



New Skills, New Confidence

Submissions to
Adult Learners' Week Contest
April 2 – 9, 2011

Produced by Literacy Nova Scotia

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Department of Labour and Advanced Education for their support.*





Nova Scotia

Proclamation

International Adult Learners' Week

WHEREAS *Nova Scotians are celebrating International Adult Learners' Week from April 2nd to April 9th, in particular, the achievements of adult learners and the organizations that support them; and*

WHEREAS *Every experience is a learning experience and everyone is a learner. Adult Learners' Week raises awareness as to the tremendous value of participation in lifelong learning, and the opportunities and services available to Nova Scotians who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills; and*

WHEREAS *Adult learners who take the initiative to meet the demands of changing labour markets will be poised to meet those challenges leading to a knowledgeable and skilled workforce;*

THEREFORE *be it resolved that I, Darrell E. Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of April 2nd - 9th, 2011, to be "International Adult Learners' Week" in the Province of Nova Scotia.*



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Darrell E. Dexter".

Darrell E. Dexter
Premier of Nova Scotia

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

Introduction

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's International Adult Learners' Week is an annual celebration of lifelong learning.

For the fourth year Literacy Nova Scotia celebrated International Adult Learners' Week with a contest and a reception. The contest was especially important this year because of the theme, "New Skills, New Confidence".

The contest was a culmination of six writing workshops conducted for Literacy Nova Scotia by Jenni Blackmore; nearly 100 learners participated in the workshops held in Bridgewater, Country Harbour, Dartmouth, Middleton, Sydney and Truro. The workshop participants, as well as learners from other adult learning and English as a second language, seniors and workplace/workforce programs were invited to enter the contest. We received 74 submissions and we are very pleased to share the essays.

The contest winners were:

- **Joel Hatt** – South Shore Work Activity Program
Workplace/Workforce Category.
- **Jennifer Lillington**, NSCC Marconi Campus
Community College/Adult High School Category.
- **Sara Bourque** – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association
Community Based Category.

The three winners of the contest were honored at a reception held on April 8th at the Citadel Halifax Hotel. The winners read from their submissions; Marilyn More, Minister of Labour and Advanced Education 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 new skills and confidence to be gained from learning opportunities and will inspire others for years to come.

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New Skills, New Confidence

Joel Hatt - South Shore Work Activity Program

Hello, my name is Joel Hatt. I went to the South Shore Work Activity Program in my fifty-fourth year of life, much older than all of the other participants. This just goes to show you're never too old to learn.

At first I wasn't sure if it was for me, but I thought what do I have to lose? Maybe I'll learn something. So, quiet, untrusting and fearful of new people, I began their program. As time passes I'm learning many new things. In Life Skills I am learning to differentiate feelings from thoughts and not to make assumptions. I enjoy Upgrading, especially math. I find it challenging and rewarding. Another interesting class is the Workshop. There I've learned basic carpentry skills and how to safely operate power tools. In Microsoft Office class I am learning to prepare a resume. I am also learning how important quality customer service is, and how to successfully manage stress and control my negative attitude.

The key is to focus on the positive in your life. A positive attitude can affect your success, stress level, and health. I've learned there are people here that really do care. With their kindness, patience and knowledge we can learn from our mistakes and choose to live the life we want. So, with pride and dignity, I want to say thank you to the counselors/instructors and staff at the South Shore Work Activity Program. Keep up the much needed, greatly appreciated, good job.

There is little difference in People

Jennifer Lillington – NSCC Marconi Campus

“There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.”
W. Clement Stone

For me, my positive attitude and motivation has led me here for a reason. I truly believe that life is made up of steps, some of which prepare you, teach you and make you realize where you are suppose to be and why.

In September 1996, I made a decision to quit school. It was a reason that came to me easily and it was caused by many issues that had haunted me, throughout my high school years. For I was quiet and not easily motivated or outgoing, actually shy and nervous which had left me to be a target for bullying and upset. This probably comes to a big surprise for those who know me know as the outgoing, funny, social butterfly that always is wearing a smile and enjoys loving life.

It was the morning of my first day of grade twelve which was suppose to be the best year for me surely was not. I could feel inside an unexplainable feeling of disgust and disappointment. I knew I was not going to be graduating with my fellow classmates this year and it lead me to the no care attitude of quitting. I quickly gave up and thought whatever, just get this over with.

The years have went by and I am now the role model for my two beautiful children. A twelve year old daughter and a nine year old son that unfortunately has learning difficulties. He was born eight weeks premature and it has left him behind on all aspects of his learning. With praise and a never give up attitude in which I have tried to teach them both, he will get through it and excel at his own level.

Looking back at the last fourteen years of my life, as a 32 year old often looking into my children’s eyes that sometime’s say “Mom, I hate school”. I quickly address this and try to explain the importance of an education to them. Education is the most important tool to success and I didn’t come to that conclusion easily.

Four years ago, I attended a community based learning centre attending classes three times a week. It turned out to be just another step to where I am now and where I am going. I was eager to write the General Education exam and get this show on the road. I was training physically for RCMP and had always wanted to be a Police Officer. I had already lost 80lbs in order to do what I had always wanted. Not knowing that the road coming was going to be a complete let down. I wrote the exam and passed everything with flying colors except Math, my dreaded subject that always haunted me and is still my struggle.

Days passed, tears we're shed and I kept saying to myself do not give up! This actually was something that never crossed my mind, I was going to do this and succeed. Well, I kept trying having re-wrote the math five times failing each try, feeling so stupid and stupid is a word I strongly dislike. The worst part was I was so close, a pass was 450 and I made a mark twice of 440. What do I do, I kept asking myself what do I do now? Why can't things work out for me. I know what I want and I am trying so hard to get there.

The thoughts of what I want kept running through my head and deep down I knew GED was not the answer. I quickly realized what I have always believed and that was everything happens for a reason. It may not be clear to me now, but in time it will be.

I felt capable of so much more and I knew I could do it, and that is where I realized the answer to my path of learning. I always said that I wanted to walk across that stage and feel the rush of getting my high school diploma and that was exactly what I was going to do. The path sometime's takes you in a different direction that is the right one, even if it's hard at the time to understand, I now know this is true.

I enrolled in the Adult Learning Program at Marconi Campus in Sydney and knowing it was going to be a challenge but I was ready to embrace it. I focused on what felt so right and welcoming. I am now driving three days a week two hours each way to classes. You see when a person has the passion and yearning for something as I do, nothing will stand in the way and anything is possible when you believe in yourself. My life is becoming what I have always wanted it to become. It took time, lots of ups and downs along with many tears but they have made me who I am and they have brought me here in front of you telling my story.

The reason I am here is clear to me now and easy to see. For life and learning go hand in hand and with the heart to do it and a positive attitude, something that seemed of no importance to me years ago, is my dedication now.

I am so happy to say that I have been accepted to NSCC Truro Campus for September 2011 in the Human Service's program. With second year Correction's officer, with hopes of working with the Sherriff's Department. I believe that we as students, mother's, and adult learners and just as a person need to accept everything about ourselves in order to succeed. You are you that is the beginning and the end. No apologies and no regrets. I have no regrets, not even quitting school. The road that has been chosen for me is this and I am embracing every second of it. Education to me is the key to my success, I always knew it but needed to make choices and let my qualities shine through.

New Skills, New Confidence

Sara Bourque – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

If I think back it was nine o'clock in the morning. I was sitting on old suitcases smoking a cigarette, unsure of the decision I now faced. I had decided to leave my possessions, my friends, my boyfriend and two dogs but most of all I was going to leave my home.

Well I did it. I left everything not knowing what life had in store for me. In the months that followed I experienced a multitude of emotions, which all pulled me in different directions.

My friends back home called informing me of the parties they had been to the previous nights, telling me details of the exciting new things they were trying and all the fantastic fun they were having. My life was a roller coaster ride at this point. It was on a downward slope and spinning.

My home life was chaotic to say the least. I was unhappy and extremely negative. I lived with my mother and she was exposed to my toxic life. I was also going to PiCCoLA, but rarely showed up to my classes. I enjoyed it, but wasn't really committed or ready to study.

This year I came to school with a dramatic change in my attitude. I was ready to absorb every word my teacher spoke. I have always struggled with math; starting at an early age and in school I rarely asked questions. I guess I was worried that my peers would be judgmental.

Being a student at PiCCoLA is a fantastic opportunity. To be involved in an adult learning program, among other students who are attempting to succeed where we have failed in our pasts is inspiring.

PiCCoLA is a comfortable and safe environment that has helped me grow not only academically, but has lifted my spirit and has opened up doors to possibilities I did not know could be obtained.

Besides academics, PiCCoLA has also offered a nutrition course free of charge. In this course we learned the importance of a healthy diet and also how to purchase good, wholesome food on a small income. I am now able to provide a healthier diet for my family. So being part of PiCCoLA has not just changed my life, it has brightened the life of my family as well.

Our school would not be complete without Diane Vaughan, my teacher. That is her job description; yet she is a role model, our confident and most of all a friend. She guides and directs us and understands that as human beings we all are unique and all have different ways of learning. Diane tries to accommodate all of us in any way possible.

When I look back to the day I was sitting on my old suitcases, smoking and wondering whether or not to leave everything and move to Pictou, I realize that I cannot regret my decision to move. Leaving led me to PiCCoLA, which has positively changed my life and now I have many opportunities waiting for me. Thank you PiCCoLA and everyone involved with this organization.

The Promise

Darlene Clements - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

A promise was made. The promise was an agreement between two people: my mother and me. The promise was for me to get my education for myself. It will make my mother proud, however it is for me.

The first time I met my instructor and a future classmate was on December 10, 2010. They were decorating a Christmas tree on the sidewalk by Center 200. I asked the women what the Adult Learning Association was all about. The instructor told me it was upgrading and said to come in on December 13. I went in for an assessment and found out what I needed to work on and got more information about the program. The teacher said I could start school on January 4th.

The first day of school, I was excited that I was starting classes and starting the beginning of the promise to my dear mother who had passed away in November.

When I walked up to the doors, I was scared. The fear of walking into the classroom for the first time was overwhelming. I was nervous about meeting new people. It went well.

I participated in a review of everything that the other students had covered since September. I was more than able to keep up.

The day disappeared quickly. Then it was time to go home. I got on the wrong bus, was very late returning home and worried my family.

The next few days of that first week went quickly. I wasn't nervous or afraid any more. My classmates were helpful, and supportive. My teacher made me feel comfortable too. I was able to relax and do my work. I did have trouble with stopping for breaks. The teacher kept telling me to take my breaks, or I would burn out. I laughed at her. We laughed a lot in class and talked about many different things. It sure isn't like public school.

By the end of the second week, I was learning that breaks are important. We were doing math and I really needed my lunch break. My classmates and instructor were very excited about that.

I am learning many things. We have been doing fractions, order of operations, exponents and lots of crazy stuff in math class. We also do a lot in Communication with our English skills. We also do Social Studies, Science, Computer and Human Relations.

I am learning how to write essays. It can be difficult sometimes, but I am doing very well so far. I know that when I get frustrated I am learning something new, and to walk away before it becomes overwhelming.

I am learning that I can do anything I want to do. It takes time, effort and patience. My self-confidence is improving daily. I now know there is no one going to stop me from reaching my goal but me. I am on my way to higher education.

Returning to school is helping me build my self-esteem. I have to build up my self-confidence. It will be the best thing I will ever do just for me.

I joined a dart league the same week that I started classes at the Adult Learning Association. I find myself wanting to go out more often and to be involved in things. I like meeting people, I feel more confident talking with people. I feel better about myself and I am learning to heal. I am so proud to be working towards my grade twelve.

I have a long road ahead of me, one full of bumps and lumps along the way. I realize that with determination, hard work and confidence in myself that I can succeed and keep my promise to my mother.

New Skills and Confidence

Diane Collinge - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

The first step I made to make a difference in my life was to pick up the phone and make an appointment with The Adult Learning Association (ALACBC). When the day came, I stood outside the doors wondering what I was getting myself into. I then thought, "I'm here, so I might as well as go in."

That is where I met an instructor and we talked and did some testing. The assessment gave us information on where I needed to start. The instructor gave me a date to start. When that day came, I showed up and I surprised myself: I stayed. I continued to return each day. I am the first one to arrive in the morning and usually the last one to leave in the afternoon.

I have learned a lot and one of the most important things I have learned is that going back to school wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I learned a lot as far as school goes, and I've also learned a lot about myself.

It took me three months to get everything set up with the Department of Community Services and another month to arrange my transportation. However, I did it! Here I am. I'm learning writing, math, social studies, science and so much more. We spend time outside of the classroom, as well as in it. We have had a lot of fun, shared much laughter, some frustration and a few tears along the way. We have attended workshops and functions. We collaborate with the Adult High School, go out on outings, and have guest speakers in as well. I also had the opportunity to attend a Learners Institute in Truro.

I'm glad I made this decision, as I've been given the second chance at getting an education and bettering my life. I have traveled all across this country, from Newfoundland to British Columbia. I have lived in communities on both the east and west coast. I have worked all of my life, mostly jobs that involved lots of labour. While living in British Columbia I was employed as a human excavator. I cleared land by hand, deep in the forest. My favorite job was tree trimming. It was not for the faint of heart, as I was high up in a bucket using a chain saw cutting tops off trees. I worked until I hit my early forties. My body just couldn't withstand the punishment any longer. My feet itch when I want to travel, so I returned to Cape Breton to reunite with family. I realized that in order for me to return to the workforce I had to further my education to get a job that my body can handle. Upgrade, upgrade!

