good about going to school. I know there will be a lot of new and interesting things to learn.

I have a study group that I go to as well. We mainly work on our CCA work. A group of girls from my classroom discuss and review our notes from our book, we go over different methods of memorizing and I find this very helpful in preparing for an up coming test. Thinking back, when I was in school I would of paid more attention to my studies. My life might have been different for me. Maybe, I would of followed my dream to been a nurse, like my mother. I feel my life is fulfilling and I will never stop learning.

I would encourage others to return back to school. When it comes down to learning, it is never too late to learn new things. Follow your dream and never stop learning. In taking this CCA Link Program I know this is a great opportunity for me, and I am very gratefully for having this come my way.

## **My Story**

Shelley Gorman – NSCC Truro Campus

It has been seventeen years since I stepped foot in a classroom. I am a survivor of seventeen years of abuse by my partners. I am now 35 years old and have 3 children. My youngest was taken from me 8 years ago and I see her once a month for 2 ½ hours. I have had a long string of bad luck. It all started to change when I met my current boyfriend in 07. He has inspired me to be all I can be.

In August, I came to NSCC to talk to the staff about returning to school. They told me about the Adult Learning Program. I had said to them “how do I apply”. I filled out the application and NSCC sent my application off. I was so excited, I checked the mail everyday for a week until the letter finally came in saying I got in. I was so excited. I called everyone I knew to tell them the good news. I was starting school in September.

As the first day of school was finally approaching I was getting very nervous by the minute. Then it finally came; now was my chance to finally prove to everyone and myself that I am not a loser. When I started, I was really scared that I was going to find it too hard. It was the other way around. I found school very easy. I have finished two subjects in less than two months. They were math and career skills. Before Christmas break I had most of my courses done. I have studied and worked everyday, even while on vacation.

I have put my whole heart and soul into my school work. I am very dedicated to my work. I have not missed a day unless it was an emergency. I arrive everyday on campus at 8:30 a.m. and I leave at 3:30 p.m. When I get right home I get into my pjs and then I hit the books (doing schoolwork) until the time I go to bed. On the weekends I do the same thing, homework all day long.

It is now February and I only need four more credits and I am finished the Adult Learning Program. I want to be able to finish by April and that is my goal. When I set my mind to something, I usually always accomplish it.

I was talking to a good friend of mine the other day and she had told me that I need to take some time out for myself. My response to her was that when I walk across the stage getting my diploma and graduating with my grade 12, it will be the day that I can put my feet up and say “my hard work paid off”. I really hope that I will be able to come back next year and take my learning to the next level. I really hope that my children will be proud to call me “mommy” when I am all finished and that I inspire them to stay in school and get their education.

## **My Story**

Betty Bennett – NSCC Truro Campus

I have decided to write about how I came about getting into the ALP Link program. Well where to begin? My name is Betty; I am a mother of two teenage girls. Kim is eight-teen and Ashley is six-teen. I am also a step mother to five other children ages ten to age sixteen. Sometimes my everyday life can be a handful at times, but somehow those days I seem I will never make it through, I do.

I am thirty-six years old and have been out of school for twenty-one years. I thought I knew it all at the age of six-teen and dropped out of school. Boy I wish I knew then what I know now. I had an instant family at the age of eight-teen. I worked in restaurants, department stores, bakery, security and private nursing homes over the years; to pay for everyday bills and what my children needed. Through out the years I kept telling myself I would go back to get my education, but I never did. Now my girls are not so little and also do not need me as much anymore.

Last year in 2008 I went to Career works and spoke to them about getting my grade 12 and CCA, so I could a better life for myself and my family. This is where it all began. I was so excited when I received my approval letter for the link program. I was also nervous about going back to school; as my grades were never high. I really struggled in math in high school. I could not believe the one subject I struggled in then I am doing well in now. I had to look twice when I received my first math test back from Kryz.

By coming to the Truro NSCC I would like to accomplish getting my grade 12 and receive my CCA certificate. As I have always enjoyed working with the elderly. Are teachers are really wonderful with us. I also find our class really works together as a team.

I am glad I made the step to come back to school. Now I can try and accomplish, or I should say "I am going to accomplish what I have set out to do". I know it may get rough here and there, and it will not come easy, or handed over to me. As it says on my cover page "the world is full of possibilities". You never know what possibilities are out there unless we try to accomplish what we want in life.

So from the last bit of a poem my CCA instructor handed out "There is no better time than right now to be happy. Happiness is a journey, not a destination. So, work like you don't need money, love like you've never been hurt, and dance like no one's watching".

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Angela Weatherby – NSCC Truro Campus

While sitting at home, Rosie was reading an ad about going to school. She hadn't gone very far in school, and wanted to fulfill a need of accomplishment. Her belief is "you're never too old to learn".

Rosie applied at the Nova Scotia Community College and was accepted. The first few weeks were crazy. The thought of learning new skills, and challenges was exciting. She found that college was hard work which consumed much of her time.

With the assistance of study groups, her endless work was lightened. By getting people's thoughts, and input it helped her to better understand various problems. Rosie found that education is very important. It will enable you to achieve a steady job and a career of your choice.

There were times when Rosie became overwhelmed with her work load. There was a point in time when she needed to be provided with more support with particular subjects that she didn't completely understand. Counsellors were available at Rosie's discretion throughout the day.

Rosie enjoyed the seminars, and public speaking she attended she also took advantage of the health and wellness facility that was provided. This helped her relieve unwanted stress, and help her to bond with and know her classmates better. Without education one can only work at a minimum wage job and not be able to explore choices.

With will power and determination she can overcome many obstacles in life. Education plays a very important part in this without education she is limited with what she can do, but with education her goals are endless. She found out you are never too old to learn.

## **Making a Change - The Power of Adult Learning**

Rita Taylor – NSCC Truro Campus

It's strange how quickly life can change from one day to the next.

In the summer of '08 I was working at Valley Variety, a local convenience store. It was yet another minimum wage job on my resume, and that list was growing longer every year. Nine months into the job and I learned I was to be laid off. I was shocked, and really had no idea what to do next. My boyfriend reminded me of my desire to go back to school, but once again I made excuses for myself. "I'm too old for that, Chris. I've been out of school for twenty years. I don't have my diploma, who will accept me?" But this time, Chris' words stuck with me and I decided to look into my options.

I made a call to Careerworks Nova, a career resource center in town. My sister had worked with the center and had success, so I was hoping they could help me. I was assigned to a career counsellor who was very encouraging with my plan to attend school. He and I both agreed that getting my high school diploma was important, but he mentioned a program called Link at the NSCC. It would give me my grade 12, and a certificate with the Continuing Care Assistant program. I didn't know much about it, but I agreed to give it a try.

There were a lot of hurdles to get into the program. Dealing with Service Canada for funding and acceptance was a headache and I didn't think I stood a chance of getting in. One day out of the blue, I received a call saying I'd been enrolled to the college. It was the best news I heard in a long time, and I cried with relief. Finally I'd found a direction, and things were going to change for me. No more convenience store for me!

My first day of college was terrifying. Being forty years old, I assumed my classes would be filled with teenagers right out of high school and that caused me a lot of anxiety. It was a relief to see a roomful of my peers. I had no idea what to expect from this program and had no experience working with the elderly. I hadn't even been in a nursing home before, so I had a lot of fears about what I was getting into. But after the first week of orientation I began to mellow and really look forward to this big step in my life.

Now that first semester is ending, I feel confident with my choice to go back to school. It feels like this is exactly where I should be. The timing couldn't have been better. With every test I pass, and every new friendship that grows stronger, I feel a joy I don't think I've ever experienced before. It's a feeling of accomplishment that is strange to me, and I know I will make it. Sometimes change is the best thing for you, and the only way to leave a convenience store job behind is to take a risk. I'm proud of myself for taking this risk.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Darlene Hill – NSCC Truro Campus

Hi: My name is Darlene. I am an adult learner. Wow! I actually said it. Adult learner. It seems strange to me to be thirty-four and back in school. Isn't school for a younger generation? Once a person has made the decision to not complete grade twelve isn't that when they go out, find a job, and try to become a responsible young adult? Well that's what I use to think.

