



Opening Possibilities through Learning

Submissions to
Adult Learners' Week Contest
March 1 - 7, 2010

Produced by Literacy Nova Scotia

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Nova Scotia Proclamation: Adult Learners' Week - March 2, 2010

WHEREAS the Canadian Commission for UNESCO has declared March 1st through 7th. 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, Darrell Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of March 1st – 7th, 2010 to be “Adult Learners' Week” in the Province of Nova Scotia.

**Darrell Dexter
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, "Opening Possibilities through Learning".

For the third 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; over 90 learners participated in these workshops held in Amherst, Antigonish, Barrington Passage, Eskasoni, Halifax and Windsor. 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 70 submissions.

The contest winners were:

- **Stephan Cunningham**, Barrington Community Learning Centre Video Category.
- **Daniel MacKay**, South Shore Work Activity Program in Chester Workplace Development Category.
- **Shannon Bridger**, NSCC Waterfront Campus, ALP Community College and Adult High School Category.
- **Yvonne Hippenstall**, Bedford Sackville Learning Network Community Based Category.

The four winners of the contest were honored at a reception held on March 2nd at the Province House. The winners read from their submissions and Darrell Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia attended and was presented with copies of the writings.

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 demonstrate the power to be gained from learning opportunities and will inspire others for years to come.

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Shannon Bridger – NSCC Waterfront Campus

Yvonne Hippenstall – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

Honorable Mention

Chantal MacInnis – NSCC Institute of Technology Campus

Bruce Laybolt – Cunard Learning Centre – video category,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q6BwykSEhU>

Ryan Emms – South Shore Work Activity Program

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Other Submissions

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Margaret Naboi – Halifax Community Learning Network

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Opening Possibilities through Learning

Stephan Cunningham - Barrington Community Learning Centre

Good afternoon Premier Dexter, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Stephan Cunningham. I produced this video because I had trouble putting my thoughts on paper. With the help of my teachers we created this short story.

I would like to thank my wife Julie, for being by my side. I hope you enjoy the video. Thank you.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/LiteracyNS#p/u/0/unUYV4muaEY>

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Daniel MacKay - South Shore Work Activity Program

Hi. I'm a twenty three year old male. I struggled a little bit in high school with lack of socialization skills. This gave me a bit of low self esteem around people in my early twenties. I felt this prevented me from getting a job. I also have ADHD. It is a common learning/focusing disability.

I started attending the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) and the staff here are training me on how to improve my work ethic and helping me improve my skills for the workforce.

There are all types of different people here with their own issues but they are good people. These people teach me that I can be myself. All a person must do is be respectable, honest and friendly. Since I came here I have built up a great amount of self esteem. I feel a lot happier now. I'm more sociable and have a steady routine. At the end of the day I am exhausted but it is a good tired.

SSWAP inspires me to get a job after I graduate, which I look forward to. I recommend applying to SSWAP to anyone who is struggling to get a job. Then they can have a good successful life. They can be happy with themselves and eventually get a good job they like and hopefully always have money in their pockets.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Shannon Bridger - NSCC Waterfront Campus

As adult learners it can be a difficult experience trying to achieve our goals. We have jobs to keep, children to raise, learning disabilities, a lack of self-confidence and painful personal issues. If we can overcome those obstacles, roads that we thought we could not travel are suddenly open to us. We can develop careers that we once thought unattainable, we can live lives that we can be proud of and each of us can exude the greatness that we hold deep within us.

When I was a child I fell in love with the film industry, it was the only career I ever felt passionate about. I wanted to create interesting pieces of film that entertained the audience but also felt true to who I was. Nothing was more exciting to me and no other adolescent longing was stronger. However, the pangs of impending adulthood got in the way. I was forced to grow up more quickly than was fair, and I began to lose the goals I developed in my childhood whimsy. As life grew harder, I left high school and became the quintessential party girl. I figured I could worry about adulthood later and just have a good time. That thought died a painful death as I reached my mid-twenties, and I was left with a gaping hole in my self-confidence.

The more time I spent away from high school and the older I grew, the more I felt as though I was beneath a wave. As much as I would fight my way out of it, the lack of faith in myself would pull me down and the older I grew caused me to panic, making my situation feel so much worse. As time went on, it grew cold and dark and I just wanted to let myself drown.

Yet there was a light in that dark, I met someone who had faith in me and he told me about the NSCC Adult Learning Program. A will to fight for myself flared up inside me as I learned all of the facts about the program and I began to pursue it. Suddenly there was a fire inside me again that wanted endless possibility and I began to remember the goals that I once had. I am now an adult learner at NSCC, and every day I grow closer to realising my childhood dream. The world has suddenly opened up to me now, and entering a screen arts program is suddenly so close I feel as though I can touch it.

Opening ourselves up to knowledge is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves. If we can learn in the face of adversity and begin to believe in ourselves, the rewards are the sweetest we could ever receive because we are opening hidden doors to our future. If we let go of our insecurities for even a second and try to get our education, the possibilities suddenly become endless.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Yvonne Hippenstall - Bedford Sackville Learning Network

My name is Yvonne Hippenstall. I am 54 years old, married with four grown children and seven grandchildren. My greatest shame in life is that I only completed grade eight.

When my children got into the higher grades, it became increasingly difficult to help them with their schoolwork. As my children left home to live their own lives, I didn't know what to do. When an opportunity came along, I went to work in a daycare. Since I enjoyed the children so much, I decided to make this job my career.

In order to do this, I needed a lot of workshops and I needed a course. I went to St. Joseph's College where I studied for my Early Childhood Education Diploma. I passed with a mark in the high eighties, which put me in the bracket of being an 'A' student. Unfortunately, I could not get my diploma unless I completed my grade 12 as well. Even though I have written my GED, I did not pass all subjects.

I am now taking a couple of courses with the Bedford Sackville Learning Network. I am so thankful and appreciative of their help. I feel more confident in myself and can even help my grandchildren with their homework. Friends and family have noticed that I am happier and more confident about life in general.

I am setting a good example for my grandchildren. One day when I was doing my homework and having a very stressful time, I said, "this will not get the better of me." Jordan, my fourteen-year-old grandson, told his parents he could understand my frustration because he found the work hard himself. He then asked his mother to go to Chapters to get him some books because he really needed to buckle down and start to study.

While I was at work, my supervisor asked for the name of the place where I'm taking my courses. I was only too happy to give her information about BSLN. I wished her friend the best and know that she will get a lot of help and understanding in furthering her education.

If I could give advice to someone, it would be to open your eyes to life. Life is about learning and that is one thing that will never end. I know that I have set a good example for my children and grandchildren. I see it everyday in their faces and by the things they are now doing.

My life is now a much happier place to be. I shall not be defeated and I will succeed. I now know that I can further my education and I shall be taking advantage of it. On March 5, 2010, I will be writing my GED again. This time I will be passing and looking forward to the challenge.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Chantel MacInnis – NSCC Institute of Technology Campus

When one of my teachers at school sent me an email with the link to this contest, I thought that there was no point. There are others much better at writing than myself. I can't help thinking this. It's just an instant reaction. I put myself down much more than anyone else, I realize this, but it doesn't stop me from automatically doing it.

Maybe that's one reason why it took me so long to come back to school. When all my friends from High School graduated and went to prom, I kept thinking "*that should have been me too...*", and it should have. I was an honors student, I had friends, and I was actively involved in my school. My grades started slipping though; I started skipping class just to sleep all day. I was diagnosed with severe clinical depression just before my seventeenth birthday, and as depressed as I was before, knowing this was, ironically, pretty depressing in itself. I let it get to me much more than I should have.

I tried going back to High School three times. My depression was crippling, but what was worse, I was allowing it too. I was obviously pushing myself to go back when I was not ready. It was difficult because I felt like a failure, to my friends, my family and myself. Whenever I met new people and they asked me what school I went to, or what I did for a living, I was embarrassed to tell them that I didn't go to school and usually, I was unemployed. Even worse was when they asked me what year I graduated.

I applied three times before finally going to NSCC. When I got in though, I went in full force, I was in all academic courses, I talked to my counselor when I had problems, and asked my teachers for help when I needed it. I was in a two year plan, but now, six months later, I am four months from graduation. I was nominated for valedictorian, and I wasn't going to apply for it but then I realized that this was just something else that I could face my fear of and if I didn't get it, at least I tried right?

Now I don't know if I made valedictorian yet, won't find out for a while, but what matters is that I am here. I am no longer embarrassed when people ask me what I do and if I go to school. I applied for Dalhousie for September 2010, I hope to become a nurse. I also have a steady job which I am also proud of. My depression still affects me, but I have a great network of teachers, counselors, and friends in the ALP at NSCC who work hard to make sure that I continue to work hard, because they know I can do it, and you know what's more? I know I can do it too.

Opening Possibilities through Learning
Bruce Laybolt – Cunard Learning Centre

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q6BwykSEhU>

Ryan's Story

Ryan Emms - South Shore Work Activity Program

Jobs we've done, and jobs we do, are right at your back door waiting for you.

Just stay open minded and good things will come for those that have the courage and for those who need some.

For the people I've met, and the people I've known, I'm glad I chose the right road I was shown.

And made new friends on the way. It was worth it, I have to say.

So at the moment I go to SSWAP. There's been a few times I got out the mop.

I go to my classes. I love them all. I work really hard. I try to stand up tall

Learning about things we need, giving a hand and doing a good deed.

It's so great to have a program, a program some need to have a chance in the world God bless, indeed.

So I work with what I have. I find it hard to read but there are worse off people that are in need.

But that's why we're there, to get help for our self. And hopefully in the future we can live happy, work hard and have some wealth.

Who had a massive head injury at the age of seven.

Decisions that are Made by the Everyday Person

Rita Whynot - Queens Learning Network

Decisions are a part of our everyday lives. Some people make good and some people make bad decisions. They are a part of our lives we have to deal with on a daily bases. Whether we make the right decision is up to us, as an individual. Hoping that every decision we make is a good one.