I have also learned things that I didn't anticipate: self-esteem and confidence. I have always believed in myself. I am a very strong, determined woman who believes that anything and everything is possible. I thought that going back into a classroom might test my confidence, but it increased my self-image. How is that possible? Believing in myself, having an instructor who believes in me, and having classmates that offer support has helped me grow. I know that I am a role model to family and friends, and to younger students that join us. The more I learn, the stronger I become.

Life teaches very valuable lessons, some of which are never taught in school. Living through difficult times can teach people how to cope in a wide variety of situations. Sufficient to say, I have learned a lot over the years. Endurance gives me the insight to help me in my educational endeavors. Education will give me the piece I have been missing to continue with my life, and to thrive in the next chapter.

Back to School

Laura Holland – Dartmouth Learning Network

When I arrived at the Dartmouth Learning Network I wanted to learn how to write essays better and to improve my spelling. I learned how to read small novels and short stories in front of the students. I'm improving my spelling and grammar by doing things like writing my reflections about stories we read and adding my comments.

It was hard to come back to school because I worried that my boss Leona would let me go from my job. My boss Leona was really happy for me when I went back to school because she told me that, "the hotel will not fall down without you". She asked me, "do you want to stay here all your my life?"

My reaction from others is, "did you get your grade 12?" I always tell them, "yes, I'm just upgrading my grade 12 and want to learn how to write essays better and the spelling format." Some people that I know are happy for me and like seeing me go back to school to achieve things like my Learners Award last year in June at Acadia University.

My work is getting stressful because there are so many people telling me how to do my job and I'm so busy between school and work. I'm working two jobs. The first one is full time at the Country Inn & Suites where I have been working for 5 years. I also work at KFC as a part-time cashier and have been there for a year so far. I go to school on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays when I'm not working.

I'm very hard on myself because it does get stressful some days. I have been trying to do everything but there's not a whole lot of time during the day to do everything that I plan to achieve in life. I always tell myself not to give up and to prove to myself that I can do anything if I put my mind into it. That is what my parents used to say to me when I was younger and they still do: "If you put your mind to it you can get there in time."

I'm glad that I found out about the Dartmouth Learning Network because I have achieved so much. The teachers are great at teaching the subjects and they help us with understanding concepts. Teachers have one-on-one time with students when they need extra help with things like Math or English and always give all of us good advice when we need it and when one of us is having some problems at home or at work.

Thanks to the teachers for all the time they put in to teach students and for having the materials ready to teach the class every day. Because of school I am getting closer to reaching my goals.

My Essay for Literacy Nova Scotia

Jorden Bowers - Youthworx

I was always the kid that struggled wherever I went. I was a premature birth and nearly died before I was ever really alive, when I was twelve my father nearly murdered my mother and I in our sleep, In the tenth grade I dropped out of school. That was my breaking point. I was placed in what the school called the Occupational Prep Program at my local high school. Now I had been promised that this program was going to help me get the career skills I needed to do whatever career I wanted to do. The then principal and guidance counselor interviewed me and asked my interests. I mentioned interest in counseling people, working in law enforcement or serving in the military as such they placed me in culinary arts.

Four months later when I expressed interest in a higher education I had another guidance councilor at this school say these exact words to me. "You will never set foot in any university with the OPP and In fact you would be lucky to even be considered for NSCC". Now the fact that somebody who is supposed to be working for the betterment of students would be so insulting to just the thought of somebody wanting a higher education is heartbreaking. Do you think your average teenager has many options with just a high school diploma? I personally do not.

Because of that man I dropped out that very day. Which admittedly was the wrong move the fact that this one man's opinion caused me to quit shames me, I should have spoken to somebody higher up the food chain. And at this point I was a drop out doing absolutely nothing. I then signed up for a high school equivalency program from a school called ICS Canada based out of Quebec. It was a distance education school and finding it was like a sign that I could do better. I could become the police officer or counselor that I dreamed of being.

Well a year later and over 1000 dollars invested into this "accredited" school and I got basically a diploma that's worth as much as toilet paper. I couldn't get a job or get into any school. I was rejected from my first college application. It felt like I was doomed to failure. There were many times when I would completely shut down and cry for hours. The depression of my repeated failures had led me to considering attempting suicide at one point. I had spent over 1000 dollars of my mother's already very limited money on the promise of paying her back once I had a job. But since the program was not accredited I couldn't get a job to pay her back. And to this day I still haven't paid her back and it breaks my heart.

I went to the local employment office called Futureworx in Elmsdale. I spoke to Tracy Isenor who helped me so much. Tracy told me of a program called Youthworx which according to the sheet would “help me get the career skills I needed to do whatever career I wanted to do” Sounds familiar doesn’t it? I was a little untrusting at first as some of the people in the program were the same people who picked on me in High School. Some people I had prior issues with. However this program was a godsend. Before Youthworx my resume was maybe two to three lines in length of basically a week of labour work and a year of volunteer firefighting.

New Skills, New Confidence

Chastity Crouse - South Shore Work Activity Program

Hi, my name is Chastity Crouse, and I am 28 years old. I love going to the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) and learning new things. I'm a person who enjoys trying new things. The reason why I went to SSWAP was to learn about Life Skills, Upgrading, Food Services, Computer, Janitorial and Reception. I also wanted to become more independent. I was at Bonny Lea Farm before going to SSWAP. I decided to talk to my supervisor at Bonny Lea Farm to see if SSWAP was the right program for me. I applied twice. The first time I didn't get accepted, but then, after months went by, I decided to give SSWAP another try and I finally got accepted. I feel this program can help me achieve my goals and become the person I want to be.

Since I began attending SSWAP I have learned a lot about how to take phone calls, how to transfer people, and how to put people on hold. I've got to say I'm not as shy anymore, and I'm starting to come out of my comfort shell. My journey at SSWAP is helping me improve my literacy with Academic Upgrading, and it is helping me get experience with different work skills. I hope it helps me find a job I enjoy doing, but I feel I'm a person who is willing to try my best no matter where life takes me in this world. Yes, I'm slow at things sometimes, and forget a lot, until I figure out a system that works for me. I decided that a notebook would be good for helping me to remember. Ever since I got a notebook from SSWAP, I have been carrying it with me everywhere I go. It helps me to be organized and remember things.

I feel very content at SSWAP and going there every day. I feel this program is for me and I'm a person who loves learning and trying new things. No matter what I try each and every day, I never give up on my dream or my goals, no matter how I struggle in life. In the end, I am a person who sees herself with a job, a future, and whatever else my journey takes me to. We only live once, so I must take one day at a time and see where my road to literacy takes me and go from there.

Closing the Chapter

Tammy Wolfe – Gorham Memorial Adult High School

My name is Tammy Wolfe. In June 2011 I will graduate high school and would like to share my story with you.

I was expecting grade 12 to be my best year of school; I was on the home stretch and anxiously anticipating the end of the year. I really did not enjoy school and was not an academic superstar. No one in my family had graduated high school; but my parents always encouraged me to “get my education” so I would not have the financial worries they struggled with.

Early in the school year, I experienced a life altering experience that mentally crippled me to the point that I could no longer deal with school life. I was falling behind with my classes and could not deal with the pressure of the upcoming exams; so I left school.

I was working at a minimum wage job; and had a steady boyfriend who I later married. Two years later I became the mother of a beautiful baby girl. Over the years thoughts of missing out on my high school graduation would creep into my mind only to be quickly pushed away; I had the most important and most meaningful job in the world; I was a mother now; which is all I ever wanted.

I have only worked at minimum wage jobs because I do not have a high school diploma or secondary education. During the times of financial difficulties my parents’ words would come back to me, “get your education”; however finishing school seemed hopeless. Once again the nagging thoughts of school were pushed aside.

January 2010 I discovered my job situation could possibly be changing; which prompted me to take action. I was working part-time and decided to attend school on a part-time basis. Everything seemed to fall into place. I believe that this was part of God’s will for my life.

The hardest part of going back to high school was facing the reason why I left. I had to deal with the unnecessary pain that was inflicted on me by another person’s malicious behavior. However, here I was 20 years later determined to complete and close this chapter in my life. Quite honestly I did not know what to expect. As I completed assignments; my confidence and self-esteem improved dramatically. I wrote my provincial English exam in June 2010; receiving a grade of 96%! I was ecstatic. I have now completed all of the required courses for graduation and have a 95% average overall. I am happy with what I have accomplished during these two semesters.

Even though I started this journey for my own satisfaction; I hope that I have inspired my daughter to work hard as she finishes her grade 12 year. In June 2011 both my daughter and I will graduate from high school. Even though I should have completed this milestone 21 years ago; I think there is nothing that could be more fabulous than sharing this great honor with my daughter.

The Baby I Never Took Home

Juanita Bezanson – NSCC Stellarton Campus

The day you were born was the most joyous of my life
I held you in my arms, and I held you all night
I counted all your toes and your fingers, too
I watched as you looked at me with eyes of baby blue

For the next two days, I learned the "mother" thing
how to bathe, feed, and "cool" nursery songs to sing
I was kind of happy and a bit scared of you
'Cause everything to me was all so new

We were going home today, I wrapped you up tight
I placed you in your car seat, hoping I did it right
We thanked all the nurses and the staff on our floor
I placed you in our van and gently shut the door

We drove about 3 blocks, and all happened so fast
Another car was coming right at us full blast
I can't remember too much, except the loud bang
and our van flipping over again and again

I woke in the hospital, like it was I never left
But all around me I could sense someone's death
My husband...where was he? I needed him so
Someone, please tell me, "Where'd my baby go?"

A minister came in and held my hand
Told me a drunk driver hit our van
He said a prayer and how he was sorry for my loss
And gave to me a baby angel and a beautiful gold cross

Two days have passed; I sit in a church
I don't make a sound
I just wonder why I had my heart ripped out
And now it's being placed in the ground

I often think of you as the years go by
Then the tears start welling up in my eyes
I imagine you're still here with me,
and how big you've grown
But because of someone drinking and driving,
now I will never have known.
Three days with you was a blessing,
And, now, you rest
For one day I will get to hold you, again
'Till that day, I love you, angel,
My daughter, my baby, my best friend.

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“On the Road Again”

Alicia Scott – Shelburne County Learning Network

I am writing this short story to tell everyone my experience of what I went through in high school and how I got my confidence back in being tutored up on my subjects through The Shelburne County Learning Network. I had a rough time in high school; with being bullied (both mentally & physically) by boys might I add. I quit school at around age 16, and for four years I hid myself away from the rest of the public, for fear of being judged and looked down upon for quitting school.

One day I was told about The Shelburne County Learning Network and about being tutored to help brush up on my English skills and other subjects. I wasn't sure about it though, with the anxiety I had from high school, but after being re-assured it was nothing like that, no bullying or anything, I decided to give it a try. So as of right now I am on my third week of tutoring, learning new words I've never even heard of before to help further my vocabulary, which gives me the confidence for when I'm out in the public to be able to use different words when having a conversation with someone. I thought I would feel silly at my age walking back into a school, the other obstacle standing in my way was the lack of confidence and courage I had lost way back in high school. However after talking with the coordinator and my tutor, they made me feel a lot better about the whole situation. I also found out that I wasn't even the oldest one there, if not one of the youngest ones. I've learned now that you're never too young or old to go back to school and learn.

I guess the reason why I entered this competition was that, maybe there's another person out there who was like me, after having to leave school for whatever reason, and feel discouraged and think it's too late to go back now. Well maybe it's too late to go back to high school, but it's never too late to go to an NSCC or Learning Center and get tutored or take a course. Even for people who are in their 30's, 40's, or even 50's, when back then you had to leave school to go to work and help out your family and never had the time to go to school. Maybe after high school, the easiest thing to do was get any job you could find just to make money.

Whatever the reason, you're never too old to learn and most likely you'll never be the oldest learner, and there won't be people of any age there bullying you or anything like that. There will be other adults on the same road as you and I, the upgrade/tutoring and learning road. I know I've taken some wrong turns on the road I was on and even came to a dead end, (for years might I add!). However I finally turned around and am now back on the right road, and encourage others to join me!

Know the Score

Faye Beals – NSCC Lunenburg Campus

The Nova Scotia Gambling Corporation (NSGC) is responsible for the business of gaming in NS. It is a crown corporation governed by the provincial Gaming Control Act, and is in charge of leading an economically sustainable and socially responsible gaming industry for the benefit of Nova Scotians and their communities.

KTS stands for KNOW THE SCORE. Know the Score is a program which builds on the success of the Responsible Gambling Council (RGC or the Council), a non-profit organization founded in 1983. It focuses on raising awareness of problem gambling. KTS uses social media and technology to reach more students because people between the ages of 19-24 are at a higher risk of developing a gambling problem than any other age group. KTS brings awareness messages to campuses to speak to this age group to hopefully help prevent problems from developing. At the recommendation of our program instructor, Nicole, Cheryl and I applied online to work with KTS leaders Kelly Hudson and Lisa Couperus when they visited our Campus. On the 16th of November we attended a three hour workshop with Kelly and Lisa to learn about Know the Score.

