



Celebrating Adult Learners' Week 2013
April 6 – 14

***Learning Makes a
Difference***



Literacy Nova Scotia acknowledges and thanks the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills and the Nova Scotia Community College for their support.

Produced by Literacy Nova Scotia

Introduction

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's International Adult Learners' Week (IALW) is an annual celebration of lifelong learning. It is the highlight of Literacy Nova Scotia's year and for the past five years it has been celebrated with a contest and a reception.

The contest was a culmination of six writing workshops conducted for Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) by Jenni Blackmore; 79 learners participated in the workshops held in Cape North, Antigonish, Windsor, Liverpool, Halifax and Amherst. Workshop participants, as well as learners from English as a Second Language, seniors and workplace/workforce programs were invited to enter the contest with a video or written submission. LNS received 83 submissions and are very pleased to share them.

The 2013 contest winners are:

- ◆ Ariel Harper Nave – Workplace / Workforce
- ◆ Rukhsora Sangova – ESL, Seniors' Literacy & Family Literacy
- ◆ Ryan Maisonneuve – Community based, Levels I & II
- ◆ Nancy MacDougall – Adult High School, NSCC, Community based, Levels III & IV

The four winners of the contest were honoured at a reception held on April 12th at the Halifax World Trade and Convention Centre. The winners read from their submissions; Leonard Preyra, Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and Lora MacEachern, Associate Deputy Minister of Labour and Advanced Education attended and were presented with copies of the writings. Minister Preyra congratulated the winners and all adult learners for their determination and commitment. Minister Preyra read the Adult Learners' Week Proclamation on behalf of Premier Darrell Dexter.

Eligible submissions received for the contest are published in this booklet. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all who shared their stories and enthusiasm shown for adult learning. These writings demonstrate how learning has made a difference and will inspire others for years to come.



Nova Scotia

Proclamation

International Adult Learners' Week

WHEREAS *Nova Scotians are celebrating International Adult Learners' Week from April 6th – 14th. 1st, in particular, the achievements of adult learners and the organizations that support them; and*

WHEREAS *learning is the foundation for how we continue to grow in all aspects of our lives and Adult Learners' Week raises awareness of the tremendous value of lifelong learning, and the supports and services available to Nova Scotians who wish to enhance their knowledge and skills; and*

WHEREAS *lifelong learning has a significant impact for individuals and those around them at home and in their communities, while helping Nova Scotians be better prepared to seize the economic opportunities of today and tomorrow;*

THEREFORE I, Darrell E. Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of April 6th – 14th, 2013, to be "International Adult Learners' Week" in the Province of Nova Scotia, and urge all citizens to observe this week and to be more fully aware of the importance of a lifetime full of learning in all aspects of their lives.

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

Darrell E. Dexter, Q.C., M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

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New Frontiers in Math Studies

Ryan Michel Maisonneuve - Halifax Community Learning Network

Learning has not only made a difference in my life, it has changed my life. My name is Ryan Michel Maisonneuve. I was born in Oromocto New Brunswick, and attended some High School in Ontario. I joined the Navy in 2001, and move to Halifax, Nova Scotia shortly thereafter. When I was in High School, Most subjects were difficult for me to understand, including Math, which frustrated me greatly. This was due to my seeming inability to grasp the subject matter. In retrospect, it was far before high school where the blocks in learning occurred leading to holes in my understanding when attempting to learn new more complicated concepts. This frustration affected me greatly! So much so that I never had motivation to pursue the pre-requisites required to attend university in the programs that I wanted. School seemed more complicated, over whelming and unattainable for me at the time. Some teenagers, like I was, don't learn the same way as conventional high school would require them to. This is a problem that needs to be addressed in the form of alternative learning institutes where learning can be tailored to the individual, granting the learner the abilities to accomplish the great things.