My decision that I made two years ago was a good one for me. It has impacted my life in a way I never thought possible. I decided to go back to school. I went to Queens Learning Network in Liverpool. A place I didn't ever know was there. I had to go for testing to see what level I would start in. There are levels 1-2 and a level 3. I got to go into level 3 when I started. I wanted to go back to school to see if I could get my grade 12 or GED.

The day I started was very scary for me. I didn't know anybody or thought I didn't but to my surprise I did know a couple of the students. That made it better for me to get settled in and get started on my journey to what I wanted to accomplish.

Sitting at my desk looking through the math book really put a scare into me. It was making me think twice about coming and about staying. Thinking to myself "what did I get myself into here?" Would I be able to do this or would I just have to quit. I stuck it out and in a little while the math was still challenging but I was getting it with the help of the instructors and some of the students. The other subjects were not that bad either. I surprised myself by doing good and getting done what I had to get done.

In December of 2008 I went and wrote my GED. I passed four subjects and didn't pass my math. It was frustrating to know that I missed my math by a few points. In May of 2009, I rewrote my math. To my surprise this time I passed it, which was a major accomplishment in my life. I was very happy and on cloud nine for a long time knowing that I had accomplished what I had set out to do.

I couldn't have done it without the help of the wonderful instructors and students. They would always give me a hand when ever I needed it.

The Queens Learning Network is the place to go to learn. The atmosphere there you can truly relaxed and you can enjoy what you are about to conquer. I have gone back to the network this year to help tutor the level 1-2. Trying to give back some of the knowledge that I have learned there. I am also looking into taking a PC repair course on line. So I will be busy.

Today I can do a lot more than when I first started the network. The Queens Learning Network has boosted my self-confidence greatly. I would strongly recommend The Learning Network to anyone that is looking to go back to school. It is the best place to relax and work at your own pace. You can be comfortable with the instructors as well as the students.

Gail's Story

Gail Desmond – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Knowledge is power when you have no education, you don't fit in. People look down on you. You feel like a misfit, you can't read signs, you can't count money or you can't read or write. It's hard going to the stores with people watching you.

In poorer country's are illiterate, they have no education. When they become adults they feel lost. It's hard to travel if you can't read or write.

There are schools that help you as a student learn new things. There's tutor's out there. Just because you are illiterate doesn't mean you're not smart. It means you need a chance to be like other people so you can fit in.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Donna Wilson – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Since I have joined Pictou County Continuous Learning Association's (PiCCoLA) GAP Program, I have found that the learning possibilities are no longer limited. I have heard people say, "The sky is the limit," but I never believed that it would ever happen to me. I have had classmates before say that I can do what I want but it's never sunk in that I really can.

With the GAP Program, it's more open and friendly. It's like instant friends. Since the GAP Program, I continue to learn that it's not wrong to think of myself first sometimes. I've learned that education is one of the most important things that a person needs. The learning possibilities go far beyond what I could have imagined.

I have already learned that I am a unique person with possibilities that if I reach for the sky anything becomes possible. To me my education is most important. I believe that it's not too late to learn.

Sometimes it feels like I am starting my life all over again. I used to sit at home in the dark all the time. All day, every day. Sometimes I would try to sleep the day away. I didn't care much about anybody or anything. And then I came to the GAP Program.

Here I have found some old friends as well as new ones. I have found we all relate to each other in one way or another. They are a great group of people and they make learning more fun.

Now every day is a new challenge and a brighter future. I know that I can do it. And I've met some fantastic people. I have also learned that I am a person with the ability to survive and I am a survivor.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Carol Dunlop – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

After being out of school for a number of years, I never thought I'd ever go back. After my children were grown and started attending college and beginning their lives as young adults, I seen the possibilities opening up for them.

I taught them to always finish what they started I never did as far as my education was concerned. So I took my fears and set them aside. I started back to classes. I than began to realize it was the best decision I ever made. My only regret was not starting earlier I was surprised that all the pressures of junior high and high school were not there but in it's place was support and encouragement. I always told my sons the type of education you have will help determine the type of life you will have. I did not want them to have living from paycheck to paycheck with no security, their inspiration made me realize that you're never too old to learn.

I never would have thought that going back to school could have given me so much not just knowledge but friendships, confidence, self esteem. The sense of pride taught me to try new things that I would never have before. Also when I look forward now I realize I'm closer to reaching my goals .The inspiration I got from my sons allowed me to finish what I started but school taught me never stop learning. It will only help you grow and thrive in whatever life brings.

My Future

Justin Ward – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I want to get my grade twelve and go on to get a course in the Coast Guard. The reason for this is that there are no jobs in Bridgewater or close-by. What jobs are around pay minimum wage?

I want to get into the Coast Guard because I grew up my whole life on the ocean. I did everything on the sea to try to make a living, but now there are a lot less jobs and a lot less money to be made. I did everything on the sea from hand-lining to crab fishing. The hardest I found lies between long-lining and fish dragging. There is too much of the same thing for many hours straight.

So I am going to move and better myself, but I'm not staying away from the ocean. I think working for the Coast Guard or something similar would be good.

“Going to adult learning classes gave me the chance to do things I could never do before such as writing this poem. It gave me the courage to try new things and gain more confidence in myself.”

Down by the River

Harriet Meade – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

On the bank of the mighty river
I was born and raised
When I speak this to people
My voice rings with praise

As a kid, I swam in that river
Oh boy, that water was cold
Who but me
Because that water was so cold, you know

I remember the sun was really warm
When I laid on the beach as a teen
What a surprise when I got trapped by the tide
It came in so fast, it was hard to believe

Before long I was all grownup
Those were the good old days, I think
But still I go there when it comes my way
I pray the Lord not to take it away
The place down by the river- by the sea

Tara's Story

Tara Bates – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Learning as an adult has helped and continues to help me in many ways. It helps me to have a better chance of being accepted into college and to be hired for a job. To make this happen, I need special skills many of which I have gained as an adult learner.

Going to the bank and paying for items would be difficult if I didn't have Math skills. Reading, writing, communication and understanding directions would be difficult in college, in a job, or in my everyday life without these skills.

Learning as an adult has taught me many things that I wasn't aware of before. It gives me the chance to meet new people. Learning is important because it makes life easier for me and it makes me feel good about myself.

Difficult Changes

Robert Herritt - Bedford Sackville Learning Network

Being a roofer for twenty years, I was very good at doing my job. I started out as a laborer and learned everything I could about roofing. I soon became a foreman and began training others. I worked on various roofs including flat, asphalt, metal, and wood. My favorite kind of roofing work was cedar roofing. It was a clean job. I do enjoy working with wood.

Unfortunately, while working on a steep roof I fell thirty-eight feet to the ground. Since that time I have suffered from a back injury and I am unable to work in this industry. I have a limited education at this time and good job opportunities are hard to find. I am currently working at achieving my education by attending Adult Literacy classes. There are times when this seems very hard, but I am determined to continue on and achieve my goals.

All About Me

Alison Johnson - Antigonish County Adult Learning Association

On October 28, 1994 my life changed dramatically with the birth of my 1st daughter Kristina. Then two years later my second daughter Catlin was born on April 26, 1997. I was a mother for the second time. Then eight years later I had a son, Curtis and he was born January 17,2005. I was afraid because some things changed and I did not know what to expect. Up until then I only had to take care of me and my 1st child. Then I had to take care of another human being, whom I hoped through my love, guidance and caring would become a loving, responsible, well-adjusted, very happy woman.

I lived with my parents for 7 years when I had my daughters. Then 2001 we moved to Grand View Drive. Over that time I learned to cook, do laundry, spend time with friends and to budget my money. I also got advice from my sister on the demands of children. I became aware of what the mood swings and the behaviors were of little girls. Later on I would use this information to help me raise my children. I learnt that raising children takes a lot of money.

I had to learn how to budget my money more carefully as me and my kids live on a limited income. I have learned how to do without some things that I once thought were necessary and I have also learned how to improvise when I could not afford some things that are necessary. I have become quite adept at this. I believe that there needs to be rules, whether it is in the family unit or in the work force. Therefore I have learned through attempting to raise my kid's how to make and enforce rules with a minimum of conflict. My kids are very sensitive to noise. By dealing with their wants, needs, fears and feelings, I have become a more caring and compassionate person not only with my kid's but with other people as well.

Since I have become a working mom I spend a considerable amount of time with my kids. I have had to be more entertaining and creative. We have spent many hours doing crafts and reading books. This allows me to use my skills and knowledge in crafts. This is one of their favorite past times. Doing crafts with my kids has encouraged me to make crafts that I have been able to sell to make some extra money. At times I have found that being a mother is very difficult sometimes. When my kid's school teachers and others tell me that Kristina, Catlin, Curtis are thoughtful and well behaved children who are always considerate of other people I realize how much I love them and that they are the best thing that has ever happened to me.

I took the on the Road to Employment Program in 2001. We did a portfolio and I set a goal was to go back to school in 2002 I did come back ACALA I did finish. In 2005 I return to ACALA in May of that year I got pregnant with my son. I always find it very hard to help my kids with there math homework. When I can't help them I do put myself down.

When my daughter Kristina started school at St. Andrews Consolidated all the kids would tease her about her learning disability. When her classmates would invite other kids to birthday party they would not include her. She always used to cry to go back to school. The teachers in the principal would not do anything about it. When she started St. Andrew's Junior School in grade 6, 2007 all the kids would let her to participate now she has been in Special Olympics for 2 years in swimming. She is in 2 years in track. She has more confidence in herself. She is very independent. She likes doing things on her own. She does not need me to help her she can do her math on her own. She is in grade 9 this year she is in the high school I was very nervous for her starting there.

My daughter Catlin when she started school too she was being bullied because everyone new she was Kristina sister and that Catlin always stood up for her sister. It really took a pack on her life. When she was in elementary she never had trouble with her math until she started the junior school she found the math hard. The teachers have been very good to try to help her but she does not have enough confidence in her self to ask for help. I find it sometimes very hard to help her because math is my weakness subject.