On November 17 and 18, 2010 we had the opportunity to apply our new knowledge of gambling into action by working at the KTS booth set up at Lunenburg Campus with leaders, Kelly and Lisa. The booth was very attractive, portraying the statement of the Nova Scotia Gambling Corporation. This was a very exciting time for Nicole, Cheryl and myself.

Each student that visited the booth was given a short 5 question quiz and a free water bottle for filling out the quiz. The other volunteers and I were instructed to be sure all students completed the quiz correctly as the questions were based on healthy gaming questions and the answers were very important. In no way was the quiz considered gambling. We were not asking the participants to give anything of value in order to participate. Students were given a fridge magnet printed with the telephone number of the local problem gambling agency and provincial problem gambling helpline numbers. Know the Score has a website page on Facebook. The students were invited to log on the site and apply for an opportunity to enter a draw for an iPad. By filling out the short quiz, the students were eligible for a \$1500.00 scholarship and two \$100.00 gift certificates, one for the Campus Gift Shop and another to dine at Swiss Chalet. We were all very excited to find out at a later date that Cheryl had won the scholarship.

I enjoyed this opportunity immensely. It gave me the chance to help fellow students learn about problem gambling, hopefully guiding them throughout their life. I also learned that problem gambling is a huge addiction in our society. Full of excitement, I discovered that KTS planted a seed within me to look further into being a volunteer in my community on a higher level when I finish my ALP course. Opportunities such as working at the Know The Score booth, along with being an Ambassador at NSCC, and

receiving certificates for completing the campus Wellness Recovery Awareness Program in September, 2010 have given me material to write about my life someday, if I choose. Working with Kelly, Lisa, Nicole and Cheryl was wonderful. We received a letter of thanks that will look great in my Portfolio. Know The Score has been another event that will truly highlight my 2010 year at Nova Scotia Community College.

Achieving the Dream

Karen Augustine – NSCC Waterfront Campus

I had never in my wildest dreams, imagined myself being a student, let alone obtaining my high school diploma. Because of my background, I was stopped from doing anything, especially achieving my dream as a student.

In 1993 my world came to a close when I became homebound for 12 years. I was afraid of everything and everyone. I missed out on a lot during my isolation, such as seeing my niece graduate from high school and attending my twin sister's funeral. For 12 years I was like a prisoner in my own home and although I had the key to the door, I was afraid to put it in and step out. I'd allowed my fears to consume me, and I'd become paralyzed mentally, physically, and emotionally.

I knew I had to release myself and so by taking tiny steps, one at a time, I was able to overcome all that I'd feared. After 12 years of isolation, I decided I needed to better myself. I knew I wanted to finish school but wondered if I was smart enough. I saw an application form to Nova Scotia Community College, Waterfront Campus. I filled it out, but I never thought I would be accepted. It was only done for a lark and here I am today in my 4th year of college.

As I began school, I knew I would have to face many challenges. It was hard to keep up with those around me because I knew deep down, I didn't learn as they did. In my first year, I went for a test to determine my academic level. After two days of testing, I was told that I wouldn't graduate by going the regular route and if I wanted to continue, there was a "special door" for me to use. I looked at the adviser and said that I had not come all this way to be told that I would need a "special door." He insisted that due to my low level of grading, I wouldn't make it through the Adult Learning Program.

His judgment really bothered me and I thought about giving up, but I was tired of people putting me down. All my life I heard I wasn't smart enough, I was stupid, I was just wasting my time, I wouldn't make it, so I said, "The game is on!" I just focused on what I wanted and one by one, I overcame the barriers. After 3 years of hard work and struggle, in June 2010, I walked proudly onto the stage and received my high school diploma. That to me, is my reward which will open another door that waits for me; one that I will choose to go through.

I may not have what it takes to be a grade "A" student, but I have the drive of a student who wants to catch a dream. I had a dream and I followed it. Now as I see more clearly where I am going, I see that the future lies in front of me. I have a diploma that opens more doors to where I need to be. One of those doors has led me to the Human Services Program. I am now about to complete my first year. The dream I have dreamed all my life, is becoming a reality.

New Skills, New Confidence

Jean Fournier – NSCC Lunenburg Campus

My past is very bizarre to some people my rages was pretty viscous or red temper.

I felt like I was in a cage not going anywhere some people would say that I am rude or strict

In my ways just like a stone if I say something I will stick to it

Choosing a new career after 45 is simple. I feel for others who are having a hard time while at it

But don't quit, be a stone and face life dead on and the future will be just like a feather and your

Goals will be achieved. Be proud and stand tall go for it.

The Hardest Thing to Do In Your Life

Edie Cook – Dartmouth Learning Network

When I first started back to school for my grade 12 I had to start back at the basics with the Challenger books and all the vowels. Then I went to work for a bit but they laid me off. It was hard to go to school since I had to work and look after the children plus all the house work. So I decided to wait until the children were older. But things changed in my life and I went back to school.

By now I was 45 years old and it was scarier than before because I had to go over to the college for my upgrading. The first day I was nervous and I did not know where to go. Then when I got to the class there were all kinds of people there for their grade 12 too. I was there for a year and I was doing well in my English and Math. I was planning to go back in the fall but the place we were living in was being closed down because it was unsafe.

So we moved to Corner Brook. I went out to see about getting a job but there were no jobs for people without a grade 12. I went to the EI Office and the woman told me about a place to go for upgrading. I was accepted and got excited but I was scared on the first day. Some of the women came over to talk to me and then I felt more comfortable being there.

It was nice being back in school. I had finished the course and was planning to go back the next year. But we moved out of the place we were living in because it was falling down around us. We moved outside of town in our trailer. But we did not have a car to get back and forth to town. Then we found a place in town to move into.

I read that there was a course going to start up at the community center, so I went and signed up. I was not sure of some of the people that were there. But I was there for my grade 12 only. But we moved again and my upgrading was back on the shelf.

We came over to the mainland and we found a place to live. I was looking for a job, and I went and talked to a person about going back to school to get my grade 12. She told me that there was a place called the N.O.W. program. The people there were helpful to me because the course was very hard for me, but I did finish it.

The women at the N.O.W. program gave me the number for the DLN program. I called them and made an appointment and they called me to tell me that I was accepted.

This has been interesting so far. I know this will help me in all kinds of ways and I hope I can stay to the end. But like always life can get in the way. It would be helpful if we had some money to help with the cost of living so we would be able to go to school and not worry about having the money we need to live on.

My Journey to Employment

Jessica White – Dartmouth Learning Network

Going back to school has made me feel nervous, excited, scared and unsure. I came back to school to get my education and also to find different qualities in myself and others around me. I am looking forward to a new outlook on life. There is so much left to learn. In the next few years I will graduate and take a trade in Paralegal. I chose this trade because I feel it has a lot to offer to me and my lifestyle.

I have learned a lot about myself through school and mentors. They teach me to recognize my skills and abilities. A lot of people get discouraged about going back to school. I am glad I have overcome this feeling of uncertainty. It takes courage and will to enroll in an educational program.

I think it's very important to be enthusiastic about education. When you have a positive attitude teachers and students feel good about teaching and studying with you. You're never too advanced to learn new things every day. Going back to school has made me realize the quality of life is great when you succeed or accomplish your goals.

Hants Learning Network Rocks

Shelley Robar – Hants Learning Network

I am going to Hants Learning Network. I started in the level 1 program two years ago, and then I went to level two one day a week. I want to get my GED.

It gives me great privilege to be able to go back to school.

As well help me to improve my math and reading.

Teacher, friends, life skills, math, science and reading.

I find going to school gives me more confidence in myself as well helps me to grow

School is excellent.

Because I am there to learn new things

I feel that school is good because I want to learn grammar as well confusable words

I would like to learn more about history.

For me, I find the teachers instruction very helpful.

Teachers are believers in a lot of ways because they understand how to help me.

As I improve my ability and my knowledge.

For me I love doing project because it helps me to improve and to learn

I learn more about mathematics and other subjects and I would like to learn about

grammar. I like doing fractions decimals and learning new challenges.

I feel that going to school makes my life more rewarding as I learn the things I need to know and to know about the values. School provides me the work I need to know so that I can make it in the community.

A New Beginning

Tammy Taylor – Hants Learning Network

Hi my name is Tammy and I just started level 2 in September 2010. I didn't really like high school that much, but when I started Adult school I love coming to school. There I met a lot of new friends, but three of them are my really good and best friends.

I don't have my driving license yet so I have friends and family taking me to school and bring me back home. I leave for school around 7:30 am and get back home at 6:00pm at night. It makes a long day for me but I love it.

I love math and most of the other subjects. I attended a three day workshop in Truro and stayed away from home for the first time in my life. My Level 2 instructor is the best teacher I have ever had she helps you when you really need the help. School seems to be a lot more fun for me everyone is so nice and kind to me. I came back to school to get my grade 12 so that I can get a good job. Being 38 and going back to school I didn't know if I wanted to come back or not. But since I came back I would never miss it for the world because my best friends and my teacher are the greatest.

New Skills, New Confidence

Ashley Crowell – Yarmouth County Learning Network

My name is Ashley Crowell. I am almost 20 years old. I go to the Yarmouth Learning Centre at NSCC. I am here to get my grade 12 and take the Cosmetology course after I graduate.

I dropped out of school in grade ten, after I had six credits, three years ago and I moved to Moncton. I found out I was pregnant shortly after. I Moved back home and started doing Correspondence, but I stopped after a few months because I didn't understand anything because I was doing it alone, and the only help I had was through e-mail.

I had my son in September of 2008. I moved out of my grandparent's house and in with my son's father. I took care of my son for the first six months of his life, then my father and stepmother asked me if I wanted them to look after my son until I got on my feet. My father and stepmom ended up getting full custody of my son, and now I only see him a couple days a week for a few hours and I have him on weekends.

After my son left I started to get depressed and I met someone and started doing drugs and drinking. I did it every day and then sat down one day and said to myself that I am never going to become anything by sitting here doing this to myself, and I really won't get my son back doing this either. So, I moved back to my grandparents and decided to get my head together and come back to school.

I want to get my grade 12, take the Cosmetology course, get off assistance, get a good job, and get my own place and fight to get my son back.

I know this will be hard but I have my friends, family, and my son all for support and to be there to watch me walk across the stage.

What Will I Be?

Lynn Burns – Colchester Adult Learning Association

A friend asked me one day, “What will you be when you are done schooling?” I said, let’s see. I’ve been a daughter, mother, wife, and a domestic goddess.

Right at this moment, I am an adult learner with all the challenges that most students have. I’ve been in CALA for a few years and have been challenged with spelling and reading out loud. I’ve had a great instructor and tutor working with me. I’ve overcome both challenges with the support of instructors, as well as other students. Our CALA coordinator was always around to give all of us a pat on the back.

I still have a few learning challenges to get over, so if I am asked “What will you be?”, my answer will be that with support and motivation, in time, maybe I will be an ALGG(Adult Learner Graduate Goddess)

Skills Needed

Leslie Hopkins – Shelburne County Learning Network

In today's work environment, technology is changing the way we work. People have to update their skills from what they learned just a few years ago.

When I turned 17, I left school; I went to work in my grandfather's fish plant. I stayed there for a few years. Back then you didn't need a grade 12 diploma to work in a fish plant. You could quit school and go to work that same day. It was fun working in a fish processing plant. I got to put in a lot of long hours. Quota cuts came in, and there were fewer fish plants to work in. After a while I started to wake up, and look back at my life. I realized that I had to make a choice; either stay at my job, or go back to school.

It's scary going back to school. When I quit school I figured I wouldn't need to go back, but I could see I had a choice of working at the same job, and getting smaller paychecks, or going back to school to further my education so I could get a better job. You see a lot of jobs in the paper that you want to go after. But you need your grade 12 to work there.

I didn't know what to expect when I walked in the door for the first time. You want to go, but at the same time you don't. Once I walked through the door I felt a lot of stress go away from me. There are a lot more people that want to go back to school, but they're scared to do it, or to ask for help.

People have asked me about school since they found out that I was going. I told them what it's like. Some people are just curious, while others want to go back to school themselves. "Who do you see? What do you do? Is it all week, at night? Do you have to pay? Is there a phone number?" These are some of the questions that people ask me. They want to go back too, but they're afraid.

Once I took that first step, I began to feel better about myself.

This is my second time preparing myself to write the GED.

The last time that I wrote it, I felt sad that I was giving up. I knew I had put some time into preparing for, and writing the GED test. Now, a couple of years have gone by, I'm glad that I'm again preparing to write the GED.

What I found out about the school so far, is you can expand your horizons, and open up new doors. Once you put your mind to it, and say that you're going to do it. Never, never quit!

Freedom like Eagles and Planes

Dianne Jones – Colchester Adult Learning Association

The sky has no limits and neither do our minds. It takes all kinds. Like a bird fluttering its' wings ready for a take off to another destiny. Like the airplane roaring its' engine, ready for it's' flight to go high in the sky. CALA is also a place to come to spread your imagination, venturing off to a new destiny with openings ready to be discovered by open hearts and minds.