My grade twelve year I was given the opportunity to graduate with an accounting diploma, but I blew that! An education and career were not a high priority to me at that time in my life. I was young, I found a job, I had friends, and a boyfriend. I had everything I needed, this was my future, or so I thought! There I was nineteen working at a low paying job and living with my boyfriend. I felt like I was on top of the world. At age twenty-one I had my first child and six months later I was married. At age twenty-three along came my second child and my first own house. Wow! Twenty-three and I had everything I could ever want. Wrong!

The years to come were good, but not what I expected. I spent my time being a wife, a mother, and an employee. I felt like I was living my life for everyone but myself. At age thirty, I was married nine years, but going through a Divorce. My life was falling apart. No husband, no house, no job and two kids. At age thirty-one I met someone. At age thirty-two we were living together and at age thirty-three we bought our own house. Everything in my life was turning back around and things were good once again. There was still something missing in my life though, what I wanted was a better job and more money, but to get that I needed a better education.

A few months ago after talking with a friend who had been accepted at NSCC to train to become a LPN. I decided to go there myself and see if they had any courses I might be interested in. Well they did and, so here I am today, Thirty-four taking grade twelve plus a Continuing Care Assistant Course.

In the year 2010 I hopefully will have the missing Link that will make my life feel complete. That's what the phrase The Power of Adult Learning means to me. A missing Link! The word Link is a very meaningful word in my life as well. Link is the name of the course I'm taking, plus it's another great accomplishment to a never ending chain to the course of my life.

I may have chosen a family before an Education and it may have taken me thirty-four years to realize what an Education would do for my life. But it's better late than never, don't you think?

Something I have recently realized is that you are never too old to learn, so it is never too late to learn, and you won't stop learning until you "Die"!

## **Janice's Story**

Janice Addicott – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Hello, my name is Janice. I am 29 years old and I live in a small options home in Cape Breton. In the next few paragraphs I want to share some of who I am and talk about how I am living and learning for a viable future.

When I was 20 years old I was diagnosed with schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a mental illness that affects each person in a different way. For me I experienced delusions, paranoia, nervousness, and hallucinations. Sometimes I was edgy and sad; sometimes I abused drugs and alcohol. Before being diagnosed and for a while after life was hard and so was coping.

These days however, life is good. I work two different jobs. At one of my jobs, I work in an assembly department cutting and washing glass to prepare it for sun catchers and other glass products. At my other job I work at a gift shop doing all sorts of tasks such as working on the cash, waiting on customers, cleaning, and stocking shelves.

Over the years, I did a lot of volunteer work as well. I use to volunteer in pediatrics and palliative care. Through my volunteer work I met lots of wonderful people and learned a lot about myself in the process.

A few months ago I decided to return to school. I am attending an adult upgrading class at the Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton and enjoying it very much. I like my classmates and instructor. I am learning a lot there.

My journey has been long and it hasn't always been easy but I am well on my way to living and learning for a viable future. Thanks for reading my story.

## **Barbara's Story**

Barbara Duco – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

My name is Barbara and I'm from New Waterford, Nova Scotia. I am going to write about living and learning for a viable future through my eyes and experiences.

In 2004, I graduated from a high school learning center program. I left high school with a poor education, a bad attitude and a lot of negativity towards everyone and everything. I was living my life with these three things and nothing was going right. There has to be better out there for me, I thought.

In 2006, I tried several programs none of which appealed to or seemed right for me. The first program was for people either looking for work or trying to keep the job they already had. They taught you how to speak and how to dress for work. This lasted for only a short time and I stopped going.

Then I decided to go to an adult learning program. This didn't appeal to me either but I went anyway. My attitude was still negative and I wasn't thinking about the instructor, my classmates or anybody else. I just wanted the class and the subjects taught to be all about me. It didn't work that way so again I quit. Still no further ahead than I was two years previous.

Shortly after the failed attempts to better myself I found a program that changed my life. With a little push and a lot of help I attended an employability program that offered both literacy skills and job skills. Perfect! The program was six months long, five months of learning and one month of work experience.

I did my work placement at a guest home for the elderly and I loved it. It was everything I was looking for; they hired me for two more months. After this job ended I went to another home for the elderly for six months of work. This inspired me even more about the kind of future that I want. I realized I really enjoy this kind of work and I still volunteer there.

I've decided to go back to school to the adult learning program with the Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County that I tried back in 2006 but quit. This time around my attitude is positive and I'm willing to try new things and to be part of a group. This time around I want to take the advice of my instructor and learn from my classmates. I want to eventually become a Certified Care Assistant or Licensed Practical Nurse. I am now on my way to living and learning for a viable future.



## **Ginette's Story**

Ginette Thieren – Richmond County Literacy Network

Life put me in a position where I needed to enter the workforce. With only a grade nine education that made it difficult, if not impossible. So here I am, a woman of 54 years of age, full of false pride with an arrogance that convinced me that I had done alright up till now with my lack of scholastic achievement.

In this arrogance of mine, I decided to write my GED with less than two weeks to prepare. I had been out of school since 1971. What made me think I could pass my GED, unprepared as I was? Well, I failed. My pride took a blow, but it also showed me that I needed help if I wanted to get my GED and then, a job.

My weakened pride and myself made up our minds that it was time to buck up and find the courage that I've seen displayed in those adult learners which attended literacy programs offered through "Literacy Nova Scotia". I could use their courage to inspire me to seek and find what I needed.

To make a long story short, I'm now enrolled in a program which pays me to get educated, with an 8 week work placement to boot. HOW GREAT IS THAT?! I get paid to get the education I need plus a foot in the door to the work-force. It just doesn't get any better than that. Now I beam with healthy pride and I feel brave. Just like those who inspired me.

## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future – The Power of Adult Learning**

Jane Marchand – Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council

Like many teenagers in high school, I couldn't wait to be out of school to be independent. In the 70's and 80's, jobs not requiring a high school diploma were plentiful. In the following years, as an adult I realized that I did need a high school education. The goal for me to complete grade twelve or a GED was set years ago, but I never took the necessary actions to do it until 2008. With a busy family life, it was easy to give reasons that I now realize were excuses as to why I couldn't further my education. This was not a top priority on my list. I would have done this, years ago, if I had known the great sense of personal accomplishment this diploma could give me.

Setting the goal was easy but for me to achieve the goal of my GED, I knew I had to have a plan, follow the plan steps and commit to it. I also knew that after being out of school for almost thirty-five years, going back to school would be stressful. I was nervous and excited to start. The instructors at the Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council were excellent to help relieve my anxieties, assist me with my studies, and keep me focused.

Over the years, excuses came too easy. To justify it, I told myself I didn't have time, and I didn't know if I could do it after all these years. After all, I worked outside the home and made crafts in the little bit of spare time I had, so where would I fit in studying? We never let our children use excuses to not attempt or not complete anything, so in the fall of 2008 I decided I should follow my own rules. I had to rearrange my priorities so my GED would not be just one of those things I'm going to do someday.

I never imagined I would feel this much pride to have my GED diploma. I studied hard to earn this and the sense of personal accomplishment is amazing. My self-esteem has also improved considerably. I am employed now and I am very satisfied. It gives me great peace of mind knowing, that, because of this achievement, I have a wider range of options should the occasion arise where I would need to seek other employment.

I believe what I have always told my children: that you can do anything you set your mind to do. Goals don't come to you; you have to go to them. Even though I set the goal of obtaining my GED years ago, it took me until 2008 to make a plan and commit to it fully. I had to set my priorities, let go of all my excuses and doubts, and tell myself that I can and will do this. We had twin grandchildren born November 20 and I wrote my GED on November 21 and 22. My heart may have been with my daughter and her new family, but I stayed focused on the tests, thanks to the encouragement from the great instructors I had. Deep down I think I always knew I could do this, but actually having passed my GED now gives me great personal satisfaction. Learning never stops. It is something we do from the day we are born, that can never be taken away.

## **One Person's Trash...**

Alanna Densmore – NSCC Burrige Campus

Last summer as I was organizing and packing to move my small family after a rather messy breakup, I found a picture of Jesus in our churches' trash. It was a beautiful picture of him, large and nicely framed. Old, but in a comforting way and new; it had a retro look about it and I knew immediately that I wanted it.