I have trouble with math myself. I keep teaching my kids to stay in school. Never quit with out getting there grade 12.Its very hard to find a job without your grade 12.Catlin has been very proud of her sister and brother she tries very hard to help them out. When you have kid's with learning disability its very hard to help them out. My son Curtis starts school next September and he has a speech delay and also has A.D.D. and its very hard some days because he has a aggressive behavior am a single mom raising three children on your own can be a challenge some days.

I am divorced now. I have been divorced sense may. Some nights it can be a challenge trying to get all my homework and assignments done. Over the years I been working very hard on my grade 12.I also been working on finding a very good paying job. My kids accept me as I am. They have been very supportive towards me. Being a single mom is very hard sometimes you can't do things that you would like to do with out kids. With out my kids I would not be where I am today. I am also proud to have my friends for there support and courage and also my family too for putting words in my head to start doing things for myself.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Daphne Murphy – Hants Learning Network Association

Learning can open the possibilities of getting your G.E.D, getting a better job, job skills and running a business. The only way to get an excellent job is by going back to school and getting your GED and by taking the course of your dreams. I would one day love to open up my own business.

First thing I have to do is get my GED. I decided to go back to school to learn all over again but there are things that are new to me. I have to learn them and I'm slowly learning how to do the work and getting better at it.

Also, I will have to go to a trade school to take my course. This means I will be in school for another year. This one is going to teach me how to bake much better than I can. Finally, when I'm all finished school I could get the job that I always wanted. While I'm working I could find a place to open up my own business. I would love to open up a bakery where I could make up my own cakes, pies, squares, cookies, etc. I'm glad that I went back to school to get my GED.

To get what you really want out of life, you have to get your GED. That is what going back to school can do for you, and that's what possibilities through learning can do for you. It can open up the door for you to get the education you really need.

Waiting

Jennifer Ipeelie – Hants Learning Network Association

Waiting for my life to start up again. A single mother of a beautiful 3 year old daughter. For five and a half years I was in an abusive relationship. I made it through hell and for five and a half years I hated myself for being stuck. I left him and moved to a women's shelter. I waited less than a year.

One night Family Services called, "you're going to Nova Scotia tomorrow with your little sister and your daughter." Finally something that will help me get started.

June 23rd, 2009 we moved to Nova Scotia from Iqaluit. Summer was fun and hot, had my nineteenth birthday in July and also got my first driver's license on Sept 1st.

I wanted to start school again. I went to Adult High School but they recommended I go to Windsor Adult Learning Program. I started Sept 8th, 2009. I have learned so much, became more confident and not so shy around people.

I got to learn more about myself. Life gets hard but I got strong and stayed strong for my daughter and myself. Things go down but stay strong. When you get to the bottom, there is nowhere to go other than up.

Thanks to Family Services paying for my family to move to live with our father, and thanks to Windsor Adult Learning Program. If it wasn't for them I don't know what I'd be doing. I'm nineteen, in school and eager to start a job.

No more waiting - only living life.

Coming Back To School

Kathy McLellan – Hants Learning Network Association

Coming back to school was one long decision to process. But after a long time thinking and weighing all the pros and cons, I decided why not.

I never had the chance to finish school. After grade nine, I stayed home to look after my mother, who was very sick. I guess I could have gone back later on, but I just didn't feel I was ready at the time. When moving out on my own I still didn't think about school.

It wasn't until about five or six years ago my caseworker at the time talked to me about going back to school. Then I met Patricia. After talking with her I started back to school. Even though it has taken me this far and this long. I am glad I made that choice in coming back to school.

So if you're in school, stay in school and get your education while you can. It will be the best decision and the right decision you have made and you will also thank yourself for it in the end. But even if you do drop out just remember you always can return to learning as an adult, no matter how old you are.

Mitchell's Story

Mitchell Doucette - Hants Learning Network Association

I grew up in French speaking home and went to an English speaking school. It was very hard. I kept failing grades. I was nine years old when they moved me from grade 1 to grade 2. Then they figured that there was something wrong with me so they moved me to a special education class that could help me more. Then they got a teacher's aide to help but by this time I didn't want the help but they gave it to me anyway. By this time I was thirteen and I started to smoke, do drugs, drinking and I started getting in trouble at school. At home I was fighting with my friends, my sisters and mom and dad. They were trying to put me in a home, but I wanted to live on my own. I learned the hard way. I ended up in the hospital. I stayed for three months. Then I said to my mom and dad "it is time for me to go to a home". This was because of the drugs and drinking.

I ended up in Aylesford but after two years it closed so I moved to Windsor. I love it here. I made a whole lot of friends here. I got a full time job at New Boundaries where I refinish furniture. I love doing that. I love coming to school. I love doing math. I am looking forward to doing very good in my math this year and I try to get to work even when I am not feeling good because I know it will make me feel better if I keep busy. I am trying very hard to keep busy. I love school a lot. It helps me a lot. I find my writing is getting better. It's not as messy as it was before. I have improved a lot in a year. I am going to do my next level this year.

I am really looking forward to it. It's time for me to start doing what is right for me. My life has been hard in the past but I am finding it easy where I am now. I am very happy. I live in a home that helps me with my living. They are there to support me and help me with daily issues.

Did I mention that I have been three years sober from drugs and drinking? It was the best three years of my life. In my final statement, I would like to say thank you to everyone who has helped me get back on my feet. Thank you with all my heart.

Returning as an Adult

Debbie Babin – Hants Learning Network Association

I came back to school because I wanted to learn how to do math. I think I have learned math and I don't find it hard anymore. Being in school as an adult is challenging and very enjoyable.

A former student was the one that got me to come back to school. I have no regrets. My first time starting school was in 2001 in Level 1. When I finished Level 1, I continued into Level 2 and finished it and now I am in Level 3.

Coming back to school has given me more confidence. I think I made the right choice. I could have stayed home and still not know how to do math. I am very grateful to my friend for telling me about the learning network.

I wish some of my friends would come to school. I have a friend that can not read but says she would be too ashamed to admit she needs to have someone teach her how to read. I told her "no one would make fun of you". That is why they have an adult school so we can come back and get more of an education.

It is a good thing we have a place we can come to because it has helped me immensely. I know it has and I am so happy with myself. Also I give credit to the seven teachers I had because they really did teach me a lot of subjects that I struggled with. I love school and I am not just coming because it is something to do. I am here because I am learning and I have learned so much by being in school.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Ken Boudreau - Halifax Community Learning Network

Stats show that 25% of Atlantic Canadians have difficulty at the lowest reading level and only 15% of Atlantic Canadians function at the highest level.

What the Adult Learning Program means to me are the goals I have given myself. To be able to read and write with ease, so that I feel comfortable to be able to write my GED.

I was not able to complete my Grade twelve because of my skills and schooling at the time. I am now forty six years of age but when I was twenty I realized that things were difficult for me. And I was unaware of the resources that were available to me.

At the age of forty six I am now able to access the resources to further my education. I feel that the program has inspired me to finish my education. I also think that programs like these are very important to the person as well as our community.

I would like to thank everyone that has helped me on my journey to accomplish my goals and dreams.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Alexandria Campbell – Cunard Learning Centre

Hello my name is Alexandria Campbell. I am attending Cunard Learning Centre to have a better understanding of what it is I want to do in life, that I will further explain.

I'm back in school because I want to open up new opportunities in my life and learn everything there is to know. As a young woman in Halifax Nova Scotia I know that having an education means everything to have a better life, "you fully have to open up your mind to achieve this." That means doing everything you can to fulfill your dreams and challenging yourself on many different levels.

When I first started here at Cunard Learning Centre I only knew that I wanted to be a Licensed Practical Nurse now I see myself in different fields of work. I find the hardest thing about going back to school was "what would people think"? Would they think I was stupid? Or would they think I was smart for going back? Then I got the concept of "you're not doing this for them you're doing it for you", to care about only what you think of yourself.

Starting here at Cunard Learning Centre I didn't even know how to do long division, and that's something you should know in junior high school, I was frustrated "yes" but I kept trying and trying till I got it. Now I love math and I love school. Learning is everything I think about. I am pretty much saying the more quickly we can come to accept the fact that we never stop learning the more quickly we can begin to learn it all. Like one said, "practicing acceptance is fundamental to the philosophy of life in acting, acting in Life".

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Margaret Naboi – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Margaret Naboi. I am thirty four years old. I was born in a small village in Sudan. Sudan is a big country in Africa. When I was eleven there was a war. Many people were forced to leave their homes. I escaped with a group of people to a refugee camp in Kenya. We had to walk at night and hide during the day. I lived in this camp for seven years. I met my husband Charles there. We left for Canada with our three children in 1997. We have lived here for twelve years.

When we arrived in Canada it was November and very cold! We were picked up at the airport and taken to a hotel where we stayed for a few weeks. One day, soon after we arrived, we woke up and the sun was shining. It looked like a beautiful warm day. We got dressed and went outside. It was freezing. We had to go back inside. That was the day we learned the difference between a Canadian sun and an African sun.

We had a lot more to learn. For me it was very hard. I had never learned to read or write before I came to Canada. The first thing I had to do was to learn English. For three months I had a tutor come to my house to teach me. The tutor was paid by the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA). After that time I taught myself because I was thinking if I don't try I will not learn English. After three and a half years my husband and I had to take the citizenship test. To get ready for this we had to study from a government book. I had a woman from MISA help me. After this I looked after my growing family and I also looked for paid work. Now I work at the Marriott hotel. This hotel is on Hollis Street in Halifax. I work on weekends. I get thirty two hours every second week. In the summer when the hotel is busy I can get more hours.

I work in housekeeping at the hotel. I make beds, change sheets and clean bathrooms. Sometimes I find shoes or telephones. One day I found a cell phone on the bed. I called my supervisor to let her know. Then I called the front desk to see if the guest was still here. If the guest has already checked out I would put the phone in the lost and found.

I like this job because I like to meet people. When I go to work in the morning my co-workers greet me with a friendly hello.