Then into flight the eagle rises and sees all around him, different lands and seas. So is the airplane that flies high in the sky. Oh, how big is the world from above. On with the journey we go with CALA, exploring our gifts and talents which we didn't even know existed. Oh, how your education starts to once again open up and bloom, just as the flowers open wide their blossoms.

At last the eagle lands gracefully, knowing it has arrived at its' destiny, coming in to rest after a long flight. The airplane finally lands with its' passengers ready to meet their newly founded land often with other friends and family ready to greet them. Oh how happy we are here at CALA with hard work and patience enduring to the end. We celebrate what a joyful year we have put in.

What a victorious trip it has been and now it is a time to celebrate what a marvelous adventure the eagle, the airplane, and the CALA student has been through. CALA is open to endless opportunities, you just have to begin.

Starting Life Again

Justin Goreham – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I decided to come back to school to upgrade skills. I have learned to add and multiply fractions but I have also learned some social skills and speaking out loud. I hope to learn to divide fractions and learn more about proper grammar.

My mother gave me the confidence to come back to school after six years. This in return has given me hope for the future as it has provided me with a way to gain the skills to write the GED.

Writing is a skill I am having a very hard time with. It is hard for me to figure out what goes where and how to put thoughts in my head onto paper. That can be very frustrating, although I am hopeful to learn all this in time.

Now seeing as I do have a faster learning curve in math than my mother, I hope to become familiar enough with fractions to help her when the time comes. I'm surprised that I am able to learn math as quickly as I am. It makes me feel smart.

I am getting back on track with my life, school is my first big step, and I have my mother to thank for all of it.

New Skills, New Confidence

Heidi Christie – Barrington Community Learning Centre

What are my experiences on the road to literacy? There are many new experiences I have had to make unwillingly during the past seven months. My new skills and new confidence include being both a mom and dad, due to the death of my wonderful husband and soul mate. Finding employment to support my family and still achieving my GED in June.

My life experiences have not been anything that I could have imagined. The loss of my husband, after battling cancer for only 2 ½ months, was overwhelming. I endured sleeplessness, the unwillingness to eat, shutting out everyone who cared about me and my emotions ran in every direction. I needed to reach inside of myself and regain the goals I made before my life got turned upside down.

Having the role now as both mom and dad is a difficult task. I have the love and support of my children and family to get me through this. I know this will be a rough road to follow, but I'm ready to prove I can do this.

I have prepared a resume and interviewed with a positive attitude, and head held high. I have succeeded in landing a part-time job. Still I am trying to acquire the "dream job", a job I enjoy that I don't call a job.

To achieve my goal of getting my GED, requires a great deal of work, motivation and determination, if I have already dealt with losing the most important person in my life, then getting my GED will be a piece of cake.

New Skills and Better Confidence

Julie Cunningham – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I am working on my math and communications skills. I find English is hard because it is my second language. I am deaf and ASL is my first language. Being deaf, I do not put small words in a sentence. I tend to forget or don't use them.

By coming to the Adult Learning Center, I have been getting better at my skills, and helping myself by finding ways to solve problems that I'm having. I need to understand what hearing people are saying.

My confidence is building up. Since my mom had go back to school, that showed me you are never too old to go back, to not give up. Now, I feel happier that I'm working on my dream job after I finish my GED. I'm being more open minded that I see more people are going back to school that are older and cannot read or write or whatever other problem they have.

Now I'm on my way to find a better job and making more money. These skills will make anyone lives better. It also helps to build self-esteem and more confidence

New Skills, New Confidence

Kristy Swinimer – Barrington Community Learning Centre

In a small town, lived a girl name Kiki. When Kiki was in high school, she hardly went to class; she would skip class to hang out with her friends. She made a call to Sable Fish Packers to see if they were hiring any workers. They said, “You’re hired.”

Kiki dropped out and went to work. She only had work in the summer time at the plant. When the summer was over she tried to find work, but no one would hire her. Kiki’s father asked her about going back to school; she didn’t think it was possible. So she made some calls to find out where adult classes were held, and a few weeks later she was back at school.

Kiki is a lot happier now that she’s gone back to school to further her education so she can be prepared to write the GED.

New Skills and New Confidence

Brittany Blake – Barrington Community Learning Centre

Confidence and skills are alike: you need confidence to get skills and skills to get confidence.

You need to find out what skills will work for you, lifelong skills, short term skills and work skills. Everyone is better at one thing than another, and that's okay. The trick is to figure out what you are good at, what you like and then work on making it your very best.

Confidence is liking yourself and is the key to success. Overcoming shame leads to confidence. Always having confidence is a skill that should always stay with you. The trick to confidence is to always like yourself, say it out loud if you have to." I like myself, I like myself I can do it because I have confidence!"

I went to Truro for a 3 day course from Literacy Nova Scotia, Tools That Work for You. While there, I made a stick to encourage me. It had things on it that made me think of my past, present and what my future could be! My dog ate my stick, but I still have a bright future.

I've learned a lot. I know I have, because it didn't take me long to write about new skills and confidence, because I have new skills and confidence now!

An Easy Decision

Donna Shand – Barrington Community Learning Centre

My decision to return to school was an easy one. The work itself is hard. After being absent from school for 33 years, it is at times frustrating and difficult, however when things are learned it is very rewarding.

By returning to school I hope to have a better understanding of fractions and decimals. Once I have acquired these skills. I will feel relieved and excited. Also, I hope to improve my writing skills such as punctuation, especially commas and paragraphs. This will make me feel capable and hopeful.

Through learning new skills it has given me confidence and determination to acquire my GED. Upon doing so, it will make me feel satisfied and very proud.

My Essay

Tyeisha Manuel – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I moved here about 2 years ago so that my children could have a better upbringing. It's not as busy here as I was used to in Halifax, so I've had a lot of time to sit down and think about things. One thing that crossed my mind was I would love to come to adult school to better my education. Hopefully I would be able to help my kids with their education when the time comes and need my help.

I started attending adult school in early February. Since I've been here, I've learned how to write a limerick. I was happy to try something different, but by the end of it I was very proud that I accomplished something I never knew I could do.

I'm having a bit of a hard time multiplying decimals, but with a little extra work I am confident that I can get it down. I am capable.

I'm learning how to voice my opinion out loud. I am very impressed with myself because I tend to be very shy at times.

Hopefully I am writing this essay right. I'm nervous about someone reading this and excited that I made an attempt to do it.

Overall, I am happy that I'm here, excited to learn new things, and beginning to feel good about myself for doing something good for me and my kids!

Possibilities for Annie

Audrey Belliveau – Barrington Community Learning Centre

Let me begin this story by saying that life can be full of possibilities. This story is about a lady we will call Annie. Annie was just your everyday person on the street of life. Annie could not get a job, not the one she wanted, that is. She did not qualify for most jobs out there, although she was a hard-working person. Most of the jobs she applied for required you to have your grade twelve. She had not finished high school.

When she was in school, Annie would try to keep hidden as much as possible so the teachers would not call upon her. Annie hated school. She made some choices that changed her life and ended with her dropping out of school. After leaving school, Annie got married and had a family. She would, over the years, hold part-time jobs. Her husband would, over the years, say, “Why don’t you go back to school and get your grade twelve?” Annie would say, “Why would I need that? And besides, I am too stupid to do anything like that.”

The fear of people knowing how bad she was at math was terrifying to her. It was something she tried her hardest to avoid. Years later, some people Annie knew were coming to a community-based learning centre, near where she lived, to get their GED. Annie had decided she wanted a job that was not so far away from where she lived. She soon found out jobs were not easy to come by if you don’t have at least your GED. Her fear of cash registers, or working somewhere where she had to use one, was enough to start a panic attack. Annie made some inquiries about the place she was interested in working. She found out that one of the requirements was a GED. Oh, dear! She thought about it a lot.

One day, she came to the bank near the school and saw a poster in the window, with a phone number to call for joining classes. She called that day. There was no hiding now. Once she got used to the other students and teachers, she felt a little more comfortable. But still, the fear of people finding out that she was so bad at math was not a pleasant thought. Gradually, she started letting go of that fear.

One day the class talked about what Literacy means. Annie was really surprised to discover that someone who can’t read probably feels exactly the same way about reading as she did about math. She realized a lot of people have similar problems. Literacy also includes numbers. Literacy is everyday life.

I would like to dedicate this story to the teachers at Barrington Community Learning Centre.

New Skills and New Confidence

Fiona Adlaf – Barrington Community Learning Centre

Understanding New Skills and New Confidence Skills, has been a big issue in my life, along with other lives. I have struggled in school, and everyday life, I never had the confidence I should have had. I didn't believe I could do anything. I believed I wasn't smart enough, I didn't need an education, and I would live without it. I was wrong!

After having many jobs over the years, I have come to the conclusion that they were getting me nowhere. Shortly after starting to have children I realized it wasn't just me I had to take care of anymore. Living job-to-job wasn't going to cut it anymore. I knew I had to make some changes and fast! I knew I had to improve my reading skills, and math, and communication skills. So I decided to go back to school. I figured I wasn't getting any younger and my life needed to change. But most of all I really want to prove to my children, that no matter how many hard balls life throws you, if you want something bad enough and you want to work for it you can do it!. Along with all young mothers, there are many things you have to learn when you go this route. You have to want it bad enough that you learn how to have time management. I'm still working on that part myself, it's not easy!

Going back to school has changed my whole life, knowing the fact that I am not just going to have a job, but going to have something I enjoy, and that is a career.

Upgrading yourself makes you feel so good about yourself. Knowing you're smart enough, you can improve your skills is the best reward I can give myself along with my children.

My New, Skills and Confidence

Tammy Halliday – NSCC, Annapolis Valley Campus

I am very happy to have had the opportunity to challenge myself for the second time around in going to the Adult Learning Program; the second time around for me has been very rewarding up to this point. Even though I'm thirty-eight years old I feel very confident in my new skills such as my math skills, reading. I feel achievement in my writing and in my sciences in the time I've spent in this adult program.

The first time I came to this program I was not quite ready after coming out of a heartbreaking separation from my husband. I have been struggling with different coping skills since my separation such as being a single parent and having full responsibility of all the needs for my son and myself and being on low income makes this a challenge, but this time around attending this program has helped me tremendously. I have amazingly found a way to get my life back on track by going back to school. I realize that after numerous low paying jobs and shoulder surgery that my education would be my next step forward for the second time because I know without it I would not be able to get a good paying job. As frightening as it sounded to me then it all makes sense to me now

I can honestly say in all fairness that I have realized how important education is no matter what age you may be; I want to move forward and continue to receive many more skills in my reading and also my writing and I feel like I've become better at both for example writing this letter is with the help of my English classes. I have noticed an attitude change in myself, an improvement since attending adult school and I love the new person I've become before and after. My attitude has changed dramatically towards my family and especially my son who now tries to keep up with his mom as he is in grade ten now. As a child I've always imagined myself graduating but it seemed many years ago that this would never happen. When I look at my son I imagine being his age and giving up. It almost seems like yesterday; I can't imagine my son giving up like I did many years ago. Now I feel I have the strength and the confidence that I never felt before, hoping that it will all turn out for my future.

I never really had good family support, coming from parents who had split; my parents never really pushed me to go to school and I hardly went. I do wish that we could turn back time, but I do believe things really happen for a reason: all we can do is just believe in ourselves. I have to keep the confidence, strength and concentration in what it takes as an adult learner to become a better person and to also stay focused on my studies and what I have learned. I am also hoping to meet the goals that I once dreamed of as a child. I want to feel proud about this new experience and be able to say once I've completed my education "look, I did it." I feel mature enough to keep up the work and the life struggles of being an adult learner.

It really takes a lot of responsibility to become the person you never thought you could become. I would be very happy to graduate as an adult learner because it hasn't been exactly all candy. I had to learn from my own mistakes, believe me, not easy ones. Do whatever you have to do to get your education because without it, it's a hard and poor road. I wish that I didn't have to find out the hard way, but that's life. Without the help of all my teachers I would not have been able to do it. They were there for me when I thought I would never make it. This is a chance for, everyone out there to learn, so why not take the opportunity to give it a shot. I'm living proof.

New Skills, New Confidence

Trevor Rose – NSCC Marconi Campus

My name is Trevor Rose and I enrolled in ALP this year 2010. This was a very hard move to make for someone who has not been in school for 11 years. You have the feeling that you cannot do it or it will be too hard. But you will find out quickly that it can be done all you have to do is your best and nothing will get in your way. The best part is the Staff here at NSCC is always there to help whenever you need them. All you have to do is ask. When you feel you cannot do it they are always there to pick you back up and show they care and tell you it can be done with hard work. And they are right It is just a matter of wanting it.

I was very lucky to have good jobs after I left school but I never had a chance to start out at the top in any companies I worked for. My lack of Education always made me start at the bottom and work my way up and this is not a fun process as all you have is a good work ethic and not the education to start you out making good money. There was a few things that made me want to take the jump and go back to school Number one was my two kids I felt how can I tell them they have to go to school every day if I did not do it myself. And how am I going to pay for their education if I cannot get a high paying job as education is the key to good jobs. When my kids are at the age of going to school I will just finish my third and last year of this fun journey back to school. So I will not only have the right to tell them they have to go to school but I will be a good example for them of why it is important to do so. And that to me is very rewarding and something I look forward too. I could look back and regret not going to school but I would rather look at now and think if I did it then I would never meet the great people I get to learn from everyday now.