I took it back to the house my ex; my daughter and I were still sharing thinking they might find it odd but not caring. After all, to all outward appearances' I had never been an overtly religious person. Growing up in Ottawa, Ontario my parents were founding members of our church and I was certainly equipped to make an intelligent decision regarding evolution and creation. I leaned towards evolution just because it made more sense to me than the pulpit pounding fundamentalists' I listened to growing up. Although I still attended church periodically it was basically so my daughter would have a foundation in which she could form her own opinion.

I did not pack this picture; I could not take my eyes off of it, at times feeling a familiarity that was almost uncomfortable. I kept the print upstairs where my daughter and I spent most of our time. I still had 3 months before all my affairs would be in order and I could make the move with as little stress as possible. This was my decision and a trying one at best.

As a middle aged woman I can honestly say I never thought I would see so much change at this time of my life. My decision to go back to school was always foremost on my mind but the death of my father prolonged it and left me feeling shaky and insecure. Also, not having the proper support system at home made me realize that a move was imminent.

My father, being the protective parent that he was, raised a secure adult but unbeknownst to him when he left us my feeling of security went with him. I was terrified, had lost my confidence and seemed to be searching for something I couldn't quite put finger on until I found the picture and it began to make sense.

I remember when I was a child my father and I had a ritual on Sunday mornings. I would wander into my parents bathroom while he was shaving and ask "Where are you going, Dad?" "Crazy" he would say, "Want to come?" "Sure" I'd say "sounds better than church" to which he would remind me of the reason we worshipped. "I'm not always going to be here to answer your questions, Miss Alanna." "Oh Dad," I'd say, not being able to fathom a time when this strong, beautiful, charming man would not be a part of my life.

Needless to say, I am no longer imagining a far off time. It has come whether I'm ready or not. I believe the picture I found was a sign from my father to remember. "Dear God, it's me, Alanna" I would recite as my parents listened, smiling because it was the title of a much beloved book they had given me by Judy Blume. As silly as it sounds I still pray this way as an adult.

I believe in my time of grief and loss, of despair and betrayal, when I couldn't find a comforting thought in the present, I was able to retreat to a time when comfort was more accessible. This realization has brought me a sense of balance I was lacking, a sense of wonder, even, in rediscovering something I thought I had lost, my father.

## **Learning as an Adult**

Tara Bates – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Learning as an adult can be a lot better for many people than learning as a child. In my opinion there are many reasons for this. One is that not all children get along well in school. Children with learning disabilities are often mixed in with children who don't have learning disabilities and this can make the children feel bad about themselves because they are not like everyone else.

Another reason is that teachers often don't have time for children that find learning difficult because they have too many to teach and once the majority of the class understands the lessons they move on to the next one. When this happens, children with learning problems often feel left behind because they are unable to keep up with the rest of the class.

A third reason is that some children are placed in special needs programs while others stay where they are even though they shouldn't and they are passed along so that the teachers won't have to deal with them for another year.

The fourth reason is that some children find it hard to make friends because of their learning difficulties. Other children can be bullies and can be very mean. This adds to the stress of not only having learning problems but also not having any friends to socialize with. It makes children feel frustrated and alone.

When an adult goes back to school things are totally different. At least from my experience things have been totally different. When an adult goes back to school the whole person is developed.

Instructors work on not only a person's learning in the usual subjects like Math and Reading and Writing, but also self-esteem and self-confidence. Adults in upgrading programs are able to learn at their own pace. Instructors go over material and keep going over it until everyone understands what they are learning. The class sizes are smaller which means adults get more one on one instruction.

Adults learn better reading, writing, math, social, computer, and personal skills. This helps adults to become better people. It helps when they are raising a family or wanting to go on to college or when they want to get a job or a better job if they already have one.

Sometimes through adult upgrading programs like the one I go to at the Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County people learn to understand important information like: following directions, money transactions are easier because of their math learning, they become more involved in their communities by doing something as simple as reading the newspaper everyday.

Going back to school as an adult is an important and worthwhile step. It makes everyday living easier. Learning as an adult makes for a better future for everyone.

## **Housekeeping**

Danny Benson – Dartmouth Literacy Network

I've been housekeeping for 28 years. I'm part of the housekeeping staff. I work in the Dartmouth General Hospital. Before that, I worked in Scotia Square.

I start work every day at 7:30am. I always get to work early. I like to give myself time to get ready. There are five staff members on the shift and I like to talk and smoke before work.

The first thing I do is go to the store room. Then I get my supplies for the day. The first thing I do is get the garbage. Next I dust and mop. After that I clean bathrooms. I get along well with the other workers. I am flexible and easy going. I like working on my own. I like to talk a bit with the other coworkers. I like to talk while I'm working. I work hard with the team. I like my job.

## **Adult Learning and Writing**

Nancy Marshall – Halifax Community Learning Network

When I heard about a contest for adult learning and writing I wanted to enter as soon as possible. I realised that this could be a once in a lifetime opportunity to discuss my career as a writer. It could also allow me to mention how adult learning greatly helps to boost ones level of self – esteem. Students working with tutors strive for success at their own pace. Qualifying students need to study academics in addition to attending the program. Subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as other courses, are the foundation of the program. The program is based on the individual interests and or personal goals.

Two of my academic and personal goals are to understand the rules one applies to solving mathematical problems and to understand the steps involved in working with money (talking about money puts a smile on my face.) It is at this point, allowing the wheels of my mind to turn; I start to imagine what the possibilities can be.

Writing is a vitally important aspect to my life; it helps in realizing my destiny as an author and entrepreneur. When asked why I work as a writer, I tell people “ I did not choose it, it chose me”. This is not to say writing is easy for me, I had to identify the skills it required and go out and get them. The next step was to find ways to move toward my goal of earning an income as an author. I worked writing my first book (a book of poems) titled Loose Laces and then as a greeting card designer / producer.

During the process of writing not only did I grow as an author, but I also grew as an entrepreneur learning to format a book, how to choose a printer and how to market and sell my product. From that point on, I made a conscience decision to move on with my writing. When I finished Loose Laces I started a company called ‘Marshall Mark Cards & Creations.’” under which I created transportation planners, these allow individuals to organize their transit commutes and schedule.

Having a desire to learn is key. Hold on to your spunk and don’t let your peers drag you down. If writing is your goal go ahead and move foreword with it. I read a saying the other day that was printed on a t-shirt ‘Just do it”, it stated. I have taken on that philosophy while I continue to learn. Learning at any stage in life can be really enjoyable.

Struggles come and go, but the goal at hand is to keep moving ahead. Achieving your success means making an honest effort to study despite challenges. As a woman with a physical challenge I am often asked if my disability affects my writing, I firmly believe it enhances it.

You should keep reaching for the stars.

## **Education: A Lifetime Commitment**

Rubin Millard – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Education has and will always be for me a lifetime commitment that started when I left school after finishing grade eight, to go to work to help support my family. My dad had gotten sick and was hospitalized for most of his life. This left us with little help and twelve hungry mouths to feed younger than me. This meant for me I had to leave school and find work to help reduce the burden and send whatever I could home to help Mom out.

But with little education or job experience I was able to get a job as short order cook and training later as a chef in a restaurant in Truro. This is where I learned to ask the questions I needed to learn to do a better job and move up or on. I soon learned one of the most important lessons in my life! There is no such thing as a stupid question. If you want to learn and become better at your job, ask questions! Work hard to achieve your goals in life, learn all you can and you will make it.

This is how I learned to be a baker, then a bakery specialist supervisor for a big company and then running my own bakery for a number of years. Along with this I have gone back to school to get my grade twelve and taken a number of courses : Dale Carnegie , small business management, accounting, food handling, creative writing, leadership development . This year I am taking a computer course through CAN-U (CUMBERLAND ADULT NETWORK for UPGRADING) along with a CPR course and another Food handling course.

I have learned over the years the secret in life is keep learning and asking questions. I do not think that because I am out of school now I can stop learning. Life is the best teacher of all, the more I learn the more I know and the wiser I become. Over the years I have learned to do more things by watching and asking questions like plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, wood crafts, etc.

Volunteering keeps me involved in my community, church, school and is another way of learning for me. I also get to teach at Lions the new members about lionism, drugs, sight program etc. I have taken courses on being club president, secretary, treasurer, zone chairman etc. I have also been on different committees of the district and international Lions. I have been on a few boards and I am on the advisory board of Nova Scotia Child Welfare. These are all learning experiences for me and help me to know how governments work. To me Education is a life time commitment and when you stop learning you are dead!



## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future- The Power of Adult Learning**

Ronnie Holesworth – Halifax Community Learning Network

I have been going to Adult Learning at the Spring Garden Library in Halifax for at least seven years. Each year that I go, I learn something new. Since going to Adult Learning I have learned how to look things up on the internet and find things in the library. I have improved my math and reading skills, I can read more difficult books with big words, and have put in a lot of hard work to learn more.

Adult Learning is good for me because it improves my resume and shows that I am a hard worker. I like to work hard, and learn new things that will help me in the work force and improve the work that I can do.

Adult learning is important to me because it lets me show that I can do well and learn about difficult and different things. My favourite thing to learn about has been learning how to read maps which has helped me on vacations. My biggest challenge is learning to read harder books. But I like this challenge because I like to work hard and reach a goal. My most recent goal is to finish a big novel. It's hard to read, but I like the story, which helps keep me reading!

I am happy that Adult Learning is here. If it wasn't here, we wouldn't have a place to learn important things like this.

## **Shame into Pride**

Tina Surette – NSCC Burrridge Campus

Each time I chose safety,  
Over fulfilling my dreams,  
I reinforce fear,  
Of returning to school, so it seems.

A broken record plays,  
It skips in my mind,  
It's there everyday.

Failure and useless,  
Some of the words,  
That play on my record,  
Seen and not heard.

Reasons for quitting,  
Reasons for going back,  
Words that restrained me,  
It was knowledge I lacked.

Knowledge not only  
of the literate kind,  
knowledge that's buried,  
within me I'd find.

Fear we can define,  
Angst, dread and distressed,  
Can keep you from feeling,  
Confident, clear or blessed.

I am a mother  
And a loving wife,  
I'm a woman with choices,  
I chose my life!

An admirable faculty,  
A steadfast heart,  
In the ALP,  
Is where I'll start.

### **Note:**

The shame of not completing my high school has been crippling. I quit at 16 after becoming pregnant. My grandparents have all of their grandchildren's graduation pictures on the wall, mine is not there because there isn't one. My children notice this and I have always told them someday I'll get my picture there. My oldest is

going to be 18 now and he looked at me and said this Christmas at my grandparents house while eating dinner, "mom, someday isn't ever going to get here is it?" After Christmas I made that call I'd been dreading to the NSCC, Burrige Campus and someday turned into Monday. I called my son with the news and being a child of very few words said, "ALRIGHT MOM!! Well, gotta go, I'm texting." It was the nicest thing anyone ever said. LOL!

## **Why I am Back in School?**

Beth Brewster – Kings County Adult High School

Why am I back in school,  
When all my friends get to lay by the pool?

In high school, there were so many mistakes I made,  
For all of these, dropping out was the debt I paid.

I always knew that I needed to go back,  
So that I could get my future back on track.

Going back to school was the best thing I've ever done,  
Who knew that adult learning could be so fun?

Through this time I've made good friends, As much as it will be great to be done,  
I'm going to be sad when this all comes to an end.

Adult high school seem to be the best,  
I would always choose this place above all the rest!

## **Shon's Story**

Shon Randell – Amherst Adult High School

Because I did not graduate high school, I always felt inferior to people that had an education. When ever I was around people who I thought were educated I became quiet and withdrawn, hoping no one would engage me in conversation.

Since starting adult high school I have gained much more than just an education. With my work ethic, and first class educators at the Amherst Adult High, I feel I've gained the confidence and the skills to succeed in life. The confidence I gained through the adult high was impart do to the teachers who realized the potential I have, they pushed me to be the best I can be. The more confidence I gained the easier it was to succeed at learning educational skills and life skills.

This is my last semester at adult high, and as I sit back and reflect on the time I have spent there I can honestly say that if it were not for the hard work, and dedication by myself and my teachers I would not have the confidence that I have today. All of the teachers at adult high have something different to the table. As long as the teachers at the adult high see your working hard to achieve your goals they will go above and beyond the call of duty to help you achieve those goals!

Some times I think of what my life would have been like if I had channelled all of the hard work, and dedication I put into the past jobs I have had and used it for my benefit not my employers. But it doesn't matter now what turn of events may happen to me. I know that with the new found abilities I received through adult high and their staff I can persevere and conquer any thing life throws at me.

## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future-The Power of Adult Learning**

Lydia Parris – NSCC Marconi Campus

Wow. Where do I begin to tell you of one of the most important stories of my life, and one of the most important issues? In 1980, with only 3 months to go before graduating with my grade 12, I quit school. Yep! Like most people I told myself that I will go back next year. Next year came, and so did many, many others. My life led me to travelling, marriage and children. With the children came the need to work, and thirty years ago, it wasn't all that difficult to get a job without your grade 12. It wasn't necessarily good jobs that I had, but it kept my children fed and clothed.

The years went by, and it was time for my children to go to school. I never told my children that I did not complete my grade 12 because I didn't want them to use that as an excuse not to succeed in their own studies. I spent as much time as I could helping them read and doing homework. Sometimes however it just wasn't enough, especially when I found out that my youngest daughter was diagnosed with a Learning Disability (or as we call it in our house "Learning Difference"). I started to blame myself because I wasn't "smart enough" to help her. My daughter doesn't think that because she thinks I am the smartest person she knows.

I quit my dead end job and was presented with the opportunity to attend the NSCC Marconi Campus in Sydney. I am enrolled in the ALP program and will be graduating in June this year with my grade 12. With the overwhelming support of my family, friends and the instructors at Marconi, regaining my self esteem has been the one of the greatest rewards that I have received while attending this campus. In June, with my three daughters in attendance, I will walk with pride to that stage to get my diploma because I am the smartest person my daughter knows.

P.S. Did I mention I intend on returning to Marconi next year? Something else I've learned.....it's not just anything I can learn.....I can learn everything.

## **Continuing My Education**

Rayburne Whynot – Queens Learning Network

The steel fabricating shop where I worked for eighteen years had gone out of business. I've worked there as a fabricator and welder. The last couple of years it got harder for me to keep up with all the certifications that were needed to do the jobs.

When the ISO 9000 International Organization for Standardization came in effect that made it difficult for me. With the level of education I had, that made it harder for me to read and understand what it all meant.

In the meantime employees and I were talking about upgrading. They mentioned about the old Milton school, just outside of Liverpool; there they were taking students in for The Adult Learning Network Program. The next time I was laid off I called the Adult Learning Network and was accepted.

I went there for two weeks after which I got a call to go back to work. I was only back to work for a short time when the company closed their doors for good. That's when I made a firm decision about going back for more education. So I picked up the phone once more and called the Adult Learning Network in Bridgewater. On the other end was a very pleasant person talking back to me and was very excited to enroll me in the upgrading program.

There I spent about four years, one evening a week, with some very encouraging and helpful tutors. That wasn't enough so I started in their classes three to five days a week. The teacher and the students there are great to be with. It is a wonderful learning atmosphere to be in. We are learning, also we are having fun with it.

What I expect to get out of my learning are more reading abilities, spelling and writing skills. After that I may try for my grade twelve, then a course in something that would interest me. It is hard for me to think of something at this point that I would like to work at for the rest of my working years before retirement.

## **Going Back to School**

Jamileh Yousef – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I was not happy because I did not get my grade 12. So I decided to do something about it. I told myself over and over to go back to school. And a friend told me about improving your education.

So I went to Community College. The person who worked there sent me here to the Lunenburg Country Adult Learning Network in Bridgewater. At first I was nervous because I was out of school for 30 years. I met the students and instructor; they are very friendly people to know, and I'm happy I met them.

I'm doing really well. The reason I decided to back to school is to improve my education and to get a better job so that I can support my children. I have learned a lot about math, reading and spelling. My main goal is to help adults and children who cannot help themselves. And I'm not giving up until I get my grade 12. Without education you don't have anything. I told my children if they want a better future they have to continue their education.

After I'm done here I would like to go to Community College and take a course about looking after children and adults. Then I will look after myself and my children on my own with no help from anybody. I will depend on myself to prove I can do it.



## **Why I Chose to Come Back to School**

Eugene Munroe - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My name is Eugene Munroe. I am forty-two years old and there would probably be a lot of reasons why I came back to school. The one reason that always sticks with me is to prove to myself and everybody else, including my family, that I can do it. I can actually accomplish this and get rewarded from this.