However, I need a fulltime job. To get one I need my grade twelve education. To help me do this I am in the adult literacy program at the Halifax North Library. I also take English lessons at the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS).

I go to the Halifax North Library on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Here I am working with a tutor to improve my reading and writing. I need to do this to help me to be ready to study for my GED. I need to get my GED if I want to go to Community College. I have to go to Community College because I hope to someday be a home support worker. I would like to have a full time job working for Homecare Nova Scotia.

The program at the library has helped me a lot. Without it, I would have a much harder time improving my reading and writing as well as helping me to someday get a better job. It also helps me in other ways. I am able to help my children with their homework. I can read forms better and I understand people better. For people like me, new to Canada and new to English, this program is very important. It has helped me and my family to live better life.

A Way to the Future

Rayburne Whynot - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

One of the most important things in life to me is to have a good future. A life, home, family and a good paying job so the whole family can enjoy the basics of life. I was born in 1951 and at the age of six years I started school. It was hard for me to take interest in my studies and this created a problem for me right at the beginning. I ended up leaving school at the age of fifteen with a grade five education. Knowing how life would end up, was the last thing on my mind at the time.

Back then people could go and get a job without getting a trade or higher education. In the last five years at my place of work it was getting very hard for me. Not having the abilities that I needed for my everyday work was very frustrating. After forty five years in the work force and ending up with two physical impairments, I have time to go back to school to obtain more learning skills.

Being involved in volunteer work is something I like to do. I enjoy working with the multi-user trails in Lunenburg County, as well as volunteering as a fire fighter with the Italy Cross Middlewood and District Fire Department. It is never too late to learn new skills.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Debra Lawson - Barrington Community Learning Centre

What are some of the possibilities that come from learning? There are many things that can happen from going back to school. You can obtain a career in your field of interest for a better paying job. You can gain knowledge of better life skills, higher levels of confidence and self esteem. You may also gain a different outlook on life because of it.

For a high school dropout there are many closed doors. In order to open all the doors one has to have grade twelve or equivalent. One way to get a high school education is by attending a Learning Centre in your community. It is a fun safe way to learn. The instructors have unique ways to teach you what you need to know, so you can achieve your goals. One way of learning something might be by playing a game. Sometimes just giving you the one on one attention you may need to succeed.

When you have finished your Level 4, or passed your GED exam, university or college might be your next step. From there, all the doors will be open for you.

CALA is a Blessing

Shawna Gamblin - Colchester Adult Learning Association

My decision to go back to school was not an easy one. Actually, my first thought was to get my GED, but I didn't have the book. I decided to place an ad on Kijiji under books wanted.

Later that evening, I was checking my email and I noticed a response to my ad. The response was from a lady named Debbie Farrell. She was telling me about an adult upgrading class that was no cost to me and would help me achieve my dream of getting my grade twelve diploma. She said that the program name was Colchester Adult Learning Association (CALA).

I later contacted Debbie to arrange an appointment with her to discuss my options. The day of my appointment I was nervous, as I should have been, being out of school for twenty two years. I met with Debbie, we talked about the program and how it works. I wrote a "TABE" test to find out where I stood academically. I passed the test and was accepted to the morning class of level 2 upgrading.

My instructor, Bonnie Mac Donald is great. She keeps a positive mood in the classroom. Everyday she writes an inspirational quote on the board that helps us for not only learning but life as well. With Bonnie's help, I have realized my potential to move forward and to achieve my goals. I have done a good job at passing the required curriculum.

In the early part of October 2009, Bonnie suggested that I should apply to advance to the ALP level $\frac{3}{4}$ at the NSCC. This program is the next step towards reaching my goals. I went to see Michelle Murphy, Adult Learning Program Counselor. Michelle assisted me in filling out the application to enroll and then she tested me to find out where I am academically. She told me that everything looked good and that she would submit my application. In the meantime, I continued to go to CALA to keep my mind working, and I find it enjoyable to be there with the other students and Bonnie. It took a few months of waiting due to the holidays and new semester starting but I finally heard from Michelle, I was accepted into ALP level $\frac{3}{4}$ for March 2010. I am sad to be leaving CALA before finishing the year, but I am also excited to be moving on with the next step.

My future starts and ends with me, and I thank Debbie and Bonnie for helping me to realize my potential. I believe that once I have my feet grounded in ALP, I will come back to CALA to help out if they ever need me. I'm sure that there are more adult learners out there who may benefit from my story, and get their lives going in the right direction like I did.

A Possible Challenge in Life

Madina Uwizeyimana – Halifax Community Learning Network

It was hard for me during my first week in Canada. I was six months pregnant. I was in a new country with a new language without my family. When the war started in my country, I was twelve years old and stopped going to school. I started studying again fourteen years later. Learning English, math and science has opened many possibilities for me and my family.

I'm learning how to read better so that I can read the newspaper to get information such as news, weather and events. I enjoy reading the Chronicle Herald. There was a story about whole body scanners at airports across Canada including Halifax. Today I read the newspaper "The Metro." I read a story called "Hey Big Spenders." This story is about people in the government who spent government money on personal needs.

Writing English as a second language is something that I'm learning because I want to be able to write letters to my government about peace in Rwanda where I was born. In the future, I would like to write a book about my country. Another possibility for me is to teach my children about counting numbers and money that will help them to be able to make a budget. I could help them with their schoolwork.

The benefit of learning for me is a chance to make a big change in my life and my children's lives. My plan is to finish high school and apply to college or university. Learning English at MISA, the Cunard Learning Centre and the Spring Garden Library Adult Literacy Program will help me reach my goals and get a good job.

Ronnie's Story

Ronnie Holesworth – Halifax Community Learning Network

I have been coming to literacy for about 10 years now and I have been getting a lot out of it like learning how to do reading and math and looking things up on the computer. I think a lot of other people would like to try this program out because it helped me a lot through the years that I have been coming here.

I got started at the same time as my wife Sarah and we like coming to this program because it's a great opportunity to learn better things. Johanna was the coordinator when Sarah and I got started here with literacy and I enjoy coming here every Thursday.

It makes me feel good to come here and meet new friends. Coming to this program gives me confidence in myself. I like writing stories and having them published into a book and I feel so excited to write stories for people to read and sharing my stories with others. I get to listen to other people reading their stories and it feels great to know that people love reading stories. We have parties and sometimes we have pot luck suppers here at the literacy program. We also get awards, certificates and prizes.

This program helped me in applying for a job and filling out applications and answering math questions. It helps me with my work. My bosses at work are very nice to work with so we hope other people will come out and give this program a try. Just ask for Jennifer Hill and she will help you out. She is a very nice person to work with here at the literacy program. You will see what you will get out of this place, it will help you with reading, math, writing skills and writing short stories like me and my wife did, so please give it a try, you will like it. The program helps me feel that I am doing something for myself and I feel proud for what I do and Jennifer is the best coordinator of this program. Jennifer will look for tutors for people who are willing to give this program a try. They will like what they get out of it. I know I do and I have been coming here ever since. If you would love to try this program. Jennifer Hill, she's the best coordinator this program has.

The program gets me interested in books too and I learned a lot using the computer and how to look things up on the internet. I love coming here because the people are very nice to chat with so I hope other people out there will give this program a try. They will get a lot out of this program like I did through the years that I have been coming here and working hard. It makes my life interesting and it gives me challenges and I learned to set goals for myself like my wife Sarah did. By telling people about this program I am hoping to get other people interested in this program. It's like coming to school but it's a great school to come to.

The more you learn the more you want to learn. To get a lot out of this program, come try it out. It's a very nice place to show up at the classroom. The program helps people with writing, math, reading and other things so give this program a call and they will help you out with a tutor one on one to teach you.

Robert's Story

Robert Lowe – Halifax Community Learning Network

I started to come to the program to do my reading and writing.

I have been doing my reading for 18 years off and on.

It helped me to get my reading back in my system.

It helped me with my computer skills.

I like to write stories to make a book for myself and for Christmas presents.

I like to read my stories to everybody with help with my tutors.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Heidi Christie - Barrington Community Learning Centre

Over the years I have opened my
possibilities for
education and
new beginnings
I
now
go to Barrington Community Learning Center.

Progress is
overwhelming and a great way to
study what I have missed
since I left school as a
individual
being able to
increase my learning
is
the
inner
energy to make me see a new
start.

Life
experiences
advance
rapidly, opening
new
improvements and
nine-to-five
government jobs.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Kim Scott – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I was very hesitant about going back to school. It took me about two years to get the courage to make the call to the learning centre.

I have been enrolled since September. This has been one the best decisions that I made for myself. The instructors are great and the atmosphere here is very relaxed, which makes the experience very enjoyable.

I am presently working towards passing the GED test. Then I plan to enroll at NSCC to take the Office Administration Course. With this course, I can apply for various jobs such as in offices, banks, schools, and even government jobs. I am very interested in working in any of those fields in my area.

After being a homemaker for the past four years, I now realize how important this is to me. I am not going to settle for a part-time job working nights and weekends, like most employers offer these days. I am looking for a full-time position with benefits. These days, having a medical plan is a must, especially with a family.

To sum it up, there are some things that I need to do to get that job that I've always dreamed of. First get my GED, next enroll at NSCC I sure hope my two years of hard work will pay off.

Ralph's Story

Ralph Lake – Hants Learning Network Association

It is a good thing going here. You can learn and get better in Adult Learning. I like coming here through the week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There are a lot of good people here. The teachers are very good and help people when they ask for help and that is good for adult learners. Our school is in a house and it is great to be back in school learning more. I am glad I came back to school.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Bryan Kluz - Barrington Community Learning Centre

Bob, from Nova Scotia, didn't like going to school, but his parents made him. Bob would always act up in class and get in trouble. He did this so he wouldn't have to do work, and get sent out of the class or get suspended so he could leave. Bob had addictions that made him not want to even be sitting in class and this affected his grades.

At the age of 17, Bob had had enough of school and dropped out. His mother said he either needed to be in school or have a job if he wanted to live in her house. So Bob went looking for a job the next day.