I think that any adults who never completed school at a young age should go back to school. Not only will it open the doors to great jobs in the field you pick but it will give you a chance to meet great people. Learn from them and meet others who never finished school as well. You are not alone in this quest there is others who did not finish school for all kinds of reasons. Never sit back and say I did not have a chance to finish. Send in your application and come join the journey to live a better life.

My ALP Experience

Lana Mossman – NSCC Lunenburg Campus

I started going to the NSCC in Bridgewater in 2010 My first week starting out in my classes was interesting .I did manage to get going down the wrong hall or level a few times but I got the bugs ironed out. My schedule is a little different than the other students because I have one Level 3 math class and the other classes are Level 4. The people I see in Level 3 math don't understand why I am not in there other classes, so I tell them that this is the only Level 3 class I have with them that everything else is Level 4. I am doing well in my classes. The math I find challenging, hopefully it will stick in my brain. I enjoy coming here. I have met a lot of people who are doing the something I am doing and that is to get their grade 12 education. Each person has their own story about why they have returned to school to finish their education, which I think is great. I get along well with the other ALP students like peas in a pod. Then there are the people that just rub you the wrong way but these kinds of people are few and far between. When I get frustrated I think to myself why the heck I am here at my age, I must be crazy, so I give myself a smarten up talk. When I finish taking my grade 12 through ALP, I want to take a core program either the CCA or something to do with the environment.

When I was quite young I thought of being a massage therapist I never pursued it at that stage in my life because I was only 8 or 9 at the time. I enjoy helping people, I think back now that would have been an ideal career path. But Since I have been here at the NSCC I do enjoy science when we were doing the section on the environment called the sustainable environment I would like try and help fix our world so that our children's children will have a place to live before we destroy ourselves with neglect to our natural and non renewable resources.

Biography of Paul Mailman

Paul Mailman - South Shore Work Activity Program

My Name is Paul Mailman, I'm 24 years old, and I was born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. My biological parents' names are Brenda Gavel, and Frank Wilson. My biological mother was 16 years old when she gave birth to me. She couldn't keep me because my grandmother (her mother) said that my mother couldn't look after me because she was too young. I have 2 younger half sisters, Emma who is 20 years old, and Elsie who is 18 years old.

I was adopted when I was 6 months old by Gary and Patricia Mailman and from there lived in Conquerall Mills, Nova Scotia.

I attended Hebbville Elementary Consolidated School from primary to fourth grade, and then in fifth grade I attended a new school named Hebbville Academy. I was one of the first students to go there. I struggled through school because I had learning disabilities, and I also suffer from Bipolar Mood Disorder, which I was diagnosed with when I was 14 years old. When I was in grade nine, I had a really bad episode with my disorder, and I had to be admitted to the Mental Health Unit at the IWK where I was treated and released. Then I started high school at Parkview Education Centre in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, for grades 10-12, where I received the Nova Scotia High School Diploma. When I was in grades 11 and 12, I got paid to help Janitorial Services with sweeping the floors. In Grade 11 I suffered from double vision. I had to have a spinal tap to release the pressure from my spinal cord because I had too much pressure in it. That happened because I had a side effect from lithium.

In Grade 10, when I was 17 years old, I joined the Hebbville Fire Department, and I've been in the fire department for 8 years now. The names of the courses I took, and passed, were Forcible Entry, Portable Extinguishers, Personal Protective Equipment and Self Contained Breathing Apparatus, Hose Layout, Fire Streams, Water Supply, Red Cross First Aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation and Automatic Electronic Defibrillator, Fire suppression, Occupational Health & Safety, WHIMIS, Food Handlers, & Safety Officer.

In 2008, I was hired by Fairview Inn Bridgewater to work at the Cranberries Restaurant as a dishwasher/prep cook. I also attend the South Shore Work Activity Program in Chester, Nova Scotia, which teaches you Janitorial, Customer Service, Food Service, Reception, Food Safety, Life Skills, Upgrading, Portfolio, and Microsoft Office Computer Skills.

I've had a lot of Challenges in life but I've taken it a day at a time. I live my life to the fullest and overcome my issues. Thanks for taking time out of your busy life to hear my story.

On My Way to a Better Life

Diana Bent - South Shore Work Activity Program

My name is Diana Bent. I first went to the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) in 2004, but it was not the right time for me because I had just gotten out of a bad relationship and was trying to live on my own. When I was there, I did get help with my reading because I wanted to get my driver's license. However, I did not get it while I was there. When I left SSWAP, I met my new partner, and he put things on the computer to help me prepare for my driver's license. I got my license in 2005. That was one of my big goals.

I have another goal which is to get my grade 12. I know that will take time, just as my driver's license did. In 2009 I went back to SSWAP. There in Upgrading, I am working on English and Math, and I will hopefully prepare for the GED test. I am now in level 3 at SSWAP and on a job placement three days a week. The other two days I am at SSWAP where I do Wood Working, Computer, and Upgrading.

Since I have improved my reading skills and got my driver's license I have had the confidence to share my knowledge with others and help them prepare for their driver's license. I also had the confidence to work with Mental Health to make a video about adults overcoming their barriers and improving their confidence.

I am still working on getting my grade 12. I know this is a big goal for me, but my confidence continues to grow each time I learn something new. I know the work will never be over. There will always be another goal.

New Skills, New Confidence

Ken Boudreau – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Ken Boudreau. Before starting at the learning network two years ago, my personal goal was to get my GED. From that time, my confidence and skills in reading, writing and math have improved. I have written a great story and re-acquired my driver's license as well as a new truck. I have also been using the computer, something I would not have tried before. I have improved my job status which if I had not come to this program I would not have been able to achieve.

Power of Learning

Carman Mason – Colchester Adult Learning Association

In this world of ever changing dreams
There are always challenges that we must all face
One of these challenges is the power of learning
Without it we are helpless and may find the road rough to travel.

In the power of learning there is wisdom and perception
No man can attain it without hard work and dedication
In order to achieve goals in learning an individual needs to have patience
We also need to have an understanding of how to reach them.

If we would put our whole life's soul into the power of learning
We could accomplish things which would have an impact on our lives
We could also have an influence on other lives around us
We would be a real blessing to all we come in contact with on a daily basis

Finally, we must make use of our knowledge that we've gained in the power of learning
We have had our eyes, ears, and mind opened to the wisdom and education that our
forefathers once engaged in
Now that we are possessing this knowledge to act out on a daily basis
Let us take heed, cautiously, in how we proclaim our body of facts from the power of
learning.

Believing in Myself

Robyn Ritchot – Hants Learning Network

The reason I came back to school is to improve my skills and to build up my confidence by believing in myself. I have met new people and helping them out also helps me to understand more. I have become better at math, science, English and writing. Also, another reason that I did all of this is to show my daughters that it is very important to have the skills and confidence in yourself which helps your self-esteem.

To give an example of my increased confidence and skills my math has improved a lot more because before I came back to school I wasn't very good at doing fractions and now I can do them without any problem. My science has really improved a great deal more because now I can understand it more. My English and writing has improved a great deal more because now I can write essays and I take my time at writing them.

When I am done with all of my schooling I will be able to go on to find a better job because I will have more confidence and skills to use to do that job. So when the time comes, you can pass them onto your own children who in turn pass them onto their children and so on.

New Skills, New Confidence

Justin – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I am a 20 year old from Bridgewater Nova Scotia. I've been out of school for a long while. Also, my schooling fell apart at an early age. Years later, I came to Employment Solutions Society for an appointment, so I could try to get into some GED classes. But when I took an evaluation, I realized that I was never going to pass. After about a week I was back for another appointment; that's when I was given the offer of trying ALN to work on my skills before I try my GED. For anyone trying to get back into school, I would recommend ALN. Since I've started to attend I've gotten better at my math and writing skills, and it gives me the opportunity to get used to coming back to school on a regular basis.

New Skills, New Confidence

Kathy Dauphinee - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

We moved to Bridgewater eleven years ago from Glen Haven, where we had lived most of my life. I've been out of school for quite awhile. It has been one of my biggest regrets of my life. I have found that you cannot find a good job without your Grade 12, so when this opportunity came up, I knew it was time. I know I will need to learn everything over again, but I want to do it right this time. I would like to get my Grade 12 in maybe three or four years. Then I'll have some sort of career and build a life for myself. I have only been in the adult learning class for three months, but already I'm learning to be myself in a group setting, and I'm learning it's good to do and learn new things. I have a long way to go, but I know if I stick to it I can do it.

What's Right for Me

Rayburne Whynot - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

Literacy should have meant something to me years ago, but being with friends back then seemed more important to me. My parents pushed hard to keep me in school, but it was too much for me; it didn't interest me, and at the age of fifteen I quit. Getting work wasn't a problem back then, so off to work I went.

At the age of twenty I was married, had a family and my first home. I worked for forty-five years in the workforce. Education was growing big in my mind during the last five years of my work, because of the challenges I faced. I contacted the Adult Learning Network and I was matched with a tutor one evening a week for several years before I retired. The coordinator then approached me and asked me if I would like to join the class.

Not being sure of how I would handle sitting in a class with others, younger or older than me, made me reluctant. However, I took the plunge and enjoyed every minute ever since. From day one my fellow students were fun to be with. They told stories, laughed a little, played games, and celebrated with Halloween dress-ups and making valentines for our loved ones. We even had little outings such as beach day and bowling.

Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network gave me this opportunity and confidence to continue on with the program. I've attended many workshops, such as computer, writing, and personalities. I went to some in Truro with Literacy Nova Scotia about the Nine Essential Tools for Learning. I gained skills in computers and communicating, both in the class as well as in the community. As a result of these skills I am now re-enlisted as a volunteer with our local fire department, and I am chairperson of the Bull Run Trails Association. If it were not for the Adult Learning Network, I would be back where I started; lacking the knowledge I obtained over the course of eight years. Attending this learning network is one of the best ways that I could add to my retirement years.

Back to School

Jamileh Yousef - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I started going to school at the Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network in 2008 in Bridgewater. I really enjoy it a lot. I get to learn something new every day.

The students are friendly and helpful. The teacher is a wonderful person. I can ask her for help; she can explain the right way that's easy for me to understand.

Every year the Math gets harder and harder, but the more I practice, the easier it gets.

I really love to read, it helps with spelling and writing. I can read about people who fight to make things right for their people and for us too.

Spelling is hard sometimes, but the more I practice, the easier it gets. I enjoy playing with words and learning their meanings.

I have enjoyed going to many workshops; the people who put them on are wonderful. They share their experiences.

The best thing I did was to come back to school.

New Skills, New Confidence

Joan Silver - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My name is Joan Silver. I started back to school two years ago. I am glad I did. I'm learning to do the math, reading, and spelling. I'm learning to read out loud. It's coming more easily than before. I have more confidence in myself. Before, I didn't want to go anywhere if I would have to read or spell any words. I hope someday I can pick up a book and read it from cover to cover with no problem.

Going Back to School

Elizabeth Rita Tancock - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I was uncertain about returning to school.
So many years have passed.

Will I fit in?
Can I be a student again?
Will I do better?

I remember when I was young.
I was shy and afraid to speak up in school.
Now I'm an adult and I've found my voice.

This is my third year as a learner.
What a wonderful learning environment.
Everyone's at their own level,
Searching for their own knowledge.
I'm very pleased with my progress.
I fit in, I'm not all alone.

My Fight for an Education

Darlene Lutz – Hants Learning Network

I am 48 years old and I have been fighting many things in my life to get my education. The biggest surprise came when I read for the first time to my grandchildren. The look that came across their faces was priceless. I kept telling my grandchildren that I couldn't read and likely never would learn how to do that. My granddaughter used to sit and watch my daughter do all my reading and writing for me. She was very surprised when I read for her and my grandson. Now I read to my grandchildren every time they spend the night at my house. It makes me so happy because I can read to them.

I quit school when I was in grade 7 to help my dad raise my younger siblings. When I was 25, I took a course with my mother that helped us get our education and a job placement.

I was put in another program where I worked at the Windsor workshop. I enjoyed working there. I helped build wooden furniture and I helped the other participants who worked there, too. The participants all had learning challenges but they taught me a few things too. The most valuable thing was that if they could do anything, I could do it too.

After this job I had a tutor come to my house. Her name was Patricia Helliwell. She was the very first person who helped me and the one who inspired me the most on learning how to read. I did learn to read some, but I still was not getting my education.

After a couple years I attended Adult Learning Level 2 classes with Sandra Milbury for a teacher. She tried hard to give me lots of support and encouraged me to keep going.

Cathy Caldwell became my teacher when I was about 38 years old. I am still going to school after 10 years. I have faced so many problems that forced me to quit school several times, but I keep coming back to Level 3. Cathy helps me with school work and some problems I have at home. Cathy helped me get tests done so we would know about my learning disability. She will sit down with any of her students or past students to help them with their problems.

I have fought with myself and faced a lot of challenges but I want to get my grade 12. I want to go to work at New Boundaries Workshop or to go to work in a senior citizens' home to help the elderly. That's my dream and always has been.