I will not be like my dad who never finished school or did anything to try to benefit himself. Instead of making his life and his family's life better, he just wanted to live it up and drink. That made me think that I didn't want anything like that. I wanted to be different and to make my life better for me and my family. So that motivates me to try to be the best in everything I do.

I am trying to actually work my way up by earning my grade 12 and getting the career that I would like to keep until I retire. Grade 12 will give me all that and more. So then I can inspire my children to stay in school and finish their grade 12. Then, if they want to go to college or to get a trade, that opportunity is there for them.

I can show my brother and sister that education is still a good thing, because neither of them have their grade 12. So actually getting my grade 12 puts me ahead of the game with all my family. Hopefully this would inspire them to do the same thing before they get too old. I chose to go back to school to make a better life for me and my family.

## **Roy's Story**

Roy Allen – Yarmouth Learning Network

I came from a family that was very poor. There were fifteen children in the family. I had to go to work when I was thirteen years old. I went fishing on scallop boats. I could not read or write very well but I was a very hard worker. I hung around people that I should never have been around. In time I got away from these people. As I got older, things started to look up. I worked out West.

When I got home, I thought that I would go back to school. So, I went to the EI office to see if they would put me into upgrading courses. After awhile they got me into the upgrading course.

I am very glad I went back to school. It doesn't matter what someone says, it's what you want to do that's important. So, I encourage you not to give up on your goal in life. Go and do it. Someday, you will not be sorry for what you have done.

Since I have been back in school, my mind has opened up. There are things that I did not know and I am doing quite well. The teachers are very good. If I have a problem, they are all willing to help me. Since I came to school my family is very proud of me. They think that I am doing a good job. They are 100% with me to get a better job in the future.

## **Living & Learning for a Viable Future-The Power of Adult Learning**

Carrie Morrison – NSCC Marconi Campus

Wow! This is an amazing chance for all of us to share our stories. Stories that might be an inspiration to help others from making big decisions like leaving school during your younger years, or not going back for reasons of being scared, overwhelmed, or just stubborn. Many people just say they are too old, but really you are never too old for education. Second chances don't come around very often but when it comes to school, those chances open a whole new world you just have to go after it. This is my Story, of my second chance.

My name is Carrie Morrison, and I am currently enrolled as a mature student in the ALP program at NSCC, Marconi Campus. My story began when I was in Junior High, I wanted to be a police officer when I graduated, but was soon told I was too short. That put a damper on my dreams and school didn't interest me in any other way. So after spending 2 years in grade 7 and 2 years in grade 8 when I reached grade 9, and turned 16, I walked into school for my very last time. Something I have regretted ever since. When I told my mom, she was very disappointed with me and said I was not going to be hanging around not doing anything with my LIFE. I was told I had to find a job or enrol myself in a trade that I might be interested in. That's the day I started with the customer service industry in food and retail.

At the age of 21 I became a mother, of a wonderful baby boy on Jan.22, 1990. I had entered another whole new world of learning. How to raise a son on my own shuffling with child care, working, meals and alone time with my son. My son is 19 today, and has turned out to be a very respectful, loving, considerate, young man who graduated last year from Riverview Rural High, and is now attending UCB in communications. He wants to be a police officer. It's amazing what you're able to learn from your children as they grow up. Wanting to give him a good life I knew I had to do something with mine. I enrolled in a Hospitality course in 1991, and from there I worked in that field for the next 20 years. I have enjoyed every moment learning new things everyday, and especially teaching others what I have learned. The hospitality industry is a very fulfilling job because you learn and meet new people everyday, but there has always been a void. That void was not finishing school.

I tried doing the GED, but that did not work. I needed the discipline of a classroom to help me focus as a student. When my son graduated I wanted him to look at me the same way I felt for him on that day. Full of pride and joy, on, his great accomplishment. That is what brings me here today. I enrolled in the ALP program for the second intake on Sept. 29, 2009. Which, ironically is 24 years, and, 1 day from the day I quit in Junior High. On that day my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday I was very nervous, and overwhelmed but soon became comfortable and relaxed. It is amazing how the faculty and other students can calm you down. When our studies started I found the younger students right there to encourage you and help you along. As a mature student the atmosphere being in the ALP program is so different and rewarding from when I was younger it makes you want to learn. The journey of my life will continue through the years to come in education and life experiences learning new things and opening new doors. We all have hope and dreams, but EDUCATION is

the greatest human achievement to stand up for and Applause yourself and others who want to learn. Thank you for hearing my story, and I have much respect for all educators out there, it's an honour to LEARN from you.

## **My Essay**

Michelle Francis - Unama'ki Training & Education Centre, Eskasoni

I think First Nations People feel betrayed by early settlers because we have been. Early settlers came with their fake brotherhood and false smiles. They have taken our ways of survival and tradition, and beauty of open minds. Then they tried to discard our people and our understanding to whatever suited and still suits their needs. Once they thought they had reached enough understanding; that is they believed they knew all about the whole existence of our native people, which there is more than meets the eye, they took gross advantage of this knowledge.

I strongly believe that early settlers knew the effect they had on our untouched culture. I believe this because they had surly corrupted other cultures in the course of history and had continued doing so no matter the consequence. They also did this entirely for their own selfish needs and wants. Look at the Holocaust for example and currently the treatment of locals in Darfur.

The settlers' true intentions had become an obvious understanding to our people. If they could have bleached our hair and skin and break our language we would still not be "intelligent," or "perfect" enough. When our people stood up against these new settlers, although constantly exposed to their controlling ways, they refused to die or be broken. Early settler's laws and views were easy to read. Their way of living came from a long traditional way of scheming, taking over, following rulers and kings. They also had different beliefs; they were headstrong to their own set of ideals and what was important in their lives, things like comfort, convenience and material goods were necessities; the very things our culture could live without.

The virtues of our culture were to learn lessons through stories, myths, and ceremonies. We love and honour all living things; we treat each other and the earth with all it's creatures with utmost respect.

Settlers saw the way of native living as a hassle and curse, it took them back to inconvenient times. They couldn't understand why natives would reject their way of living. At first they thought we were too naive to understand, then they realized that we preferred our traditional lifestyle. The settlers made a shameful mistake with their arrogance and like any shameful mistake they tried to cover it up by eliminating our culture. These times brought rejection and miscommunication; then came forceful times of traumatizing torture. It was the time of our transformation from savages to civilized beings.

If I had a way to express myself in a careful environment with the right material I know I could explain to my people: that we had been scorned, tortured and murdered and forced to bite our native tongues. We need to heal and forgive. Let those times go so we can move along. The early settlers have made changes where we are recognizable. We need to stand strong together and take advantage of those changes. We will not get burned for practicing our ways now. No one can truly hurt us. Our native communities are rock solid enough to create a foundation. Native communities know these words I speak of. We want to read it, to be acknowledged.

We want the chance to say we have been invaded by intruders then we can heal and stay strong like our ancestors once did. We don't need to fear the future based on the past. We need to shape the future because of the past.

## **Weight Loss Challenge**

Kerry Ann Fitzpatrick – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Kerry Ann Fitzpatrick. It's very hard to lose weight. Food can be very addicting and it's a very hard challenge to overcome. It takes a lot of motivation and willpower. It can be very stressful, you feel like nothing fits you and people make fun of you. Also, it makes you regret things, everyday, when you wake up in the morning.

I've tried a lot of things. Me and my good friend Jenny joined the gym, but it just wasn't the best thing for me. I have also tried many diets, so now I've decided to see a dietician to see what I can do. Her name is Anna. Anna tries to help me as much as she possible can. Sometimes I look in the mirror and feel like crying, because being overweight can be really depressing. It is not easy living like this day-to-day. It's a new year, a new beginning, it's 2009.

Everything I do upsets me. Every time I have chips or any other junk food around my son Cody, it doesn't show him a good example. I have to make sure I eat better not just for myself and my satisfaction but for my son, too. He's all that matters to me in the end. I find a treat week helps, but I also find that the bad food is the hardest challenge. So, I'm hoping my dietician can help me through this. One evening I was watching Oprah and she was talking about weight loss and how hard it is to lose weight after you've gained it, and you know what? She was right about everything she said, and I see things as "you make life what you want it to be."