Bob had a hard time finding a job because he never finished school, but found a job working at a gas station for minimum wage, and finally got his own little car. He thought he made a good choice dropping out of school because now he was making money instead of just going to school and getting his education.

A year went by and Bob was getting sick of getting paid minimum wage at his job, so he went out to look for a new job but had no luck without his schooling. His car was worn out so much and he didn't have enough money to fix it because he wasn't making enough money, so he had to get rid of it.

Bob was finally starting to realize why people needed their education to make it anywhere in life but he didn't want to go back to high school. Instead of going back to high school, he found out he could take a course to help him get his Grade 12, so he went on the computer to look for more information about it.

A few weeks later Bob started going to the Community Learning Centre. He was nervous because he thought he wouldn't remember anything from high school, and that he would have to learn it all over again. After a couple days, he felt good about himself and knew that he would be able to do this and make a better life for himself in the future.

After passing Grade 12, Bob became a carpenter, and made enough money to buy a new car and a house.

A Solitary Place

Elizabeth Rita Tancock - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

If I didn't know how to read
I couldn't understand what is
Written down, and if it were
Read to me, I couldn't
Remember all of it.

If I didn't know how to read
I couldn't read a letter, a poem,
Or a story to myself, nor to the
Young or old, whose eyes can
Not quite focus.

If I didn't know how to read
How can I learn to use a computer
and keep up with new technology
That's always changing?

If I didn't know how to read
I couldn't play Scrabble and other
Board games. Look at all the fun
I would be missing!

If I didn't know how to read
Even if I could watch television
I'd still be a sad lonely person
Shut out from "The World of Words".

Brittany's Story

Brittany Blake – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I'm just a girl with no money, no job and not very much schooling. It started in Grade 1, when I found out that I couldn't read or spell very well and have always worked at below grade level.

In Grade 4, I was sick for a couple of weeks and when I went back to school, I was so far behind I just gave up. While everyone else was at school, I hung out with kids that were older than me, in my community. I was tired of that by the time school went back in that next year, so I thought that I should try school again. I was in Grade 5, and things went well. I was still reading and writing at below grade level but at least I passed that year.

Then, I was off to Grade 6. That was a hard year. Bigger, new words; harder math, I did not pass Grade 6 that year but the next year I did. Now, I was on my way to high school! Grade 7, new school, more friends and that meant more difficult work and a bigger place to get in trouble! I met lots of new friends who liked to skip school, so I started doing it too, but I didn't skip all the time. I did go to class enough to pass and even to pass Grade 8. But by then, I only went to school once a week. Most of the time school was just hard. Friends always wanted you to skip and go hang out somewhere other than at school. I was in shock when I passed Grade 8!

During Grade 9, I only went to school for one day. On the first day back, I never went again because I had found a job. One day at work, I said, "I have had enough of this!" I went back to school again. Even though I only went that one day in Grade 9, I was placed in Grade 10. I had barely passed grade 8, but they skipped me through, and put me right into Grade 10!

I really didn't know what they were teaching or talking about. It was really confusing for me. So I dropped out. I tried to get a job but if you do not have your Grade 12 or if you are a still a student, you could not get a full time job.

I have been going to the Barrington Learning Centre. It's different than high school. People here want to lean like I do. Even though I am young, I have realized that you need a Grade 12 to get a good job.

If I had not dropped out so many times, I would have had it by now! No matter what age you are, just remember what good will come out of an education and no one can take it away from you once you have it!

My Learning Experience

Aaron James Weagle - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My name is Aaron James Weagle. I suffer from paranoid schizophrenia and depression, and this is my story. I grew up in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Dartmouth is a bad place to live when you're seven years old because you never know what's going to happen. There could be drive-bys, stabbings or even shootings anytime.

All I know is that I lost my best friend due to mistaken identity and that's hard to deal with when you grew up together. I lost a lot of family to cancer, drugs and even alcohol. I have been dealing with schizophrenia and depression for awhile now. People with schizophrenia often cope with seeing things which are not there and hearing voices in their head, which sound like they're coming in from the outside. I deal with all that stuff everyday, even when I'm in school. It's really hard to deal with schizophrenia while doing school work because you hear voices telling you one thing, and you try to shut them out, to keep focused on your school work.

Going to school as a person with schizophrenia can be hard from time to time, because some people don't fully understand exactly what schizophrenia is but that is okay. There are doctors and books to help people get informed. I'm just lucky to have good classmates and a good teacher who try to understand the serious mental health diseases that I have and who try to help me get through it. School work now at the adult learning network tries to focus on what you want to be when you are done school.

For me I want to get either my Diesel Mechanics or my Auto Body and Small Engine Repair. The teachers really focus on doing work that needs to be done for the subjects needed for the future courses. Going back to school is really fun. It helps put people in a good mood, makes them feel proud and boosts their self-esteem. With the right help, support and assessments to figure out where their learning skills are, education will be made easier for the students.

I think people with disabilities who want to go back to school should look into Adult Learning Networks and Adult Learning Programs, because I know that I made the right decision to go back to school and into the Adult Learning Network.

Through Learning

Gary Brogan - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Through learning – to be a better reader

Through learning – how to solve math problems

Through learning – how to speak the right way

Through learning –how to use a computer

Through learning –how to read signs

Through learning – how to spell words the right way

Through learning –how to read newspapers

Through learning – how to read labels the right way

Through learning- how to be a better person in life

Through learning- how to see the world in a new way

Through learning -getting your mind working again

Through learning –understanding how to shop well

Through learning - understanding what the doctor says

Through learning – you're not left the out the cold

Through learning- knowing what's going on around you

Through learning – you will get ahead in life

Through learning – you see a bright light in your life

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Get Your Butt Back to School!

Ronna Goreham - Barrington Community Learning Centre

You wouldn't believe how a young child would inspire you to go back to school. To make you realize how important it is in your life to have your education.

My daughter was the one that really made me realize how important it is to get my education. My daughter said she is not the only child who has said this to her mother, "Mom, why should I go to school if you quit? How am I going to learn? And who am I going to look up to teach me things?" This made me think. She also said, "GET YOUR BUTT BACK TO SCHOOL!" this is coming from an eleven year old.

It has taken me awhile but I finally came back because I want to make her proud and have her look up to me. My ultimate goal is to get my grade 12 and take something I enjoy at the community college.

When you realize jumping from job to job just isn't cutting it, you have to go back to school and get a good job.

Diploma

Gertrude Himmelman - Barrington Community Learning Centre

June 2009, a graduation night. As my son walked across the stage to receive his high school diploma, I had flashbacks from his time of birth to a little boy who once played in the mud with his little tyke trucks, sailed boats in papa's duck pond, flew styrofoam airplanes in the air and all the normal things little boys do. He is a little boy who has grown up into a fine young man, a man who has a dream to join the military. He is on his way.

I received my First Aid Certificate and a WHMIS certificate last year. These were two big and exciting accomplishments for me. The Adult Learning Centre made this possible for me. This is my second year here at the Learning Centre. I don't know what this year holds, but I do know the possibilities are limitless. I, too, have a dream. I am learning and studying so that I will receive my grade 12 diploma. I am on my way!

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Janice Cunningham – Barrington Community Learning Centre

Dear Uncle Bill,

I have some exciting news to tell you!

I am returning to school in the fall. I would like to attend classes at the Adult Learning Center.

It is very important to learn about computers. They can reach people all around the world. We can do research, surf the internet, E mail messages and keep in touch with friends and loved ones back home.

People of all ages every day are taking classes here. Everything comes up on a screen. I find it hard to read. The print is small. I need to wear my glasses.

Uncle Bill this is a new beginning for me. Stepping out in the world of computers is going to be challenging.

I will write soon,

Your niece,

Janice

Charlotte's Story

Charlotte Sutherland - Barrington Community Learning Centre

John Fuller
Toronto, ON

Dear Uncle John,

I am writing to let you know I am going back to school. I am going to get my grade 12 so I can get a better job. My goal is to get out of the fish plant and work where it is nice and dry.

I am learning about computers so you can talk to people around the world.

The Adult Learning Centre is helping me to learn new stuff and is helping me with the stuff I forgot.

I do not like to speak in front of people and the program helped me to be more self confident.

I have to go please write to me soon.

Your niece,
Charlotte

Let's Face the Truth about Haiti

Holly Saunders – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

I was amazed when I watched about the earthquake in Haiti. As I watch the way they are handling the money problems in Haiti, it makes my stomach sick. The people are sending the money to help for supplies, food, water and medicine. It's getting tied up at the border and can't get through. The people need medicine and supplies now, not when they are dead.

Is it just a waste of time for the people to help if it's not getting to them? The announcers say, "Just send money". What is the good of money if the water is so bad they can't drink it?

I watch television and huge numbers of people and organizations are sending millions of dollars. Something is not right!

We don't mind helping as long as we see it's getting to where it should go. Not a scam. "Oprah" and "Larry King Live" donated over eleven million dollars alone. There was another show that generated three million. Canada alone raised 174 million so far. All the world is helping, let's hope we see big changes because this is desperately needed. Too many people are suffering. Let's do it now, not when it's too late.

Past Presidents Clinton and Bush are raising funds to try and build back Haiti. If everyone is willing to help, there should be lots of changes in that country as long as no more earthquakes hit. All I can say is "God Bless Haiti".

A Mountain to Climb

Arnie Marks - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

In the year 2009, our family was hit hard with a life threatening illness. The C word had invaded my wife's body. The effect of this set back has taken its toll on all of us: physically, mentally, and financially. My wife experienced stomach pains, to the point that she couldn't move. This really upset me to see her this way because there was nothing I could do to make her feel better. I felt so helpless. I couldn't begin to imagine the thoughts that were racing in her mind. It made for long days and even longer nights. As for me, I felt as if I was losing my mind as the anxiety took over.

She has had one operation so far, which meant that she would lose time from work. And at that time I had lost a couple of clients of my own. As the results of this set back the bills began to pile up. The financial burden was hard on us as it started the snowball effect, which began to suffocate us both. This was just the start of our struggles as we walked together hand in hand facing this battle head on.