I pray every day to get through the obstacles I have faced to get my education and to get my health better and to face the fear that I have when I walk into a classroom where a teacher doesn't understand the learning disability that I face every day. I can say I'm very glad that Cathy understands me (most days anyway).

Thank you to everyone who has and is still helping me through all the years I have spent trying to get my education. This time I'm not giving up unless I become sick and can't attend classes anymore.

I told Cathy I'm staying in school and when I get too old and end up in a wheelchair I'll still be going to school to learn. That's my story on my education and the years it's taken me, but I'm not giving up this time.

Angel Wings

Megan Currie - Jump Start for Trade

All she needs is angel wings.
Tear after tear, fight after fight.
When will this part of life give flight?

Nowhere to hide, nothing in sight.
Shadows are all that she sees at night, no light.
I can't believe she's still alive.

All she needs is angel wings.
Cutting deeper, the scars don't heal right
All she knows is how to smile light

Pick up and leave, all she needs is to escape this bad dream.
This place is a hole brightened by a nightlight and a duel glow.
She screams and plays make believe that everything is okay.
The battle slowing ending as she opens her eyes and it falls down.
The war is over, she's won finally.
All she needs is angel wings.
All she needs is a chance to fly.
To show that is something amazing.

New Skills, New Confidence

Marilyn Duplessis – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

I was 16 when I left home to go to work. I was a personal care worker for two elderly ladies. Two years later I went to work as a live-in babysitter/housekeeper and worked there for two more years. During that time I neglected my education. I started to have children of my own and when they started school I was unable to help them out with their homework. They are now grown up with children of their own. Now I have started a new life of trying to get some education. I only completed grade eight and I went to a school called adult education back in 1982 where I graduated with a grade nine certificate.

When I was sixty-one I had the chance to go to school at a place called Dartmouth Work Activity. I went there for a year and graduated and then they introduced me to the Bedford Sackville Learning Network. I have been with this group for two years and am learning a great deal.

Now at sixty-four, I am still learning at school. For a long time I didn't know what to do with my life. I started to think about my grandson and how he overcame a disability and graduated with a high school certificate. After I graduate, I plan on taking an Early Childhood Education or Pet Grooming course.

My GED Dream

Violet Drummond – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Violet and I am an adult learner. I am preparing to get my GED which I was kind of nervous about doing at first. After I told some of my family members that I had been thinking about getting my GED, they were all happy for me. I felt more confident about myself and happy that I was finally going to follow my dream. I always wanted to do this, but I was kind of shy on how to get started. One day I was reading the newspaper and I came across an article about getting your GED. I phoned the number to find out more about it and I set up an appointment to meet with someone. After that, I kept going back and forth to work, waiting for the phone call to go see someone to help me. I always wanted to get my GED but I had a family to look after. My family life was very demanding as I had two chronically ill children with Cystic Fibrosis. When the time was right for me to try again, I took the step. I always wanted to get my GED just to be able to say that I finally got my grade 12. In the program I have learned new skills like putting words in sentences, reading a story and explaining what I have read. At first I found this program a little easy for me because I had already done some of the work. This year I am doing even more work, plus homework and reading too. I am now into my second year and I am enjoying it!

My teacher really makes sure that I understand what I am learning and I have fun doing it too. I would like to thank two very good friends of mine who are teachers from the hospital because they seem to help me along the way. They always tell me if I work very hard, I can get my GED. They both encourage me a lot, so it makes me feel special. Sometimes I think that without the support I get from everybody, I could not keep going.

When I get my GED I am going to have a big party and invite all my friends to celebrate. Then I am going to buy a nice frame and put my certificate in it. This will make me very proud of myself. Who knows what I will accomplish next, as I know now I can do anything I set my mind to. The sky's the limit.

New Skills, New Confidence

Faye Hankey – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

As a child I remember enjoying school. I am presently attending the Bedford Sackville Learning Network. Although it has been 56 years since I have been in the classroom, I am enjoying it very much.

At the age of fifteen, I was working at a summer job and earning money. I felt very independent and confident that I could earn my way in life. At the end of that summer I spent a year at Miss Murphy's Business College graduating the following May. At sixteen I graduated and had a job at a Trust Company. I had completed Grade 10 and a Business Course. Secretarial work was not my life ambition. I always wanted to go to College but, finances being what they were, this was not feasible.

At the age of 72, I want to realize my dream. I want to get my High School Diploma and go from there, depending on my remaining years I would like to attend College and get whatever credits I could earn. I worked for forty-four years and do not wish to enter the workforce again. For me, this is a purely selfish decision and for personal satisfaction. I have never lost my interest in learning and I would like to finish what I should have started fifty-six years ago.

Life in general has been a real hardship and struggle for me, because of my family, I lost my home of twenty-six years in 2006. My daughter requested that I sell my home and she and her husband would provide me with accommodations. They would build a basement apartment where I could live out the rest of my life with family. After the sale of my home and having moved in with them, they told me they had no money for this project. I put up funds to the tune of \$15,000.00 plus and was then evicted. During that time I suffered financial, mental, verbal and physical abuse at their hands. My life was and still is devastated by their actions.

For the past four years I looked after my elderly mother. Her health deteriorated to the point that I could no longer continue to care for her. Against my wishes, I had to place mom in a nursing home. I could not provide the extensive care she needed. Through all the stress and hassles I have encountered in my life, I have never lost the desire of wanting to further my education. I still have this huge desire of wanting to accomplish my goal of attending college. I am enjoying my present class at Bedford Sackville Learning Network but want to increase my hours of study.

Adult education classes have provided excellent learning opportunities have been a resource for further information and I have enjoyed the fellowship with other adult learners. Education has been an opportunity for me to go on and seek success despite the setbacks I have had in my life. I am enjoying the process and look forward to completing my goal.

Learning to use My E-mail

Keith Finn – Halifax Community Learning Network

My goal was to learn how to use e-mail because I did not have a home phone. By learning e-mail I can get in touch with friends, and they can get in touch with me. It is good to use e-mail to get in touch with other important people I have to get in touch with like my employer and my tutor. It is quicker to use email instead of writing letter's by hand.

I knew nothing about computer's before I started. It was a really good feeling when I wrote my very first e-mail with help from my tutor on Oct 21, 2010. We were both very, very excited. It took me over 3 months of hard work to do my first e-mail on my own. I wrote my first e-mail on Jan 20, 2011. It was lots and lots of very hard work but it paid off very much in the long run, because it really built up my self-confidence.

To learn about using the computer first I had to learn how to use the monitor, Key board, and mouse. After that I learned about web browsers, the World Wide Web, and web sites.

I learned the web site for Google and then I learned how to get in to G-mail. Then I learned how to reply to an e-mail that was sent to me and to write an e-mail from scratch. It really helped me to pick easy to remember username's and pass words. I learned that it is very important to sign out when you are finished so people cannot get into my e-mail.

Another Dream Come True

Holly Saunders - Bedford Sackville Learning Network

My name is Holly Saunders. I am 65 years old, married with four children and eighteen grandchildren. I am not happy that I only went to grade eight. When my children were growing up, I would not help them with their homework. As my grandchildren were growing up I decided to do something about it. One of my daughters asked me if I was interested in going back to school. I said yes of course. She called the school and I entered. It was the best move I ever made in my life. I met the teachers; they interviewed me and asked me what I would like to do. I said write a book one day. I went and did my upgrading. I am planning to do my GED; however, I still have more math to complete. I am focused on writing at this point. My family was surprised when I went back to school. So far, all my grand children have graduated. One is going to be a doctor. I am so proud of them and I would like to be able to understand what they are talking about. They are all doing very well. I talk to people every day about our school. Some think you are too old to learn. I am so proud of myself and with the help of the wonderful teachers; I am able to write my book and hope to have it finished sometime in June of this year. It's never too late to learn. When my book is finished, I will finish my math and go for my GED. People say, "when will you be finished school?" I said: "probably when I am one hundred, there is always so much to learn." I cannot thank my school enough. It's just another dream come true.

New Skills, New Confidence

Wilma Huphman - Queens Learning Network

My name is Wilma Huphman. I am a mother of three kids. I started at the Queens Learning Network for two hours a day, three days a week. I am fifty three years old and I started in Level II. Originally my goal was to get an education so that I could help my kids through school. Then my goal changed to get my Level IV or GED. I was very scared the first few weeks but I stuck with it.

I have a common-law spouse that is disabled and at times I really struggle to get to school. One of the children has ADHD and ODD. He is a handful at times. One is in grade five and the other grade seven. If I didn't have the skills that I learned at Queens Learning Network I wouldn't be able to help them. Now it is a lot easier to be able to help them with homework, projects, book reports, etc. I would not be able to help them if I didn't go back to school.

I've been in school now for almost six years. I think I came along way. We are like family at Queens Learning Network. We treat each other with respect and help each other in any way we can, whether it is school or personal stuff. I surprise myself every day. Now I speak and read out loud. Before I would have sat and been nervous, but now I look forward to it. I really enjoy learning and helping others. Now I even tutor students in class if they need help.

I attended a three day Literacy Nova Scotia Learners Institute. I really like the workshop because I learned that I was not alone. There are others the same age that have opened new doors in their lives as well. In 2010 I won the \$500.00 bursary from Literacy Nova Scotia. In November 2010 I went to Truro to receive my plaque. I even stood up and said a little speech. I received a letter of congratulations from MLA of Queens County, Ms. Vicki Conrad, where I won the bursary and got a plaque. On December 9, 2010 in the House of Assembly, I was recognized in the Nova Scotia Legislature. In December 2010, I passed my GED. I am very proud of myself. So 2010 was a very good year for me. I accomplished a lot and I am not done yet. Now I am going to attend a tutor course in the near future. I am still willing to learn and to open new doors.

New Skills, New Confidence

Rita Whynot – Queens Learning Network

The first skill I have learned since coming to the Network is respect. Respect is helping other people. It is valuing people, showing kindness towards other and valuing another's opinion. I now have more respect for instructor, students and best friends. Here you have to have respect for people if you want the people to have respect for you. It makes your life easier and you understand life better.

The second skill I have learned is to have an opinion and voice it. Before I came to Queen's Learning Network I would not open my mouth. I was a very quiet and shy person. Now if you ask me something I will tell you what I think about the situation at hand. I figure my opinion is just as valid as the next persons.

My third skill I have obtained while going to the network is confidence and self-esteem. Before I came to school I was living in isolated world. The only real friends that I could say that I had a conversation with are mostly family and a handful of friends. I was scare to go and talk to anyone. I was a loner. Wanting to do by myself rather than go out and mingling with other people. Now, after two years of being out among new found friends, I will do almost anything. I will go on trip that the school puts on. I will speak out. I have learned that trying new things comes easier with time. I was very overjoyed at last year's essay. I entered mine and was runner up. Knowing I was that close to winning made my heart soar with pride. I was proud of myself for getting that close. I never thought it would be that way.

Finally my last skill that I have accomplished is helping others. I am on the board at the school, something I never would have done two years earlier. I especially love to tutor students that need one on one time. It makes me feel wanted and boosts my moral immensely knowing that I have help them on their journey. I feel happy when they achieve some of their goals that they set out to do for I know what a struggle it can be at times. I also know what it feels like to achieve something important in your life. One of the things I now like to do is to help organize fund raisers with my fellow students. Canteen is another job I took on with a fellow student.

In conclusion, since coming to Queens Learning Network I have accomplished most of my goals I have set out to do. I have my GED and am tutoring a few students. I am proud of myself for what I have done thus far.

New Skills, New Confidence

Patricia Wells – Queens Learning Network

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Patricia Wells, a mother of five children. I'm a thirty-nine year old female. I've since come back to Queens Learning Network to try and further my education.

I have been here for seven years and I've learned a lot of skills that I didn't know I had. First of all, speaking out loud has been an issue. Before I came to the network I had a great fear talking out loud when there were other people around. It scared me immensely. Now I don't have a problem. I feel more confident. People do not make fun of me if I miss a word. They do not laugh. They actually help me by coaching me. And that makes me feel good and makes me want to do more.

Before I went to school I didn't value the importance of respect. Respect is having a good attitude, being nice to others. Listening to what others have to say. I now look at respect differently. At Queens Learning Network we students have so much respect for one another. We also have a lot respect for the instructors as well. The instructors are there when you have a problem and you can talk to them. I have learned that giving respect you receive it in return.

I never thought I could succeed. I didn't think I could do math, science, etc. But once I began doing the work it didn't seem as hard as I thought. The reason it comes easier to me is the way instructors teach and present it to me. Two fellow students have gotten their GED. They are tutors at the Network and are always there for anyone of us who need them.

When my daughter was in grade 11, she quit school. I was the one who encourage her to go back to school. When she saw that I went back to school, she went back. She got her grade twelve and graduated with honors. It was the best feeling that any mother could have.

My goal would be to complete Level Three and maybe go to Adult High School to get my grade twelve. Then I would like to take a computer course. It's no walk in the park. Completing school will be the most fulfilling and rewarding experience in achieving my goals in life. I now believe in myself and have made a commitment to myself and my education. It's the best decision I ever had made.

Back to School

Josephine Welsh – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

When I was growing up there was lots of love in my home. There were five sisters, no brothers, but I've had foster brothers and sisters. It must have been hard to be a foster child moving from home to home. For Nancy, our last foster child, it was even harder as she was in a wheelchair. She is now living in Halifax with her real father and having a good life.