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Kenneth McDow – Halifax Community Learning Network

I came to Keshen Goodman Public Library looking for help to read and write. I started coming in 2003 to Clayton Park to learn. I have learned more reading and writing and math and history and I am still coming and still learning at the library in Clayton Park.

Now I have the knowledge to do things myself. I have more confidence in myself to do more reading and writing. I can fill in applications and read newspapers and use the phonebook to look up words in the dictionary. I can manage my money and pay all my bills in my house, too.

I have written six or seven stories at the library in my class with my teacher. I have published stories in NALD, HCLN newsletters, Over the Mountain Yearbook, and the HCLN website. I have also taken computer courses. They were Bridging the Gap, a computer workshop and introduction to the internet. In my class we used the computer to learn math, history and typing. I want to get my grade twelve diploma in time and I will too.

In the past my wife had to do all my business in the house and pay my bills for years. I did not understand my money.

I have my Diploma from the Bridging the Gaps adult literacy program, to improve my literacy and computer skills. I still do the computer in the library.

I would like to help people who cannot read and write. I would like to get my teacher's diploma and come to the library and teach the people coming so they can read and write.



## **The Smartest Move I Ever Did**

Heli Stanton – Yarmouth Learning Network

Before I even thought about going back to school again, I was going fishing for a living. Then one cold day we were out fishing and I got a pain in my chest. I didn't think much about it so I kept on working but later on it got worse, so I went into the wheelhouse and after awhile we came in from fishing.

Next day I started walking up town, but someone told my sister that I had a pain in my chest and she was mad. She took me up to out patients to see a doctor about the pain. After a while he told us that it was a small heart attack and they had to send me up to Halifax as soon as possible.

I was up there for almost a month so, when I came home, my sister wanted to take care of me.

After awhile my brother decided to get married so we came down to Yarmouth to the wedding. I decided to stay down here with my brother. Later on I looked around for a job. I tried every place I could think of.

Then I heard about the Yarmouth Learning Centre, so I went up there and did some test to see what I know. After a while I got a phone call telling me to come in soon. When I told my family and friends that I was going back to school again, they said that was the best thing I ever did and they were proud about it.

I was scared when I started school, but the teachers and the other people around there helped me out a lot. The teachers will stay beside you until you know how to do your work or get it in your head. I am really glad that I decided to come back to school.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

James Kehoe – Yarmouth Learning Network

The power of adult learning and what it means to me. Adult learning is just that, power, power that I should have obtained when I was a child, but for many different reasons did not. Now I am very under educated, very poor and at a time in my life where it is not really worth living. I am a recovering alcoholic and drug addict and I also have a criminal record.

Where I stand right now, I don't have much chance of succeeding in life at all, short of winning the lottery or turning to illegal activities. I also take seizures which limits what I can do. I spend a lot of time alone and that is not good for me, so left unchanged I probably wouldn't last much longer.

So, here I am, 30 years old and back in school. When I first got back in school I didn't know what to expect, but I didn't think I would like it. After I got here, I found that it was not at all what I was expecting and I do like it a lot.

For me school is not just a place to get an education, it's a reason to live, get out of bed, not spend so much time alone and maybe make a life worth living. So you see adult learning is probably going to make the difference between life and death.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Jean Chapman - Yarmouth Learning Network

Coming back to school was difficult because my first day of school was also the day my husband 'Larry' was diagnose with cancer. So I went to school crying and going back and forth to school and to the hospital. I had to put school on hold until Larry got better but the inevitable happened- Larry died on August 19, 2007.

I promised Larry that I would go back to school in September and I did. I am glad I kept my promise. Going back to school was hard when I had just lost Larry, but it keeps me busy and I am learning so much. It has taught me how to be independent and try things I would never have tried before. It has given me a life that I never dreamed of. My self-esteem is much better. I can read and understand things I would have gotten Larry to explain to me before. Now I can understand for myself.

Having a great teacher who is so patient and very helpful with the work and with everyday life problems, makes going to school a wonderful place to go. The reason I say this, I only had teachers who didn't care, and I got sent to the principal's office for not getting your work right or not knowing how to do something. It is great to have a wonderful teacher like Julie. It makes learning more fun and I look forward to going to school everyday. I don't like it when there are storms days; that is how much I love coming here. When Thursdays afternoon's classes are finished I can't wait till Monday to return.

I have grown a lot since my husband's death and since I have been in this program.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Michael Muise – Yarmouth Learning Network

My name is Micheal Muise. I was sitting at home and was not doing anything at home, just trying to think about what I could do to take up my time at home. I thought back when I was younger and I thought maybe I should go back to school.

I looked into it. I have been out of school for at last 14 years and I would like to try to learn again. So, I went back to school at the Yarmouth Learning Network.

When I went back, I didn't know how to read that good and I didn't know how to do math that well. About halfway through the first year, all of my math that I knew how to do before started to come back to me. Here, now in the second year, my math is really good.

My reading was the pits in the first year, but I am trying hard to improve in it. I did a bit in the first year, but in the second year I think that I am doing even better and all my teachers are saying good things about me.

I think a lot of the help was from the other adults in the class. We help each other. Like with the reading and the math. I could understand better with other people my own age. That's what helps me. I hope to write the GED in the near future.

## **How Coming Back to School has Affected Me**

Muriel Beals – Yarmouth Learning Network

Coming back to school has really helped me a lot. On my first day of school, being in Julie's class was awesome. I felt comfortable and relaxed with the other students. They are very nice. We are learning a lot of new subjects which is great. Julie is a wonderful teacher. If I am not able to understand my work, she is always there to help me understand my lessons, and tells me to be patient with my work, she tells me I will get better at it in time and just to do my best.

I have more confidence in my studies. The only subject is math that I have problems with but it's improving. I have more self-esteem and I am getting to meet new people. I am really looking forward to getting my grade 12, and I am very excited about that.

My good friend Jean encouraged me to go back to school which I am thankful that she did help me. I am really doing good in school, love the school work, and the homework. I am really learning about a lot of new subjects in class and I really enjoy being on the computer when we do our summaries. We are looking up a lot of good topics and discussing what we have learned. My goal is that I want to get my education and to get my grade 12. I would love to get a job working with children in a daycare. This would make my dream come true.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Sheila Deon – Yarmouth Learning Network

The affect is to better myself, to get better grades and hope to find a better job and be able to work in a store using good skills and good manners. I was nervous but as the school got on, I was feeling a little better. I learned how to do math, science, and spelling.

Returning to school is making me feel good for myself. I'm not down in the dumps. My life is going better. I was very nervous the first day. I had to leave school the first time two years ago because my boyfriend got sick and he had to go to Halifax for treatment. We had to stay to the Lodge That Gives for 8 weeks, and then he passed away. Then my mother got sick and died, so I had a hard time.

I decided to come back to school this January. I have made new friends. My math I think is improving and I have good self-esteem and good skills.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Brenda Bailey – Yarmouth Learning Network

First, I am 61 years old. I have been out of school for many years. I came back just to get out of my apartment and was looking for something to do. I enjoy adult learning because my math has improved greatly. In my younger years, I just could not concentrate on math. Schools were so different back in the day. I am learning to write summaries which were difficult for me at first. Now, I enjoy writing them. I have a great instructor who has helped me a lot with math.

I am not looking to go into the workforce because I have an illness, but I do my school work. I have learned a great deal about life skills, meeting people, and my instructor has certainly been patient with me during math class.

When I first walked through the door, I was very scared. The instructor and other students welcomed me. I have met really nice people and we help each other from time to time. They made it easy to learn all over again.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Joline Fitzgerald – Yarmouth Learning Network

When I was a teenager, everyone always told me you will not get anywhere without school, but no, I didn't believe them because I was a teenager and I knew it all. HA! If that was only true! I quit school when I was two months into grade ten. Not long after, I got a job as a cashier, then worked at McDonald's, then in a fish plant. I quit school in the first place because I was a teenager and didn't want to go to school. All I had on my mind was that I wanted to party. That really took a toll on me in the long run.

Two years ago, I had a baby boy and found that I couldn't afford to take care of my child because I was on unemployment. I was always short of money and always borrowing money from my family. Then, I finally realized that I was not going to go back to working at McDonald's or in a fish plant, I was going to come back to school. Now I am really progressing in school. I'm waiting to get in Level III and I really can't wait to get the whole school thing over with so I can take a course and finally start doing something I really like.