I can still remember the long drive to the doctor's to hear her test results. When the doctor came in to give us the news, I could see the lump in her throat. It was hard for her to hide her nervousness with her white knuckles and sweaty palms. I was getting very impatient myself, "just open the folder", I thought to myself. Finally, he opened her file and gave us some awesome news. He told us that when they did the first operation, all the cancer had been removed and that she was cancer free. The tears of joy and relief spoke volumes as we shook the doctor's hand.

The year 2009 will be a year I will never forget. For certain it has made us stronger in facing other obstacles in life that may pop up. Cancer affects so many people. I never imagined the C word hitting so close to home. I know we still have a mountain to climb, but together as one, I know that we will make it to the top. It is easy to say cancer has no friends.

Clouds

Betty Thomas - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

I like to get the kids to lay down in the grass and look at the clouds in the sky. We like to think we are looking at cats, dogs and other animals in the sky. We have a lot of fun looking at the clouds and thinking about what they are made of. My son looks at the clouds and thinks it is going to rain all the time but I tell them he has a good imagination.

Wal-Mart Job

Danny Lorrette - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

Wal-Mart job
When I needed it
It was there

I liked meeting people from difference walks of life
It cheered me up

But it didn't last
I wish it did

We Love You Too

Jean Hurley - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

One of the last times I talked to my brother was Christmas 2005. I was sitting at my computer with my mom and dad and we were talking to him. It was the first time in three years we had seen him. As I sat there looking at my big brother on the computer, I realized just how much I missed him. At the end of our talk he said he loved and missed us. I then said, "we love and miss you too Charles." After a few moments it hit me he does love me.

When I was growing up my father had a hard time showing emotions. He could tell my mother but once my brothers and I hit a certain age it became harder for my father to say I love you. As a result of this, my brothers and I also had a hard time saying it to him and we would not dream of saying it to each other. But finally, on that Christmas day 2005 my brother Charles said it he loved and missed all of us and I said it back, "we love and miss you too."

The most significant effect that came out of this was on February 26, 2006 at 10:00 am when I got the call that my brother had died. I knew he was aware that I loved him and would miss him forever. Because of this I don't live my life saying I never got the chance to tell him I loved him and I now know he did love me.

Independence

Lori Patton - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

My memories of junior high and high school weren't the best memories of my life. Usually, when I went to school I just stuck with myself and ate by myself. Because of this, I find myself being very independent and doing a lot of things on my own.

My mother never really had much money when I was growing up. I didn't have the best clothes or all the fancy things everyone else had. One effect of that was most of the kids made fun of me and the way I dressed. I never really understood it because it wasn't really my fault.

Another cause of doing everything on my own was the ways people used me. I would try to follow with the "in crowd", so anything they wanted me to do, I would do it. Sometimes I would even buy the kid's lunch with my lunch money, that I usually only got twice a week, just because I thought it would make them like me that day. Usually by the end of the day the kid's were taunting me so bad I would run home crying, that's if they never caught me that day.

The main cause of my independence so far was moving away from all the drama and finding my own path to go down. I left my mother's house when I was seventeen because if I was still there she would make me go to school. I thought it would be easier to just move out of my mother's house than go to a place where I felt I wasn't welcome.

As a result of my experiences in school, I think I turned out to be a better person and learned to never judge someone for what they look like but for whom they are as a person. Also, to be able to do things on my own without someone being right there by my side.

Improving my Education

Kathy Dobson – Halifax Community Learning Network

When I was old enough to go to school I was six. I only went for a short time because I got sick. I had to go to the hospital. I had polio. I stayed in the hospital for quite a time as I had to learn to walk and talk.

When I got to go home I went back to school but it didn't work out. The public school teacher told my mother I wouldn't be able to keep up with the rest of the class. I ended up going to the Nova Scotia Training School in Truro. It was like a boarding school and I was there for seven years. I liked it there and made some friends.

I worked in different places after that. Later on I came to the North End Library because I wanted to learn more. Here in the library I am learning more about math, spelling, reading, writing and grammar. I especially like writing short stories.

Mom Did It, So Can I

Julie Cunningham - Barrington Community Learning Centre

This is a true story about my mom and me.

My name is Julie and I am thirty nine. My mom's name is Veronica and she is fifty seven. Mom quit school when she was seventeen. At the age of forty three, she had three3 children and was divorced. She decided to go back to school to get her upgrading. When she passed her GED test, she applied to take the Continuing Care Assistant course and got accepted. She even took a kitchen course and tourism. Now I am following in her footsteps.

I'm trying to get my GED and want to take Continuing Care too. We love helping people. Sadly, Mom passed away in January of this year. I was hoping that she would be there for me until I passed my courses but I know she is watching over me and cheering me on.

It is never too late to go back to school and start over. I would tell people, don't be afraid to go back school, and stop dreaming about what you wish you could have done.

My Goal

Jamileh Yousef - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My goal in life is to teach young children to depend on themselves so they can go after what they want in life, just like me. Going back to school is not easy for me. It's like starting over again from the beginning. I'm sticking to it. I'm not giving up until I get what I want. I want to work with kids and adults with handicaps, who can't help themselves. I want to help them learn the alphabet, learn to read and learn to work with numbers.

Going Back to School

Joan Silver - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My goal is to become a good speller and reader. I would like to be able to pick up a book and read it from start to finish and be able to spell better. I hope now that I'm back in school, I will be able to. I hope so.

I finished grade five but in grade six I quit. I didn't enjoy school back then. I always thought about being home helping the family. My mom wanted us all to finish school. I wish that I had listened back then. She was so proud of me when I went back to school. I raised my family and now I'm taking some time for myself but my family will always come first.

It will be a year next month that I returned. I enjoy it and I made some new friends. I see that I can spell better, if I would only stop and think before I spell a word. My daughter said she sees an improvement in my reading. Before I would ask her to read things for me, now I read things for myself. Math has always been my strongest subject.

Coming to class means a lot to me.

Rogue Wind

Shawn – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

Wind rushing by,
Rustling the grass.
A gulls' fierce cry,
Soaring over water like glass.

Wind through the trees,
Tapping on the outer wall.
Maybe sounding like bees,
The wind seems to call.

Wind causing you to drift,
Lazing in the sun.
A brisk breeze gives the flowers a lift,
Relaxing til the day is done.

Wind so mighty or so kind,
Blowing sand in your face.
It can be violent you'll find,
While watching clouds in a race.

Rogue wind you win again.

My Pal Cedric

Betsy Cooke – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading (CAN-U)

Cedric arrived at our house the evening of February 27, 1984. He was three years old. His current owner, Ruth, could no longer keep him. She was moving to the city and was not allowed to take Cedric to the apartment building where she was going to live.

So she asked Garnet if we would consider taking in a dog. We hummed and hawed over the matter for a few days and then we decided we would take Cedric.

So up came Ruth with Cedric and all of his supplies. Well let me tell you, I was ready to tell her to turn around and leave. I was shocked at the sight of him. He looked so huge with his dark gray, black and scruffy matted fur. He also had the most penetrating black eyes. I fell in love with him right away. So Cedric became part of our family.

The first order of business was to get Cedric groomed. He needed a bath and his nails done. When he was finished being groomed he did not look like the same dog that had just come to live with our family. The transformation was unbelievable. He was now a small dog and he took right to me. Wherever I was, he was. Wherever I went, Cedric went. We really liked to watch television together. When I would sit in the big chair he would squeeze himself right in beside me. He was my true pal from day one.

We travelled all over the Maritime Provinces with him, but he truly liked it when we purchased the property on the Gulf Shore near Pugwash. When we would get near to Wallace he would jump up and get excited and bark until we reached the driveway. We would let him out of the truck and by the time we were settled he had been hard at work collecting tree limbs, mice, and rocks and tried to get the squirrel. But the squirrel was always one step ahead of him.

It was Christmas at our home in Lower Sackville and the dishwasher decided she was going to breakdown. So we placed a service call with the local repair shop. The repairman arrived and introduced himself as Steve. He started to talk and Cedric heard his voice and came running from the living room and went absolutely crazy for him. Hmmmmmmm. What was going on here, we asked. It turns out that when Cedric used to live with Ruth he went and stayed with Steve for a week. Cedric fell in love with Steve's dog Bonnie. Turns out he became the proud father of six puppies.

Steve would return for the next four years and come to our house to pick Cedric up to take him over to see Bonnie and Charles Chapman. Charles would visit Steve while Cedric was courting Bonnie. They became the best of friends and made lots of little puppies together.

Cedric lived with our family for seventeen happy years. I believe that one of his happiest times was when he would chase the squirrel out of the woods and up the apple tree off the deck. He would perch himself up there and bark and bark for hours. We never quite figured out how he got up the tree but he was very good at it, for he never got stuck or anything. He also loved it when you would throw the golf ball but was unsure where it landed he would make big circles all over the lawn until he zeroed in on it and then he would bring it back. His tongue would be hanging to the ground but he was always ready for more. Then when we would go to the beach he liked to bring you rocks that were covered in seaweed. We would give him crabs and he would try and let the crab know who was boss but he never really won at that either.

Cedric was a loving and loyal companion. He taught our family about sharing and being kind to animals. When he died, I think part of me died too. I miss him dearly and our household has never been quite the same.

Jennifer's Story

Jennifer Rhodes – Hants Learning Network Association

Literacy helped me in so many ways, but I can only think of one so I'm going to write about how I learned to count money and get a job form work. So here I go.

It all started last year I was trying to find someone to make me a costume outfit. Turns out that it became a big project. My tutor said she could make it and get the supplies. But I would have to pay her at the end and so we both started to count money I sorted out the money then she would help me.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Chelsea Elderkin – Cunard Learning Centre

My name is: Chelsea Elderkin and I've been attending the Cunard Learning Centre since May 2009. The Cunard Learning Centre has provided me with multiple opportunities. Now I have the chance to become a Veterinarian Assistant if I choose to. This is a goal I have set for myself. This would be a dream come true to actually be able to help animals and do what I love the most which is treating them with the care and attention they deserve.