A happy childhood time was going to my parent's camp in Loch Harbour. Everyone, aunts, uncles and cousins would spend time swimming, walking, hiking and just being together. Many family parties would be held in Loch Harbour.

Eventually I got married. After losing a son, I had another boy, George. We bought a house close to my husband's work which has worked out well.

After being with the same company for seven years, I lost my job. It felt like my world fell apart. For awhile I didn't know which way to turn. My family gave me lots of support; it was wonderful to have them there for me. I still had a period of depression when all I wanted to do was sleep.

In June I had a heart attack. After I recovered I began looking for work. I went to a place in New Glasgow where I found help looking for a job and making a resume.

I have gone back to school to further my education. I find it difficult but I will keep working at it. This will help me feel better about myself, give me something to do and help me get a better job. Already I am feeling more confident, have made new friends and have learned more skills in school. Education is important if you want to get a good job.

School Concerns

Chris Donaldson - Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

I had a lot of concerns when I first came to PiCCoLA. I was worried that it would turn out the same as when I went to the public schools. I had it rough in the public schools I was picked on a lot by the majority of the students because of my disabilities. The teachers were harsh to me, and I was on my own because they lacked the proper training to deal with kids like me. These were a few of the reasons I dropped out.

PiCCoLA was different for me. The students were polite and some of them had quirks of their own, so I didn't feel like the odd one out. Our teacher was well mannered, helpful and encouraging. I always got the extra boost I needed and overall this had given me more ambition to do my work. Coming here has given me a lot more confidence in myself as an individual. I find it easier and more comfortable socializing with people. My skills in math have gotten better, which for the longest time was my worst subject. I have the inspiration and the motivation to get my work finished and my grade 12. I'm glad to have met all of my new friends as well as our teacher and all of them will leave a positive mark in my life for many years to come.

New Confidence

Susan MacPhail - Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Going back to school gave me new confidence. I am glad I decided to take that extra step to go back to school.

I quit school when I was 16 years old. 34 years ago. So when I returned I was afraid and excited. I didn't think I would be able to do it. Not only am I trying to get an education, but I am meeting new people. The social part of school is just as important to me as the educational part.

I did not realize how important education was until I tried to get a job. You have to have at least grade 12. They won't even look at you otherwise. Sure, you can work at jobs like Tim Horton's or McDonald's to name a few. Most people do not want to make a living at those types of jobs. For some jobs you may have to go to college to take a trade. You may have to go for years to accomplish your goal. Get your education while you're young. I am 50 years old; most companies hire younger people.

I go to PiCCoLA in Pictou and I have a great teacher. I never dreamed that I would have gone back to school after all these years, but it's never too late to change and improve your life.

I enjoy going to school learning getting my education and getting along with my peers. It sure built up my confidence. Now I have a reason to get up, get dressed and go to school. I was so depressed before, but now I'm not.

Yes, school is hard at times but our teacher helps when she can, so we can understand our work. She's a great teacher; she makes us all feel proud of what we can accomplish. We try to help each other, it's like we're all one big happy family here!

This is the fourth year writing GED; each time I try I failed. That makes me feel like a failure, not only to myself but also to my friends and family.

I am not going to give up. I am going to succeed and accomplish my dreams. I will go with confidence then hopefully I will get my diploma. That would make me very happy and proud.

I am a single parent. I want to be a good role model for my daughter, Melissa, to show her that yes, parents can go to school to get an education and to better their lives

New Skills, New Confidence

Gerald Brown - Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

When I got hurt at work and couldn't work anymore I decided to upgrade my education. I heard about a program called PiCCoLA and decided to give it a try. At first I wasn't sure, because of my age and because I haven't been in school for thirty years, if I could do it. I wasn't used to just sitting around and doing nothing, so I thought I would give it a try. I walked down to the school and met my teacher, Diane Vaughan who. She is very nice; I then met all the other students.

I've been down at the school now for two years. I wasn't really sure what grade I had from before, but it didn't really matter much. I knew how to read a little, but with help from my teacher, my reading has come a long way in the class room. All the students are very nice and if you need help, they're willing to help anytime. We have a lot of fun learning in PiCCoLA and it will give you a healthy mind. PiCCoLA is great adult learning program and can help at any age. It helped me.

My Life

Charlotte Sutherland – Shelburne County Learning Network

I called the Learning Centre a few months ago because I wanted to change my life. I wanted to get my Grade 12 and get a better job. I do not know what job I would like to do, but thinking about Continuing Care or Early Childhood Education.

I didn't used to like school because school was no fun. I found the work hard, I could not catch on, and before I could understand it, the teacher would move on. I was always anxious when the teacher put a surprise test in front of me because my mind would go blank. I could not catch on quickly like some of the other students. Some of my classmate picked on me because I was so much smaller.

I had a lot of trouble in Math and Science. I could not give the answer quickly like some of the other students. The teachers did not explain anything to us because there were too many students in the class. In Science, I could not dissect a frog because it was gross and I did not have the heart to do it.

Now, I can enjoy learning Math and Science at the Learning Centre because things are explained more now than they were in public school. My classmates can help me and I can help them, also. I can work at my own pace and I am less anxious when it comes to tests. I feel a little more confident at Math now.

My husband is a great deal of encouragement to me when I am down. He helped me to be motivated and tells me I am able to do it if I keep trying. I wanted to be a better role model for my children so I listen to what he tells me.

Being at the Learning Centre has made me feel a lot more confident in myself. I am a positive role model for my children. Even though I have been sick, I still have attended classes regularly and completed all the other responsibilities I have. My children see me working hard to achieve the goals I have set for myself and can mimic what I do. Coming back to school has been the best decision I could have made.

How Learning Has Changed My Life

Ann Marie French - Dartmouth Learning Network

Dartmouth Learning Network makes me feel good about myself. It helps me with my reading, my math and many other things.

When I went to school as a child, the teachers didn't pay attention to me or help me, and the other students made fun of me. The best part about being at the Dartmouth Learning Network is that I am always treated with respect. I don't know what I would do without the Dartmouth Learning Network.

They have really helped me a lot. Cathy and Jocelyn are the two best teachers I ever had in my life. They take the time to let me learn at my own pace. This never happened before while I was going to school. I am learning more now because of this.

I wish I would have done something before, but I am glad that I get the chance to change that now.

About My Life

Julia Jacoy - Dartmouth Learning Network

I am 52 years old and had never been to school before I came to the Dartmouth Learning Network five years ago. I come to school to learn to read and write, and it especially helps me to talk better. I learned to break my words up so I can say them right. Some work was very hard but it's getting better and it takes time.

Some people used to ask me why they cannot understand me half the time and ask, "What are you saying?" I come to school because I want to talk right. I have learned to talk much better now and people can understand me now even on the phone. Last month I called Eastlink and I had a bit of trouble talking to them because I think they could not understand me on the phone. I asked my teacher to help me. Cathy called Eastlink up and she told them I have a speech impediment. Then I made a call to Eastlink by myself to get my cable fixed, and I did it without anybody's help this time. It makes me feel great inside. Coming to school makes me better able to talk to groups of people.

School is now a fact of life, and getting an education can help me build the kind of future life I want. I feel stressed when the teacher gives me hard work and I don't make 100 all the time. When I worry it can affect my body. I talk to the teacher about that and we try to come up with work that I can do, just not too easy. It's a good idea to talk to someone about my problems, and my teacher is able to help me. Another good idea is that I write down my feelings in my journal. Coming back to school fulfilled my lifelong dream of going back to school.

Literacy, Education and Me

Michael Beresford –NSCC, Marconi Campus

My name is Michael Beresford and I am 30 years old. I am an adult learner who is coming back to school after being away from the education system for over 10 years. At first, this proved to be emotionally draining. Then, after talking about going back to school with my friends and family, I decided to return back to school to receive my Grade 12 diploma. This was clearly at a time when my self-esteem was not very high. With life throwing me a curve ball, as it usually does in everyone's life at one point or another, I decided to then throw a curve ball back at life and attend school with the goal to better myself while providing for my family. Before attending Nova Scotia Community College, I was nervous about attending school for the first time. Then after meeting my teachers and seeing the work involved, I felt a little more at ease. From here, I found myself doing well in all my courses and as a result, received constant positive feedback from all my teachers. Having this positive feedback and the one-on-one with my teachers made me carry this positive attitude over to my everyday life.

From here, I never thought that school would be able to help me re-gain my confidence. As I soon found out, it did this and so much more. For example, I am most proud of the fact that my son will see me graduate. In essence, I know that he will look at his own life in greater detail and see just how important education is for today and in the years to follow. In addition to myself going back to school, my positive outlook on education has led my brother and my mother to go back to school to receive upgrading on their education.

Looking forward, education should never be passed up for experience; for it is much more valuable in every aspect of life rather than experience. Your education will get you the experience but at a much greater value in your life rather than having experience with no education. With education being so important, and so many jobs requiring a grade 12 education compared to years ago, it is any wonder that education now would ever be passed up for any short term work and/or financial gain.

In the years to come, a post-secondary education will be required for most jobs. I believe this increase over time as more adult learners return back to school and become fully literate in today's society. Point in case, with approximately 1 in 10 adults not pursuing a formalized education, these steps of putting education first has the potential to change these lives drastically across Canada. By making education more accessible, through programs like ALP, you will find more people making better informed decisions about their life; while at the same time, planning ahead for a successful and rewarding career in the profession of their choosing. In this regard, Literacy will ultimately be the key to our community's success!

Technically, I Will Graduate Twice.

Katie Ducsharm - Kings County Adult High School

I was from Alberta. I had enough credits in high school to participate in the graduation ceremonies, but I did not have the correct courses to receive a diploma. I had already known that when the year was finished that I would be going to college the following year to upgrade my courses and the idea of college was as unappealing as high school had been. I had lost interest in school a long time ago. It was easy to get lost in a crowd and not care, because it seemed like no one else cared. College was just as bad; I began with three credited courses. By the end of the semester, I had failed one of the credited courses, dropped out of another, and barely passed the third. Rather than go through this frustration for another four months, I quit college all together, much to the chagrin of everyone around me.

I signed up for Katimavik, a youth volunteer program, and headed out in September. The first place I went was Nova Scotia. With the end of the program I decided to earn my diploma in Nova Scotia at an adult high school that a friend recommended to me. I was accepted and I moved to Wolfville.

I expected to find the same situation as before. What I found was completely different. King's County Adult high school has a maximum of forty students, and it is situated in a small two classroom building. Immediately I noticed was that everyone else was older than me and wondered if the move had been wise.

I was wrong. It is now February and I do not regret a single moment that I've been in this school. People devote to their goals for their own various reasons – their families, their pride, or future careers – but whatever their reason, people come in to school every day, settle down and work hard to get their courses finished.

Yet, the school feels more like a family. The group often goes out to see speakers or does special classes. We learn cooking skills, listen to survival stories, and learn about other cultures. Sometimes everyone pitches in to make a lunch together. Help is always readily available for anyone that needs it. For the first time I feel motivated.

June quickly approaches. I do not want to leave this school but I will graduate. This time, there will be no pomp, favoritism, clichés, empty words or smiles. Instead, there will be pride in graduating. The ceremony won't be about who looks the best, who has received honours, or who is better than everyone else. We are all equals, and we all worked hard to get where we wanted.

I may have graduated twice, but this one is for real.

A New Experience

Max Herman – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I can remember when I first learned to read and write. I thought it was some exciting. It was a wonderful experience in the classroom, learning math and reading, and doing interesting things on the computer.

When I first came in the classroom I was afraid I wasn't going to make it, but things got better. Since I got to know more people, things got much better.

Nonna's Story

Nonna Isaac – Chapel Island First Nation

There are so many roads to take and what road is the right path that will open the right door? The right door will lead you to success, a better education and opportunity in your life. One door leads you to the right path, a good education, and hope for the future. Learning how to read and write is the goal...a bright future. This door leads you to get a better job, good pay, and you can afford better things.

The next door is not success. You have no job and can't afford nice things. You have to depend on welfare, you have no education. You will be on drugs, or sell drugs, or be a prostitute and get involved with social workers.

I think of my success and education, that I learn different things in school. My challenge is to finish my grade. I know that I am older but I would like to have a better job in the future. I know people put me down, like my children, they say I am too old and that I should have finished school a long time ago. Sometimes, that hurts. I know that I am not a great writer and I know I won't win.

If I win, it means a lot to me, that I came a long way to get this far in school. I am so brave to challenge myself, to make it all the way to the top. My expectations and the thing I learned is that it is the best thing I ever did for myself, to be on top. I hope my children will be so proud of their mother some day. Someday, they might say how their mom worked so hard to make it and their mom is number one. Great!

My father was an alcoholic and he used to go to a bar and go home and fight and argue with my mom. My father worked with tankers and we moved a lot. My mother and father had to go to court and my mother had to choose me or my father. I was put in a foster home and stayed for about a month and a half. Then, I came home and we lived in an old condemned building. My mother screamed and pulled out a knife at me. I told her that I would not be like her. I was put away and put in a home and a girls' school. I ran away thirty-two times. I did not feel loved.

I raised myself. I took care of myself and I went through so much in life. I have been through hell and back. I was a young teenager and used to drink. I didn't stop until I was thirty-two.