Life for me went on, and I joined the Navy as a non commissioned member not having attended university. 12 years later, I decided to give math another shot, and to my amazement, it was possible for me to learn and understand it fully. Today, after only a few weeks after beginning this new attempt, not only do I understand it, but the tutoring I am receiving has been conducive to me excelling at it! From the moment I understood that it is possible for me to continue my studies in Math and other subject that I have yet to dive into, and I was also fully inspired. What if there were others out there that have experienced the same challenges that I had in High School? Surely there are, and when I am competent enough in my skills and achieve a high enough level that I would feel comfortable, I will become a math tutor for someone who needs, and wants it. This is how learning has changed my life. It has given me courage, and motivation to finally overcome the mountain that is education today. I owe this to myself, for trying again, but more importantly, to my tutor Ben, and to the fine folks at Literacy Nova Scotia. Thank you for showing me the way

My Life Experience in Canada

Rukhsora Sangova – Cunard Learning Centre

Life is a struggle. It is complicated. Life is challenging. Life is to build. It is accomplishing something. Life is a journey. My life was this, but it is much more.

My name is Rukhsora Sangova. I am from Dushanbe, Tajikistan. I am married, and I have four children. My journey started in 2005.

August 25, 2005 I came to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. I left my homeland with my family, friend, and my husband. He is from Afghanistan. He was a refugee in my home country. Because of the situation in Afghanistan, he can't go back. Then the Canadian government accepted us as refugees. Coming to a new place, I was scared, sad, unhappy, and surprised.

I started school in 2005 at ISIS. I was in ISIS for two years. I learned that learning at ISIS is not enough for me. So I decided to stay home for a while.

Then, in 2011, I came to Cunard to continue my education. I heard lots about Cunard. I finally was accepted. When I was accepted at Cunard, my first goal was just get my high school diploma. Now my future goal is to be a home care nurse. During my first year I learned a lot of things. At Cunard the teachers made me a more confident person. They made me feel free. They encouraged me for many steps of life.

Because of Cunard, I did a presentation about Afghanistan to the Military families in the Resource Center. I did that presentation for Military families so they could know more about Afghanistan. I felt very happy, like I accomplished something in life. After that I opened an account for an Afghanistan children's charity. Also, I opened a language class for Afghanistan children to know their language. On top of that, I also found a job as a lab technician. That is my first job in Canada. I work part-time. I'm very happy in my new job.

Now I still study at Cunard full-time and I work part-time. Also, I have four children to take care of and my husband. I'm a busy woman, but I'm happy.

Just remember life is a hill. Up and down. Sometimes on the hill you'll want to end your journey. But get up and try again.

My Next Step

Nancy MacDougall – NSCC, Marconi Campus

Taking that next step to change your life can be very scary. One of the scariest things that I have ever done in my life was to press the submit box on the enrollment application. I decided to fill out on-line to return to school. I thought about it for years but never had the courage to do it. Well I finally did it. I enrolled in the Adult Learners Program at Marconi Campus.

I dropped out of high school at age 17 and I have regretted it ever since. I was a teenager who knew it all. I didn't think I needed an education. Working at the local pizza shop and making money seemed more important at the time. I soon found out that was not the case. In order to get a better job, I needed my grade 12.

I always planned on returning to high school again but the circumstances never seemed right. I got married, got a different job, started my family and bought a home. Having a mortgage and paying our living expenses prevented me from going back. I couldn't afford it financially to take time off from work. I felt trapped, my education was put on the back burner again.

One day at the nursing home where I work, I met an old friend from high school. She was visiting her grandmother. She asked me if I was going to our school reunion that coming summer? I'm sure I turned red, when I told her that I didn't graduate. I felt so embarrassed and ashamed of myself. Here she was a successful teacher and I was a food service worker. That feeling of embarrassed stuck with me for a long time. I had to do something, it was time. I think that was the push I needed.

Now I am so proud of myself because at age 48, I took the next step in my life. I'm back in school learning all over again. I have two children a son age 19 and a daughter, 17. They both told me how proud they are of me. I can actually help my daughter with her homework now because we are both in the same grade. We will both graduate this year. I go to work now and tell my friends about my great marks and I get high fives in the hallways. I have inspired a young CCA at work to go back to college to get her LPN. I told her if this old girl can do it she can too.

What a great feeling of accomplishment I carry with me now. I feel like I have more confidence in myself. I took the next step in my life and as it turns out it was not scary at all. I will walk across the stage this year to graduate with my head held high. I'm not quite sure what my future holds for me but at least I have somewhere to start and the courage and will power to do so.

What the O.W.L. Project Has Meant To Me

Ariel Harper Nave - The OWL Program (Older Wiser Labourforce)

This course has been invaluable to me. My confidence has been restored; my computer skills have been upgraded; my understanding of interviewing skills and CV composition is greatly enhanced. In addition, I feel ready to re-enter the world of work, prepared for the challenges of tackling the hidden job market and facing shifted paradigms and attitudes towards aging.