I have made a lot of new friends and enjoy being with them a lot. This is an opportunity I didn't have before because I never really knew many people my own age here in Halifax.

The teachers are helpful and always willing to help you in anyway that they can. I really love math with Andre he's great he has made me enjoy math so much. I now have the confidence and the skills I need to have a better quality of life. They've helped me reach my goals and aspirations. I hope to inspire other people to go back to school and change their lives in ways they can't imagine.

I would really like to be given the chance to share my experience with others that are thinking about entering into an adult learning program to continue their education and fulfilling their dreams. As long as you have faith and believe in yourself, you can achieve anything you set your mind to.

The Different Sides of Me

Sarah Holesworth – Halifax Community Learning Network

When I was growing up I was a type of person who couldn't get up the courage to ask anybody questions. At times I did not understand what they were saying or what they were giving me to do. So I didn't know what else to do but be scared to ask.

I found life hard at times with that problem until I came across the literacy program. Literacy helped me in a lot of ways, such as learning how to write short stories, it also taught me how to better myself.

I also learned to be more independent with my literacy skills. Having those skills were very important to me. I found with being in the literacy program the tutors are still very understanding. Without them I do not know where or what I would be doing today.

Some of the things I learned about in the literacy program were learning about the human body and how the brain and blood cells work, decimals in math and how to line the numbers up, history and cultural studies.

Getting information on how other people with disabilities got by in life like myself.

Learning all these skills encouraged me to help others like myself to come forward and get the help and independence they were looking for and deserve to have in their lives.

To anyone out there my advice is if you need help I encourage you to go to the Adult Literacy Program, The people there are awesome and are willing to give you the help you may need.

I put my heart into it and I know you all can if you put your mind to it because I did.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Theresa MacLeod - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

When I first came to school I did not know how to use the computer. I did not think I was able to use a computer. Now I know how to use the computer. It helps me with counting money, reading, typing, spelling and talking to family members far away. Now that I know how to use a computer at home and school I feel happier about myself.

Open Possibilities through Learning

Carol Blake - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Every experience is a learning experience, in your classroom, in your community, at work and at play. It all counts. Learning and accomplishments builds confidence in yourself and leads to success.

Learning opportunities are across all levels of society. You can accomplish anything you want if you really want it.

Learning opens doors to infinite possibilities for individuals and for society. Learning is the key to personal fulfillment. It is the foundation on which peaceful communities are built.

Through learning all people can receive recognition and credentials for their learning skills and enabling them to become valued members of Canada's workforce.

Back to School

Kristy Swinimer - Barrington Community Learning Centre

In high school I didn't go

But now I know I have to go

It's time to go back to school

So I don't sit home being a fool

Not knowing how to read and write

I came back to finish what is right

So that I can get a better job

And not to sit home and sob

Coming back to school is going swell

I hope to God I'm doing well

Percy's Story

Percy Oliver – Halifax Community Learning Network

My dream or goal is to read and spell and that's my goal. Also I want to work on my book and hopefully get some money to work with from it. Other people, when I go for a walk down by the wharf and think about what I can do for myself, what I have lost in my life and how I can try to fix it. Often I will go to the beach, feel a rogue wind and watch it splash water onto the rocks. I have found when I see people walking on the beach, on a nice cloudy when the wind was blowing, I looked up in the sky and could see a face in the clouds.

I was thinking about my parents and my children, and my grandchildren. I started crying because I missed my parents, when I did the wind was still blowing as it started to rain. I could hear a voice, from the face in the cloud, telling me to let my parents go, they're in heaven and in peace. They're always looking at you, proud of you and want you to pursue your dreams. Do what you want, dream what you can and they will be proud of you always? I could see some birds, water splashing out on the lake onto the rocks, and I felt at peace.

When I'm in the woods, I'm always thinking about how people walk, drive, smoke, talk and waste time carelessly. The only thing I can think of finally is the freedom I desire and the question of dealing with this burden I'm feeling. Take it one day at a time and have time, patience and faith and sometimes I find it hard to have these things even though I know I need it. We need the patience and we need the faith. This is why I'm sharing this story with you all, because when you walk through the woods on a nice day and feel that nice wind on a cloudy day, feel the water splash on the rocks, feel the freedom on the path in the woods... sometimes you just want to sit on a rock or stump and just wonder where life is going to take you.

Going Back to School

Patricia-Ann Morrison - Cunard Learning Centre

I was thirty seven years old when I made the decision to go back to school again, once my mind was made up-it was made up.

About a couple of years ago, back in 2005, I attended the Dartmouth Work Activity Society. I personally thought it was great. I learned about computers while I took up clerical and also did some academic upgrading as well. Unfortunately once I graduated they told me that I was finished with the program. So to say the least, my academics were incomplete.

So, all in all, I was right back to square one-sitting at home all the time doing absolutely nothing. The only good thing out of the program was my job placement I had at Sobeys as a bakery clerk; which only lasted almost nine months due to some minor family problems and a very low paycheck.

I felt that I had no choice but to quit my job because my girls needed their mother, so that's where I stayed for two years at home to take care of my girls. After two years I got so sick and tired of being in the house and I thought to myself one day that I wanted to get out and do something about my life so I did. I made the decision to go back to school again and this time I found the right school most suitable for me, the Cunard Learning Centre.

I have learned so much while attending this program within three months than I ever did in grade school, especially my math skills. I used to fear math, but now I love it!

I was only supposed to attend the Cunard Learning Centre for one year but since I made a lot of new friends and accomplished a lot of work within a period of one year I wanted to keep attending to set my goals even higher. I want to be able to finish all of the three levels they have to offer me in order to move on to level four, which I'll be taking at the NSCC and from there get my grade twelve.

Eventually with all this knowledge, I'm hoping that this experience that I have endured will get me to where I want to be in my life, an editor/writer.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Lisa Sheppard – Cunard Learning Centre

Hello ladies and gentlemen and my fellow patrons. My name is Lisa Sheppard I attended Option Activity Center in 1999. Being out of school since I was fifteen years old, I decided that it was time to set an example, not only for me but for my son. One of the reasons why I dropped out of school was because I had a hard time reading and writing. There wasn't a lot of one on one back then so I figured that it would save a lot of time for the teacher if I just quit.

After I graduated out of Options and received my first award ever I decided that I still had a lot more wall space, so I then applied to community college. My level was not where it was supposed to be so I decided that there was still one place left. So I applied to the Cunard learning school and I got accepted there.

By coming back to school I realized that being around different people would open my mind to different career goals that I had made for myself. I had a dream as a child that I wanted my mom and dad walk up to see me walk to get my diploma.

For the past three years it's been battle for me, as well with a lot of the other students but as a team we all stuck it out and I realize. Being thirty three years old, my career plan is as a youth probation officer. The reason for that is, I realized that I am not the only person in the world alone and they are people just as well.

Geraldine's Story

Geraldine Richard - Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

I have been involved in programs sponsored by GALA (Guysborough Adult Learning Association) for the past few years. I always enjoy our sessions with GALA. Learning new things, doing brain teasers to keep our minds alert and just being with other seniors for a bit of fun.

Our present project is called PLAYS, (Prioritizing Learning and Youthful Seniors), it is just starting and I am anxious to participate in learning the process to determine the best play to perform, trying out for parts and the actual presentation of the plays. We meet one day a week to review different plays and skits to find just the right one to perform. I have written a short comedy skit I hope will be incorporated into the program. The seniors that have read it seemed to find it quite entertaining.

I am looking forward to the beginning of building the scenery for the project.

SSWAP

Byron Compton - South Shore Work Activity Program

As your mind keeps getting you confused.
Sometimes you don't know what to do.
When you relax home all the day,
Sometimes you don't know what to say.
When you walk downtown in the middle of a storm,
Then you wonder what the weather performs.

Sometimes when I try to wonder or think,
When dinner arrives I decide what to eat.
When we look into today's society, we get kind of a panic and get frustrated.
So, when we look at job ads in the newspapers,
Our brains make us concentrate.

Sometimes we try to look for the perfect job,
That we always wanted to do.
But we have to be careful that
What resumes best fits for you?
Sometimes all things or information on
Resumes don't seem to have a match,
But when you sit down with someone to help you
Design a resume, you will be on the right track.

Sometimes, when you know it's not easy,
Sometimes things can be very difficult or hard to do.
But when we stay calm, sometimes a job is waiting,
The days for a call could be one or two.
In today's economy things are never so good,
or the way they are. That's why everybody is so busy they
Search for jobs or go to seminars.

So now the question is what do you want to do in the near future?
Well if you are unsure you can always look or read a book or browse with a computer,
When I first start getting help with a friend, which
Was nice to know, I start filling out resumes, which aided
For myself in giving a start to make a goal.

So, I filled out an application, which was sometimes very hard to understand,
But I found a solution to my problem and beginning to fill out an
Application called the South Shore Work Activity Program. I did find.
The program does really help you to find an excellent job.
When you become friendly with the staff,
And cooperate with the participants you meet.
So when you work together as a team,

You could be in for a nice treat.
So when I look at the values I think they are all important
To the program we have to follow them, because if we disobey
Then we will never get this chance with the program again.

The best part about SSWAP, that I really like the most, is
Our graduation day. Sometimes we should feel that we have
Made the finish line in the race, and lots of opportunities are on the way.
So when you look at the future, your minds or brains can plan.

So when someone says I need help to find a job, where should I start?
Your guide would be the South Shore Work Activity Program.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

George Warren - South Shore Work Activity Program

I graduated from high school in 1980. After that, I took a two year course in mechanics, a one year course in auto body, and a one year course in welding all at the Cape Breton Regional School. I worked at the Tower Road Fire Hall as a maintenance worker. I also painted the Nissan car dealership building and cleaned up around the building for a month in Sydney River.

I still didn't have a steady job, so I took a job readiness course for one year. My teacher there placed me where I wanted to work. I picked the Irving garage. I pumped gas, did oil changes and I did tire repairs. Between two Irving garages, I worked for twenty one years.