I hope you decide and make the right choice on my behalf. I am hoping to make it to the top. I hope to get a nice job and get a big house and adopt some children around the world. I hope my wish comes true.

How the Adult Upgrading Program has had an impact on my life?

Shannon Johnson - Chapel Island First Nation

In 2010-2011, I began attending the Adult Upgrading Program provided at the Potlotek Education Office. With the guidance and support offered, the program has had a positive impact on my life.

Since I have been attending this upgrading program, I seem to have my values more orderly, meaning I can now manage being a parent with seven children, as well as coping with my education. Yes, moments are still hard but now that I have some support, it doesn't seem to be difficult.

Here at the Adult Upgrading Program, they provide workshops on different subjects allowing us to go on day trips. They also provide us with our breakfast and dinner. I've known my classmates before attending this program because we all live on the same community, which is called "Chapel Island" but I have come to understand them a little as a result of conversations during these times.

This Upgrading Program has refreshed my memory on all subjects. I enjoy working on my Math, but have a difficult time with my English, and with the guidance of my teacher Mrs. Sonia Smith I'm sure the difficult time I have with that subject will pass.

The staff here seems very devoted to our education. Being in this positive atmosphere couldn't be any better. Nancy Macleod, the director of the Education Office is always available for any assistance. She is supportive with anything that comes before her.

Without me having transportation to the Education Office, I started getting on the bus in the mornings with my children. My kids were excited to see me attending school again, telling all their friends, "My mom is going to school". The huge smiles on their faces, makes me proud of myself. I can be a positive role model for them, and to show them that giving up is never the answer.

This Upgrading Program is my first step in making my life for myself and my children better, my last step in the wrong direction ended when I walked into the Potlotek Education Office. Now I am dedicated to getting my education. With my GED more opportunities will be available for me.

Adult Learning Program

Nancy Johnson - Chapel Island First Nation

Hello! I am in ALP. When I took this program, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. A friend of mine told me to join. She said that it is interesting, so, I gave it a shot and I am still here after two years.

It is interesting! You learn a lot about different things and you get to go to different places and do different things and you get to meet different people, but it is not all fun and games. This is our education we are talking about and we have great teachers here.

We are so fortunate that we get to be on our own reserve and we don't have to worry about it. I have two little girls that go to school next door to ours. When they knew that I was starting school, they were happy for me. My girls are my inspiration! Without them, I wouldn't be here. I always tell them that school is important because without it, it wouldn't get us anywhere; no jobs, no money, no work.

Education is so important to us. You are never too old to go back to school! We have to work for our goals in life. We should never take it for granted, what is given to us. We are so lucky to have wonderful teachers to help us because without them, we wouldn't be here. Teachers are the greatest people put on this earth. No matter if you are young or old, they are our goals in life. It is up to you and your future. We have a good system going on here, a really good team!

I finished my early childhood but am not done yet! I still want something else to do. So, I have to work on it.

We have different workshops and different people coming from different places. The workshops help out a lot. They are good, friendly people and they help out in so many ways and are fun to do too. We work together. It's all a team effort. The staff are wonderful and great.

I would like to take this time to say thank you very much for giving us a chance to get our education. Without you, we wouldn't be here and thank you to Nancy Macleod to opening the door to our education and to Margaret P. And Sonia S. for taking your time to come in and help us and teach us. Without your help and understanding, we wouldn't get anywhere. Thank you for opening the door to our education.

Nancy Vega's Story

Nancy Vega - Chapel Island First Nation

The Adult Learning Program here in Potlotek has helped me grow and learn in so many ways. The classes are not that big, so it makes it easier for all of us to learn. We also do not just concentrate on only class work, which I find helpful because it gives our minds time to settle and absorb everything that is said to us. We used to have workshops every Tuesday in which we could bring a friend. These workshops would teach us very good and helpful life skills.

My name is Nancy Ann Vega, and I have my American GED. The reason I am in the Adult Learning Program here in Potlotek is to continue my education. I do not want to stop learning now that I am older. Growing up, I had to be forced to go to school. Now that I am 22 years old, it is my choice to stay in school and keep learning. Some people would ask me, "If you already have your GED, why are you here?", and I would reply, "It is because I do not want to stop learning." I cannot say that I am smart. I don't know everything and I'm not the smartest person. But, I do try. If I already know what we are learning, I go and help other students. There are times that other students have to come and help me. This is a nice environment to be in. We all try to help each other.

I find this Adult Learning Program not boring at all. Every day, it gets interesting. There is always fun things to learn about, and projects that just get us wanting to learn more. Recently, we had to plan a trip. Not a real life trip, but to any country we wanted to visit. Then we had to calculate how much it would cost to go on this trip. How we could get there, how much it would cost for hotels, car rentals, food, souvenirs. Money was not a factor in our pretend trip. We could choose the riches if we felt like it. We do fun little projects like this. On my spare time, I like to explore Google Earth on the computer.

Janice Dorogi's Story

Janice Dorogi - Chapel Island First Nation

Hi. My name is Janice Dorogi. I have been in community based for 1 year and half now. and this program helped me be a better listener and a writer. And I learned what I am good at, and I learned I want to be a write. I do so much out of writing essay. I think I got so much out of this community based class. I really want to be a writer some day. I am good at writing most of the time. I notice that I change since I got here. I was told to try the community based class and I stayed in the class. I am learning more than when I did when I went to Q.E.H. School back in the days. Community based has been a great experience for me.

This is a great program to take. If you were here in this class, you would learn lots also. We have fun days also, we have gone to the movies, women retreat and we also had workshops. I hope this community based program going on when my kids get older, they might need it. As long as we have this class, we should have a great learning again for our kids.

The course I want to go to is in P.E.I. it's in Holland Collage. It's a writing course. I think this class is great idea for me and know I can do it. The course cost 3,250.00 for 1 or 2 years. I want to do the course on the computer to see if I pass, if I did pass that be great for me. I love to write and I am getting better at writing.

I would like to have a chance to win this assay. I am glad to be in community based program. So I am looking forward to be able to read this assay to you. It will help me become a better writer.

I go to class because it is a good, that my kids see me going to school every day. I am just next door to the school that my kids go to. And I am helping my kids to learn also because I am going to school.

This community based is a great class to be it's a great "experience". You get be around other people and you get a lot of learning also. I am getting better at writing every day. That's why I like to be here. And maybe I could get to collage some day. That's my goal, and I will reach my goal.

I hope I win this essay because I love to write. And I am learning to become better writer. So I am looking forward to winning this essay. So I hope you enjoy my essay and make me a winning. I love to be able read my assay to other people, so I hope you pick me, and my name is Janice Dorogi from Halifax. I love to write and talk most of time. I think I am an ok writer. And this helps me to become a better writer and I learn as I write.

How has the Adult Upgrading Program had an impact on your life?

Dawn Isaac - Chapel Island First Nation

The Adult Upgrading Program has had a positive impact on my life. I have been able to improve my skills in math, reading, and writing. I have learned about the value of respect. The Adult Upgrading Program is opening up more opportunities in my life. The Adult Upgrading Program provides me with the basic math, science, social studies, writing and reading skills. It's a great feeling to learn these and understand how it's going to affect my life in the long run. Extra practice makes everything easier.

The program has taught me the value of respect. I have a lot of respect for my teacher, the staff, the students and everyone that is around. I watch what I say and try to be polite to the person who is speaking. I am quiet and listen to what they have to say. I have learned that it's very important not to be rude, to be respectful and to treat others how you would like to be treated.

Adult upgrading gives me more opportunities by improving my academic skills and opening the door to further education. I can continue going to school and become what I want to be. Support and encouragement of teachers and staff have a great impact on my learning abilities, helping me succeed in my education.

The Adult Upgrading Program has been very positive for me. Improving my basic skills, learning about respect has been important. It has opened many doors in my life.

What are my experiences on the road to literacy?

Ateka Yagjoubi – Institute of Technology (IT) campus.

My name is Ateka. I am a mother of three young children and a full-time student at the Nova Scotia Community College in the Adult Learning Program to get my grade 12 diploma. Since my country (Afghanistan) has gone through three decades of war, going to school was always a dream. Now that I'm in Canada, I feel that this is the time and place to achieve my goals. I love studying and self-educating; I can speak four languages: Farsi, English and two of them, Turkish and Urdu, I learned by myself without taking any courses. Also, I learned many crafts such as knitting, sewing, making flowers, and macramé from reading books. I learned cooking, baking, hair designs, and makeup, from YouTube.

I was in language school at ISIS for only a year and completed 4 levels of English courses. Then I applied to adult high school at Cunard Learning Center. Before starting it, I was a little anxious about my age (I am 30 years old); I thought that I am too old to go back to school, but after entering in the school I changed my idea. I discovered that I really like studying and that I am a capable student. After finishing level 2 and 3 in 15 months rather than 2 years, I applied to NSCC to do my grade 11 and 12 and I started my academic classes.

At first, I was intimidated by the huge school and studies, but after a while by working hard at home and school even in lunch hours I gained new confidence therefore I asked to take all 12 credits in one year instead of the usual two. They believed that it would be difficult for a busy mom, but I convinced the teachers and the principal that my husband would take over all household responsibilities, so I could focus on my studying. And now I will succeed in completing all 12 courses with grades of 85 and better in May.

I applied for Bachelor of Science nursing (BScN) at Dalhousie University. I will be the first and the only person in my entire family to go to university.

I'm interested in nursing, because I love helping people and being with them; it makes me happy when I help. I would like to recount a quick story of mine. When I delivered my daughters, the nurses that I had during that time were really ignorant; they even made fun of the patients. From that time on, I just wanted to be a nurse, so that I could take care of people in the way that I would have expected from those nurses.

At last I want to thank the government of Canada and Nova Scotia of their concern about its people and especially new comers that they give opportunity to mature adults to study and be educated. I am very grateful of the government and the teachers which help us to build and gain new confidence and go forward to achieve our goals. When I look back to the road that I have passed since I entered the second language school, I realized those new skills and confidence that made my spirit and character more powerful and now I can believe in myself.

New Skills, New Confidence

Rosemary Hiltz – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

My name is Rosemary Elizabeth Hiltz. I live in Port Bickerton, Guysborough County. When I was in grades two, three and four I spent much time in hospitals. I got behind but managed to complete grade 10 and got a job. I never went back to school. I married a wonderful man and have three children. I took up babysitting, helping with summer camp for young kids and teenagers. I meet some Deaf people through camp who taught me how to “Fingerspell” the alphabet.

My husband nearly lost his job at a fish plant in 2002, so I decided to work at a grocery store. Gala came to our community center to help fish plant workers who needed new job training. Those who were going to Gala spoke excitedly about the retraining program. When I lost my job, I too joined Gala. I wanted to become a better speller for “finger spelling” to the deaf. Gala taught me how to have confidence in myself and made learning fun. I never missed Gala classes until Gala had to relocation to another community where they could reach more learners.

Because classes were no longer held near my community I had many barriers to overcome. Travelling to these classes became harder. My family has one car which needed to be going in opposite directions moreover, while at class I’d worry if my children’s school was going to be dismissed unexpectedly. I couldn’t concentrate. It was too stressful for me. I tried Gala’s Brown Envelope Program for awhile. The envelope was passed on through many people before it got to me; then after I completed the lesson, I’d pass it back through this same link of people. It was a slow process. I was also learning American Sign Language at this time through the Internet, books, and a deaf friend. I did get my ASL level 3 Advance in August 2009.

In 2010 Gala began classes in Sherbrooke, and since my daughter went to school in that community I was able to relax and enjoy learning with Gala once again. Unfortunately I had some serious health issues that restricted me to staying at home. At that time Gala was introducing a new pilot program, RAP, which offered online support to rural learners who could not attend regular classes. I am enjoying the RAP program and once again I am learning from home.

It has been a long and difficult road with many challenges for me, but I am determined to reach my goals. Thanks to Gala for going that extra mile for me. Rosemary E. Hiltz

New Skills, New Confidence

Shawncey Johnson - Sydney Adult Education Centre

Hello, my name is Shawncey Johnson. I attend the Sydney Adult Education Center. I had attended ten years ago as well but at that time I was 18 years old and was just moving to Sydney from Bedford, Nova Scotia where I was working.

My mother fell back to her addiction and we were losing my youngest sister to Children's Aid in Sydney. I packed my things at eight-teen and moved to Sydney. When I got here they said I was too young to have my sister in my care and that I should worry about my education. According to them this was my mother fight not mine. I then got a lawyer of my own and we went to court. I had to leave school that year because I was missing too much time but I made a promise to myself that I would return and finish school. In the end I won and my sister has been in my care since I was 18 and she was 7. My sister is going to be 17 next month and plans to attend St. FX in September of 2012.

Also my middle sister came to live with me when she was 15. I was 21 and 4 months pregnant with my first son at the time. She graduated in 2008 from Sydney Academy High School. I am very proud of both my sisters. Since then I have had two healthy beautiful baby boys.

Now is my chance to keep the promise I made to myself and continue my education. This school is one of my stepping stones to achieving my career goals. After I obtain my high school diploma at the Sydney Adult Education Centre I would like to enroll into the Human Service program through NSCC. I want to help anyone, young or old to see there are always brighter days ahead and life is only what you put into it.