The stipend I received was a God send. I had doubted my ability to commit to an eight-week course, given my precarious finances; the extra money made the difference.

I found the coordinators exceptionally knowledgeable and insightful, striking the delicate balance between rigor and compassion for our fears. We are all older workers, still vigorous, still anxious to be useful and possessed of vital skills and experience we want to bring to the workplace; many of us have no choice but to return to work in order to survive. Chris and Katherine worked with each of us to develop or re-frame our skills to fit the modern labour market; in addition they brought in dynamic, well-informed instructors and presenters who challenged our assumptions and augmented our knowledge.

The atmosphere throughout was one of respect, encouragement, and cooperation. My fellow classmates were positive, open, and supportive: we surprised ourselves at how well we got along. I feel that I have made lasting friendships with colleagues who consistently exchange leads and cheer one another's successes. The round-table format lent itself to discussion and practice; and we were encouraged to change seats regularly in order to get to know one another. In the end we became a cohesive group of shared resources and knowledge---a team, in the best sense of the word.

It is possible that I might have found a job without this program; but it would have been largely a matter of luck. Now, armed with an effective CV, updated strategies and skill-sets and the knowledge that my abilities have been recognized and valued, I am confident that the guesswork is gone, that my talents and experience are vital and much-needed in the workplace, and that I will find the RIGHT position for me. I cannot thank the OWL Program enough.

Learning Makes a Difference

Linda Larade - Community Learning Association North of Smokey

Learning has made a big difference in my life, I'm telling you right now. I can read and I can spell. I am not embarrassed anymore and will read in front of others now. Growing up, I was called "stupid" all the time, but not anymore. Because of learning, I am now working at a full time job and studying to write my driver's exam for the first time at 50 years old! I even got my first loan to buy a new car. This could never have happened without all my learning. Learning has given me faith. It means a lot to me and it helps when you have such a nice teacher.

I do so many things now that I couldn't before. I cook more now because I can read recipes. My favorite things to make are peanut butter cookies and tea biscuits. Grocery shopping is so much easier now and I even make a list. The phone book finally makes sense to me and I can read my medication bottles. Through Facebook, I can write messages to my sisters and I have started texting a little. I am slow but I am still learning.

Thinking about it now, I am doing so much more than I ever thought possible. Learning makes me feel good. I am understanding more and more about what is taking place in the world around me and it makes me feel like I am a part of it. On my supper break at work, I always pick up the Cape Breton Post and read parts of it just like my co-workers. This makes me feel good and normal.

If I could help people, I would tell them to go back to school. It's never too late to learn and it's not something to be embarrassed about because you are not alone. You have to believe in yourself. I am proud of myself and what I have done since I started my learning. I know now that nobody can take that away.

My Education

Dahira Sheikh – Cunard Learning Centre

I started studying when I was seven years old. I enjoyed my studying because my teachers were mostly good. After elementary school, I went to intermediate school and secondary school in my country. The language I studied was Italian and Somalian. After I came to Canada, I started to learn English as a Second Language. I went to ISIS then went to QEII where I learned English up to level six. After that, I came to continue my studies at Cunard Learning Centre. Since I started my studying at Cunard, I have really improved, especially in grammar, comprehension, reading and listening. My spelling has also improved. Also, I have learned Mathematics. I like to study at Cunard Learning Centre and plan to stay until I finish Level III. I like all my teachers who teach me in all my subjects. I like all the students I have met at Cunard. I enjoy communicating with them and learn each other's culture.

Education is important to me, so I can help my children with their education. I want to understand and communicate with all people, especially those who speak English. I plan to attend university when I am ready to learn about nutrition.

“Inspired Education”

Violet Johnson – Cunard Learning Centre

My name is Violet Johnson. I have four children and three grandchildren. All my children graduated from high school. I didn't finish school.

I first started at Spell Read because I couldn't read very well. After I finished that, I went on with my Learning at the Cunard Learning Centre in the ALP program. They were preparing me for the work that I had to do because it was a challenge for me. I didn't have any confidence in myself, until I went to Cunard Learning Centre. It is the school for me because they teach me things I didn't know. I am reading better and writing better. My marks are higher now.