My wife and I decided to move from Cape Breton to Bridgewater. We needed a change. I wanted a change in job and a new place to live.

I dropped off resumes all over, without any luck. Then I enrolled in the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP). There I am learning Portfolio, Customer Services, Microsoft Office, Upgrading, Life Skills, Workshop, Janitorial and Reception. I am learning a lot to add to my resume.

At SSWAP we have job placements for three months. I am currently at Save Easy in Bridgewater. There I organize shelves, put out new supplies and put six scoops of seeds into seven pound bags and put twist ties on them. My first job placement was at Price Choppers in Chester.

The South Shore Work Activity Program has helped my self esteem and improved my customer service techniques. I have gotten to know new people and I am very proud of what I can accomplish.

Opening Possibilities Through Learning

Jessica Joudrey - South Shore Work Activity Program

I finished high school and now I am learning how to find a job. I go to the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) where I am learning life skills as well as how to cook, how to use the workshop machines and how to do janitorial. I am also learning pre-vocational where I learn how to make a resume to find a job and how to work positively with my co-workers. I have been at SSWAP since September and it is a good door opener for me. I am learning a lot of work experience. I am learning reception and how to answer the phones. I am learning math, spelling and reading in upgrading. I am learning Microsoft Office skills in computer. I am learning customer service skills. I am also making new friends.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Joan Warren - South Shore Work Activity Program

I moved to Bridgewater from Cape Breton, looking for new possibilities for work. I had little training because I have a disability, but I will not give up. I had a little training at Sobeys; packing up groceries. I had training at the community hospital, placing food on the trays for the patients. I also had training looking after children at a day care center. I also looked after my mother when she had broken her ankle. I also looked after my grandmother when she was in a wheelchair. After all the training I had, I still did not get any work, because of my disability. I have cerebral palsy and brain damage on my right side. No one wanted to hire me because of it.

Then my husband and I enrolled in the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP). There I am learning Portfolio, Customer Service, Microsoft Office, Upgrading, Life Skills, Workshop, Janitorial and Reception. I am learning a lot from SSWAP and developing trust in myself and opening up a lot to more people.

At SSWAP I have a job placement for three months. I am currently at the Salvation Army Thrift Store in Bridgewater. There I sort out clothes for them. My first job placement was at L.M.B.S. Used Clothes Center in Chester. I also had a placement at Bonny Lea Farm as a receptionist; doing filing and answering phone calls. I have more confidence in myself.

I appreciate the South Shore Work Activity Program for the opportunity of training and showing me how to build up my self esteem and for helping other people.

A Tragedy Translated

John Chuck Ryan - Digby Area Learning Association

Owing to the speed and power of the media, the world became immediately aware of the devastating 7.2 earthquake in Haiti (January, 2010). The message we received was one of absolute horror. It was one of the most damaging seismic events of all time. As the hours went by, visions of the disaster swept across our television and computer screens. These sights and sounds were so terrible and so difficult to relate to, many of us found it barely possible to watch and listen.

During times like these, many find it hard to completely understand the enormity of the destruction, as well as the extent of the suffering. We look for someone to interpret these scenes, so that we are able to really feel the situation.

The world of music can elicit feelings, such as joy, sadness, and empathy. One instructor once told me, "To play well is to feel it". When good news is related, we often say: "That is music to my ears".

Amidst the aftermath of the quake, while listening to the radio, in the arms of my love, we listened to the words of our esteemed Governor- General, Michelle Jean. I felt them deeply. We shed a tear. We felt hope.

Her words were eloquent, softly spoken, eliciting a feeling of stillness, much like one has in the calm before a storm. Our awareness was heightened.

Before she spoke - so elegantly, so poignantly- the announcer, Michael Enright had said " Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland, was so moved by her words, that he donated one million dollars to the relief effort."

Because of fifteen seconds of chaotic cacophony, we felt despair. For one symphonic moment, our Governor- General spoke; Danny Williams acted; we all felt.

What You Need to Know to Get Where You Want to Go

Helena Claridge – LakeCity Employment Services Association

I am forty three years old I have been in special education classes growing up. I have made it to grade 9. This is a new interest in the past four years. I do not think it's ever too late to learn new things. Learning things you like could be great fun. Once you can find things you would like to learn.

I thought I would like computers, computer games, video games, or simple things. I never thought I can raise pet's dogs, cat's, birds. Now I would like to try turtle's and maybe fish. I am sure there is more I just do not know what it is yet. I will need to know to get there, to where I want to go to next.

I like learning new things slowly so I can understand what I have learned. I like learning new things it is fun. Life is to boring other wise. I take time to enjoy what I am doing. I like finding new interests.

I am learning more than I thought I could learn on a computer, and sometimes having a hard time on it. Now I have an MP3 player. I have no idea what to do with one. I just found out how to keep my radio channel on it. It may have been easier if I got an MP3 player before a computer. I may be much farther ahead. Since I went back I could find out more than I ever thought. Now I am wounding what an IPod is but I never seen one. This just shows me there's more than I thought to learn with more interest. There are no dumb people just dumb actions.

Sometimes you need to go backwards before going forwards.

Education Taken for Granted

Michael G. Kennedy – NSCC Kingston Campus

I think we sometimes take education for granted. A lot of Canadian children view school as a tedious chore that their parents make them do. If only they would understand how important it is for them. In an age when some children are spending more time online and playing video games than learning, these children will have strong regrets as they get older and understand the importance of education and how much it will play a role in determining how their future will unfold.

Some time ago I watched a very disturbing and heart-wrenching film about children in some parts of the world who were forced to work every single day for pennies or nothing. These children were sold off to help pay off loans that their parents had, and some poor unlucky children were born right into child labour from the very start. The children were forced into child labour, working twelve hours a day laying and lifting bricks, sorting out dirty plastic cups in a garbage landfill; they were paid very little and fed just enough to stay alive so they can work more. These kids will never have the opportunity to get an education. They will never have the opportunity to be what they want to be. They will never have the opportunity to learn. These children will spend every day waking up and breathing in that first breath of fresh free air, before being hit hard with reality: they will be doing this for the rest of their lives. A lot of these children did not even know what a school was.

Imagine, just for a second, that you did not know what a school was, and you were forced to work 12 hours every single day with the scorching heat pounding on you, the flies buzzing around you by the thousands, working in a garbage landfill, and you made virtually no money at all and suffered from malnutrition. If you were then given the opportunity to go to school, to get an education, and to learn, would you? It's only when you don't have something that you then realize how important it truly is to you.

Some children in less-developed countries will walk for kilometers on end and gather under a mud hut just to get an education. Yet, some more privileged students from more developed countries who go to schools equipped with the latest advanced technology and far more opportunities at their finger tips, do not even care, do not put in the effort, or have not made school an important priority in their lives.

For the parents with children: Make sure your children understand the importance of education and how it will help determine how their lives unfold. And for the students who are confused and perhaps have the wrong priorities: Do not take school for granted because it is incredibly important to your success and happiness now and later on in your life, and do well in it so that you can become whatever it is you want to be.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Christine Tattrie – NSCC Truro Campus

At the age of twenty-one I was diagnosed as hearing impaired. All my life I had trouble with my ears, and throughout the years I had eleven minor surgeries to correct nerve damage to my ears. I struggled in school because I had trouble hearing the teachers, and I couldn't interact with other people in a normal way. I couldn't understand what people were saying to me and I felt like I was missing out on everything around me. I dropped out of school many times because I thought something was wrong with the way I learned, and I did not realize that my hearing is what held me back.

I have lived my whole life without sound. All of the things people take for granted, like a children's laugh or even the sound of traffic, are things I didn't even get to hear. But I learned to make do, and to pay attention to people's lips. I worked harder than other people to understand what was going on around me.

I decided to try school again because I was tired of not getting anywhere in life. I was ashamed of my limited education and didn't want people to see me as less than I am. So I made the decision to attend a pilot program at the Nova Scotia Community College, where I would finally get my high school diploma while at the same time working towards my dream job, as a Continuing Care Assistant.

Last October, I finally got hearing aids which were designed especially for my impairment. When I put them into my ears, I was able to fully hear the world I lived in for the first time in thirty years. My children's voices were clear, I heard the birds chirping in the morning, and I was even able to experience the sound of a coyote howling.

Now that I can hear again, I don't know how I ever lived without sound. A whole new world is open to me, and I am astonished each and every day by the things I never knew. Being in school is a lot like that, I didn't know what I was missing until I had the chance to learn something new. Each day in school I am given an opportunity to understand what I didn't know before. I am living for a better future, and I am grateful that I have the chance to better myself.

Improving Literacy in Self Interest

Harold Orde - NSCC Annapolis Valley Campus

One day in the summer while visiting a good friend, we constantly discussed how skills are more important in today's market, and how it is a priority to raise the profile of adult learning. I was in fact losing confidence in my abilities to advance in the work force with no formal education. In addition, I had weak literacy skills and no computer skills whatsoever.

First of all, I realized my informal skills were not going to be enough. Another year went by, and my present situation only got worse. I was diagnosed with chronic back pain and spinal stenosis. I felt that with my present condition, I would keep on fishing aboard the Atlantic Guardian, but it came to an end in August 2007. I was left unemployed, with very little communication skills and my confidence at an all-time low.

My friend told me to call Employment Opportunities Partnership in Digby, Nova Scotia. I met with an outreach worker. She was very responsive to my concerns, for instance, reading and returning to school. She asked me, "What about yourself and the direction you want to take?" When she said she could help me with skills development and send me back to school, I looked at her like she had two heads.

I accepted her help and went to the Digby Community Education Centre. I travel the transit to school every day from Annapolis Royal. I discovered a student body who were in ways just like me, for example, in reading, particularly older students. I cannot say enough about the faculty members and their support. Also thanks to Service Canada for being there.

Without all of these members helping me, especially my wife and children, I would not have been able to gain the confidence I needed for success. I have learned that confidence comes with education.

Opening Possibilities through Learning

Audrey Belliveau – Barrington Community Learning Centre