I first started level 2 about a year ago. I came back because I finally realized that I wasn't going anywhere without an education. Now I'm so happy to be back in school and after I'm done Level 4, I'm thinking about taking a course in something like CCA because I really like to help people and I like being around others.

The power of adult learning has really smartened me up a lot and now I will finally get my career started after my education is done. When you have a baby, your whole life changes. It's so crazy because people that don't have kids really have no idea what it's like, that you want to do everything you can just to keep your child happy, and to give them what they always wanted. That's why I'm back in school - for my little guy and I really wish I could get in the heads of some of the teenagers these days and tell them my story, and try to tell them stay in school. But I know it would be just like telling me when I was a teenager. They just will never listen and they will have to learn on their own.



## **Living and Learning for a Viable Future – The Power of Adult Learning**

Stephanie McCulley – NSCC Truro Campus

I believe that we all start out on the path to education knowing that it is a requirement of us as people. We grow and learn what is necessary to either succeed or fail, depending on our circumstances; choices we make, and chances we have been given. As a child, there was a time when I would strive to get good marks, to hear praise for the work I did, to know that I was doing good, but I never quite measured up. My grades were turning from eighties to seventies, sixties until I felt like I was never going to get the help I needed. And I didn't, so I gave up just after turning fourteen. I knew what it was like to grow up fast, since I had been on my own for two years. I gave up on my education, my future, and any hope I had. I just didn't realize it.

After having my child at the age of twenty two, I knew that showing my little girl the possibilities of imagining your life and making your dreams come true would be impossible. At least without having touched it myself. Thank heaven for little girls.

After much time, hardship and tears, I knew what I must do. Not only for my own unfulfilled accomplishments, sense of pride or insatiable need to be useful in this world. But also for the concern I had for my child slipping between the cracks of the system, being lost in the sea of faces in the playground or the lunchroom. She deserved better, and because she deserved better, I had to be better.

I went back to school. I now enjoy a classroom that feels a bit like home. Instructors that, although have very distinctive personalities and teaching styles, are much alike. When you look closely you can see the light in their eyes when you finally figure out what it is they desperately want you to learn. It changes you a little every time someone takes the time not to let you give up, but makes it easier to succeed. I have been blessed with a support system in my school, in all aspects of life from personal to financial issues. When you need a little extra help, someone is there. Of all places to find so much caring, support and warmth, I never thought I would call this place school.

After establishing a solid twenties average in math, I can proudly say that I am making eighties and nineties now. Something I didn't believe I could do, until someone took the time to not let me fall between the cracks of our education system. The journey has only just begun, but I eagerly await the rest of my life to come, and remember what and who made a difference. In the end, it all matters.

## **Who Said That You Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks?**

Stephen P. Burrows – NSCC Marconi Campus

Hello, I am a 44 year old student and this is my story. I left school at an early age, because I had experienced difficulty for a great part of my young life. I didn't realize the power of education until recently; I like to think that I am just a late Bloomer! When you come back to school at my age, you have to leave all of your pride at the door, because through these doors you feel like you are beginning all over again. Don't get me wrong, the teachers are top notch; they are here to boost your confidence and to see and help you realize your dreams. As a result all of the doors are open for you. All that you have to do is go through them.

Now, this is where it gets difficult as an adult learner; at the point where the fear of failure comes back into life again ready to hold you back just when you are attempting to move forward. I feel that I am going to get my grade twelve here at NSCC Marconi Campus and realize my true potential. I can say with certainty that there are faculty and staff here to help me achieve my goals. In essence, they will give you all the respect that you deserve as an adult learner and nothing but your best interest in mind. When you are reading my story and you feel that you would like to receive your education with the goal to live a better life, then pick yourself up and chart your direction to the nearest adult learning centre and begin one of the most important journeys of your life!!

## **What Happens To a Life Without Learning?**

Sarah Holesworth – Halifax Community Learning Network

Life is special  
Life is sweet  
Life is hard to keep

If we didn't have learning where would we be?  
Lost without philosophy

Life wouldn't be easy without knowing  
Going on and on without growing

There would be no learning link  
The thoughts that keep us tickled pink

Everything would be blue  
If no one had a clue

Learning would be just a dream

## **What Learning Has Meant To Me**

Bonnie Halliday – Queens Learning Network

I quit school in grade 7. I know it was not very wise but that what i did. Until just recently I wasn't going any where without education, I couldn't find a job as I never had my grade 12. So I heard about Adult Learning in my community. I thought I was too old to go but they say you're never too old.

I had three girls and they were finding it hard in school just as I did. They wanted to quit, they hated it. I told them don't be like me keep going, take the good with the bad and I am very proud of them now. So I said to myself one day, practice what you preach, now I am back in school and loving every minute of it.

I guess it was the best thing that ever happened to me, My teacher makes me feel good about myself and she teaches me what I need to know. I am a whole new person, I don't have that feeling any more of being looked down on thanks to her. She is my mentor and my reason to learn. I strive every day to get my G.E.D so I can finally say I did it.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Ivan Sampson – Colchester Adult Learning Association

At the present age of 51, I realize the changes and demands of today's workforce. After leaving High School in grade 11, I decided to work at a low level job and began family life. These decisions have taken me in various directions. My new direction won't change the past but will take that and present knowledge to assist my future endeavours.

I was raised with just one sibling by my adoptive mom who, though herself not highly educated, gave her support. At age 10, in grade five, I was a straight "A" student with excellent penmanship with a focus on detail. When I entered grade 6 things began to change. It seemed more important to help my mother and domestic ways were of general interest to me. My mother did not condone my low grades but she was accepting of the help. My sister's vision, however, was to attend St FX and after obtaining her degrees now works for the ST FX campus's ongoing studies department..

At the young age of 17, I left high school for a service station job. Still living at home and helping my mom, it seemed the best of both worlds. At age 20 and barely making ends meet, family life began for me and soon my first of 2 daughters was born. With only grade 11, I moved from job to job with very marginal increase in pay or security. In 1983 I wrote my G.E.D. but was unsuccessful on my first try because of time limitations to prepare.

Many years later, and now 51 years old, I feel drawn back to get my G.E.D. Even with 23 years of experience in landscaping, of which many were self employment, I now feel more secure to once again change my life's path by obtaining my grade 12.

My goal is to meet the educational requirements and apply my years of experience as a team player. Leaving school was a mistake and knowing help is out there makes the conversion to a high school completion a thankful choice. The opportunity is mine and now I see the results are endless.

## **The Power of Adult Learning**

Rachel Murphy – Colchester Adult Learning Association

It was fall 2006. I was sitting home as a young mother with my first daughter.

Some of the challenges I face as being a mom was that I need to pursue my grade 12 to become what I want to be and to be a good role model for my family now today I am a Mom of three young children.

Returning to school was one of the best things that I have done for my self in life. I learned that it is never too late to keep going and not to stop until I am at the end of the road. I am not near to the end yet; I have a bit of a way to go yet before I get there.

When I started out at Colchester Adult Learning Association I was in level 1 now I am in level 2. Being a part of Colchester Adult Learning Association I have bettered myself in social skills, personal skills, writing skills, spelling skills, math skills, and the structure of class time.

I find it very relaxing while I learn. I like working and talking in class time. I really enjoy science study in class because I am interested in becoming a Continuing Care Assistant when I complete the Colchester Adult Learning Association Program.

Sometimes when I see myself in my mind receiving my Continuing Care Assistant Certificate, I feel good about the power of learning.

## **Getting an Education**

Marlene Underwood – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

For me to have a viable future is to get an education. Therefore I need my grade twelve and some type of college degree to pursue a job choice in home care, which will enable me to go forth in the work force and get the job I want.

The previous jobs that I have had in the past have left me laid off or the work places have shut down because of the economy. The past jobs that I have had were not jobs that I had to use my brain. Going back to school has taught me that no matter how old you are you can still learn.

The job I am working towards is in home care. I am currently working on getting my grade twelve GED, then I can apply to Community College to take a one year course in home care. In completing my home care course I will be ready to go out in the work place and work with the elderly. I feel this will be a very rewarding experience. There will always be elderly people in society, so I believe that there will always be work in this field.

To me getting my education and a job in home care is my ultimate goal in my future. Working with the elderly would enable me to meet, listen, learn, help, and understand from people that someday I will be one of.