Every day I dedicate myself to come here because I enjoy learning. I have accomplished so much at Cunard Learning Centre. For instance, math was not my strongest subject in the past, now I have understanding and confidence since my math has improved. I now know more and I moved on to Level 3. Problems that I couldn't figure out before, I can now figure out now. Sometimes I can't comprehend what I read, but I have improved a lot since I started the program.

Now I read to my five year old grandson every night before bed and he reads to me. He brings books home from school and when he reads, he understands and even recognizes the words. Sometimes we do our homework together.

The teachers at Cunard are very inspiring because they motivate me and my classmates and encourage us to work toward our goals of education. I am learning more and more every day in Level 3, but now the work is harder and I am working diligently to finish Level 3.

In September I will be moving on to NSCC with tools that I have learned at Cunard. I have done this for three years and my goal is my high school diploma. My expectation is very high.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Marjorie Day - Hants Learning Network Association

Can you teach an old dog new tricks? Yes, you can if you have the drive and willpower to do it. There are a few different ways that learning has made a difference in my life. One way is the fact that I am one step closer to reaching my goal of obtaining my grade 12 diploma. Also, I have more confidence in my abilities to do things than when I was younger. Another way learning is making a difference in my life is I have learned how to respond to others in whatever situation I am faced with. I have learned the value of managing my time.

Learning has made a difference in my life because it has brought me closer to getting my grade 12 diploma which is my goal. I have been out of school for a long time and I look forward to the challenges ahead as I move forward towards completing my goal. Getting my grade 12 diploma will help me in my quest of getting a good job. Life is a learning experience.

Another way that learning has changed me is with the experiences I have had in my life. I have learned to believe in myself. I have learned that I can set a goal for myself and believe that I will accomplish it. I look at things differently than I used to. I have more confidence in my abilities than I had when I was younger. As time moves on, you learn that life is not easy and you also learn how to deal with circumstances that come your way.

A third way that learning makes a difference in my life is I have learned to listen to others, to respect their opinions, and to give them honest feedback. I have learned to manage my time which is important as I have a very busy life. Managing my time has allowed me to bring up 5 children, manage my household, and manage businesses. Also with my time management skills I have become a pastor, and I also help at the local pregnancy center. As well, I am on the worship team at church, and I do many crafts, and lots of social activities.

Life is a learning experience. Knowledge can make a difference in your life. In my life learning has made a big difference. It has helped me to raise 5 children, manage businesses, manage my household, also I have become a pastor. You learn how to deal with different people and situations. In short, learning is a good thing and can help you accomplish your goals in life. Learning has taught this old dog some new tricks.

What Learning Means to Me

Jillian Kinnear - South Shore Work Activity Program

When I learn my mind expands, and it becomes free with thought. Knowledge gives me the freedom to change my life. With every bit I learn it sends me to a positive place. It sends me further away from the negative path I was following. I enrolled myself into the South Shore Work Activity Program (SSWAP) in June 2012, and since I have turned my negatives to positives. I have mental health and addictions issues but have been doing well controlling them.

Learning keeps me focused and on top of my goals. I have overcome my addictions and am "learning" to cope with my mental health barriers. I had spent years bogged down by addiction and domestic violence. I have put this behind me and decided to move on. I want a higher, better, education to support my family. Learning equals security for me and my family and hopefully financial security in the end. I am currently studying for my GED. I have almost completed the book and am ready to write it in May 2013. I will continue to use learning in my everyday life and keep surpassing even my own expectations.

Each day that I get up and go to SSWAP, I become more confident in my skills, life and self esteem. I plan on attending NSCC in the fall of 2013. I want to show my children that with hard work and determination anything is possible. In my opinion, it is never too late to learn and achieve your goals and personal best. I am determined to make something of and for myself - life I can call my own. I will be a person who is a worthwhile asset to society. Thank you for taking the time to hear my story.

"Learning is a lifelong process. As long as you breathe you learn."

The Success Story of My Life

Amy Lynn VanSnick – Cumberland Adult Learning Network for Upgrading

This is where it all began for me, the story of when I took the first leap after many years of having no education in 2011. I made the phone call to the Amherst Can-U program for Adult Upgrading on October 3rd 2011. That was the first day I started to move towards the success that I was seeking for many years of my life.