## **Going Back To School**

Connie Lowther - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

One day this girl was finished her grade nine but she did not go back to go to grades 10, 11 or even grade twelve. She was 16 years old and she said she was not going back to school and she did not because she hated school and the kids were mean to her. She already had a job delivering news papers so she knew she could make money. And then she moved to Ontario and got a job working at Dairy Queen in Ontario with her sister- in- law. She did not like it up there because it was too fast, too many people and too much traffic.

She moved back home and started to work at the Oxford Frozen Foods until she quit because they were teasing her and calling her names. So she quit that job .Then she went and had two kids. They started school and she was helping her then 8 year old son with his homework. And he told her, "No, mommy, you are doing it wrong" so she sat back thought about it and thought.

She told her boyfriend that she wanted to go to school again to get her GED. He said that is good because she felt stupid that she was getting grade three homework wrong so her social worker got her in touch with CAN-U. They made appointment about what she needed to work on so she went they found out. She had a lot to learn so they asked her where she was from. She said Oxford so they set a time to go to class and be on time to get her kids from school. She started school. It was hard at first but the teacher helped her out and explained what needed to be done and she started to remember all the stuff she learned in school when she went in grade nine. She was happy about that and happy about going to school to get her GED and she even met a lot of nice people that were nice to her not rude or anything.

She hopes she passes her GED and gets a job then she will be happy to work and earn a pay check every two weeks .So going back to school helped her learn her math skills and how to spell and write and even learned to use the computer. It even boosted herself confidence not to be shy and ask for help when she needed it. She passed her GED, got this great job and moved into a nice house and raised her family right, knowing that she was well educated.



## **Wanda's Story**

Wanda Newell – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

Hi, my name is Wanda Newell. I am from Guysborough. I am 35 years old. I am currently attending an ALP GAP Program in Guysborough.

My life has always been a struggle to go to school. I could not read and keep up with the class, so I quit half way through grade 10. Now I am without a job and no grade 12. Being married with two children and struggling to keep them in school is a huge task. I don't understand their work, so I can't help them when they are struggling. I am always asking people to read my letters that I receive from my doctor concerning my daughter who was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. There is a lot of information that I just don't understand. For me to be able to pick up a letter about my daughter and actually read it and know what it is saying would boost my self confidence. For me to be able to explain to someone the terms of my daughter's condition would make me feel ecstatic.

This program has turned my life around. Knowing I need to brush up on some of my education I feel this program will steer me in that direction. My self confidence has gotten a lot better since the ALP GAP Program. One of my goals is to be able to stand in front of a group and speak without getting frustrated. At times I felt as if I were all alone; now, as I go through this ALP GAP Program, I realize that I'm not.

One of my goals is to take my G.E.D and the training I need to enter a career in home care.

## **John's Story**

John Hanlon – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

Hi, name is John Hanlon. Before I came to GALA, my life was pretty good. I had my grade 12. I went through the Special Ed program in High School. I even took I. I. Marine course to help the fishermen. I had a job at a fish plant that is now gone.

I am back in school to help me find a better job. The ALP GAP Program helps with my reading, writing, and math. I am getting better at it. My only set back was I was in a car accident while traveling to the program. It was the first one I ever had. It was scary, but no one go hurt.

I hope to have a permanent job when I leave here.

## **Virtues of Learning**

Lexi Landry – NSCC Truro Campus

Life is but a series of mistakes, from the cradle to the grave, and depending on our up bringing and self worth, we are given essential tools in life to fix them: to build and grow. Yes, mistakes are easy to make, easier still to repeat them over and over again. After a pattern has been set forth, it's up to you to either break the cycle or repeat it. I am a repeat offender when it comes to mistakes. I wear my shame like a cashmere sweater. It's soft, comfortable, and form fitting to me now, but without an added layer it becomes irritating and unpleasant. That extra layer is inanity rearing its head in the form of a hard outside exterior. I have got by on wits and lessons learned, but at 27, I question this "ability" to learn, since I somehow find myself in that proverbial `same but different` situation repetitively. And for all that I have learned, where do I apply it in an everyday situation?

For example: I have learned that as a juvenile, when you experiment with alcohol and drugs, after the first five times it's no longer experimentation, but a life long struggle to say no. Repercussions become countless and the ability to care depletes to zero. And as an adult I have learned that the past can be as haunting as a restless spirit, it has energy and a passion to consume you, to draw you back to where it waits, lonely for your foolish ways. I have also learned that mistakes, no matter how little, can cost you everything. That if you tempt fate too much, you are left with a grief so deep and profound that it can change you to your core.

Similar to being reborn, except devoid of all the wonder lust that greets your now open eyes. Instead you're reborn with a vast emptiness inside of you, some days you swim easily though your despair and you function at a level that leaves you looking stable to the others that come in contact with you. But oh, those off days, I fear them as I would fear an embrace from the Devil. I know the heart palpitations well, and \*the sinking feeling of guilt that engulfs me like a tsunami, dragging me under, taunting me with a past that is choking off my lifeline to the future. I have been stuck in my thoughts and my ways for too many years, and I feel older than my youth. Fear of being taught a different way to live keeps me rooted to my anxiety, I slip my cashmere sweater on yet again.

School, in the beginning, was an escape from all these thoughts. For all the street smarts I had accumulated, I had no idea what it meant to apply myself to a classroom, to a set schedule. But I did know that for the first time, I wasn't repeating my well known cycle, I was learning things that could be applied to everyday life. At times I push, expecting more from myself than others do. What look like little accomplishments to some is a war won in my mind, and what a perfect analogy for me. I am one woman fighting a personal battle against her own past, and school is my victory.

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## **A Story**

Holly d'Entremont – Barrington Community Learning Centre

Grey, old, torn, frayed at the edges,  
faded and left alone for years, unopened,  
with an unsteady hand the cover falls back,  
a long slow breath blows over the page,  
the dust surrounds me like a cloud,  
falling back over the pages, dust-covered pages,  
words hardly visible. A story.

Do I dare? Should I stop or go forward?  
It's like a dark, cold, eerie path in the night, shadows all around me.  
I'm scared, my legs, arms, even my mind, all frozen, cannot move,  
don't want to.

Run.  
Run fast, get away, far away, as far as possible. Hide, stay in my warm safe place,  
like a warm blanket, wrapped around me, comfortable, familiar, my world.  
No one to judge me, criticize me, that look that says,  
"I'm better, smarter, more intelligent than you."

No!  
Stop running.

I step out, unsure, with interest edging me on. Uncertain.  
I look at the letters all running together, not knowing how to start.  
Intimidating.  
A child tugs on my sleeve, rosy cheeks, eyes as blue as the sea,  
"Mommy, play with me. Read me a story."  
As I pick her up, my mind is racing, trying to think of a game, any game.  
A game to distract her from ....  
A story.

## **This Place**

Gertrude Himmelman – Barrington Community Learning Centre

This place smells, it is  
Making me sick to my stomach  
I do not like this place  
I want to go home

Quiet down! I heard in a loud voice  
Why is she so loud? I do not like her loud voice  
She scares me  
I want to go home

Who is this woman?  
She is not my mother.  
I miss my mother  
I want to go home.

My name is Miss Spruce  
I am your teacher she said  
I miss my mother  
I want to go home

Find a seat boys and girls and sit down  
I sat down, looked all around me  
Who are all of these boys and girls?  
Where is my friend?  
I don't see her. I want to go home!

She gave us all a sheet of paper to do  
She did not explain what to do with the paper  
I want to go home  
I look at my paper, then peek at the girl's next to me  
I thought she might be smarter than me....

I don't dare to ask Miss Spruce for help  
I don't want to hear her loud voice again  
I copied all the answers from the girl next to me  
I want to go home.

This place is old  
I am a little nervous  
I like this place  
"Welcome." I hear in a friendly voice,  
"Welcome to the Adult Learning Centre."  
I like this place.

She has a nice smile and a friendly voice

Who is she?  
I like this place  
My name is Teacher  
I am your instructor.  
I need a teacher  
I like this place.

Find a seat she tells us  
I look all around the men and women and see  
My sister, I sit next to my sister  
I like this place

She gives us all a sheet of paper  
She explains what she wants us to do  
I do not peek on anyone's paper  
I like this place.