It started out slow by reviewing the things that I needed refreshing with. The teacher was amazing and she wanted us to understand that anybody could do anything when you set your mind to achieving any goal in your life. There were so many stressful days that I just wanted to slam the cover of my books down and give up, but I would sit there and think that if I don't believe in myself then nobody else will. Through the studies and the completion of projects, I realized that to set your mind up to achieve is to believe in yourself and taking the steps to improvement that you didn't even know that you had in front of you. Finding the skills that I didn't even know I had and completing the task at hand felt good.

I continued in the summer program in 2012 with improving my skills and continuing to learn. I feel the work that I did pushed me to keep taking all the steps to keep moving forward with my adult learning. For once I understood that learning the things I did made the biggest difference in my life. When I was waking up in the morning for school it wasn't that it was something to do but showed me the meaning of anything you want in life, and that comes free you are willing to work on skills and achieving goals. Knowing that one day when someone asks me, "do you know the answer to this question?" and I can say, "yes I do," and be able to hold my head up and be proud of what learning helped me accomplish. To help others when they ask makes me feel that I understand as a result of the work I put in.

I am now almost 30 years old and am in the CAN-U Gap. The program where the work is pushing me to the fullest and helps me recognize where I want my life to be with adult learning. I think that I am now ready to go and get my grade 12 diploma and show that I have grown. I want to come back and show the adult teachers this is how much they and I had believed in me.

When I took the first step to believe in myself another door opened. I have the belief that when you show passion and the will to get an education, take the first step. It might be the scariest one but I can say I did it and I know. Now that I can move ahead and be ready to get my grade 12 with pride, it motivates me to go further and to get the experience of what is next for me in my education and to finally be able to hold my head up from all the support of my teachers that believed in me and stood beside me all the way. In my life learning made a difference. It opens the next door to something better. Believe in yourself, take the first step, it's the first one to success.

My Life So Far

Ashley Keeping – Halifax Community Learning Network

My name is Ashley I am 27 years old all though elementary and junior high I was pushed through school. The teachers had not time for me so they would sit me in a corner at the back of the room to do whatever they would give me for the day. I learned a lot when I got to high school where I was put in a IPP class with people who needed help like me.

Through grade ten and eleven I was loving school and learning a lot. When I got in to grade twelve I had a new teacher, I did not like him very much, all because I found him to be too bossy. If anyone in the room asked to go to the bathroom, you would have to tell him that he was the best teacher in the world, Then and only then you could leave the class room. I was in grade twelve for all of two weeks when I could not take it anymore and walked out of class. I called my mom to come and get me from a friend's house where I had a breakdown.

I was going to go back after a few weeks of just taking some time off when one of my good friends died in a car crash. I lost it I could not even think of going back in to school not seeing him there every day so I did not go back to school.

I experienced a very big depression I would sleep all day and not care about anything in life. I tried to work but could not deal with that so work was not for me and I would not stay with a job for long.

As I was getting older I knew I needed to do something with my life so I asked my worker if she could help me get back in to school, She helped me by calling some people and now I have been going to see a tutor once a week for help.

I love learning new things about math and knowing how good my life really is. I am no longer depressed I am very happy with my life and the people in it.

I will say one thing if it was not for my mom who has stuck by me through all my ups and downs I really don't think I would be here today.

I don't have any kids but I do have three great pets. Two cats and a little dog that I treat just like they were my very own kids.

Now that I know that I can do it I am going to fight to get my grade twelve so that I can get a good job. The job I would love to have would be to work in a day care. I am really great with kids.

For so long I did not think I would be worth very much in life. Now I know that I am worth a lot and I am loving life and the fact that I am learning more and more every day. I want to thank mom for her support.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Debbie Hemeon – Cunard Learning Centre

I started on taking an upgrading course at Cunard Learning Centre on October 15 2012. I am in level 3 and I am hoping to get in Nova Scotia Community College to do my level 4, so that I can get my grade 12 Diploma. I also am doing an upgrading course at Keshen Goodman Library where I have a tutor. My goal is to get my grade 12 Diploma, take course in basic office and then go and get a full-time or part-time job. I have had jobs in the past, but I was always told that I needed to get my grade 12. Right now I am living on a disability check. I have an Employment Counselor at LakeCity Employment Services.

As a child, I was abused. I was picked on and bullied in school and at home. The kids use to pick on me and make fun of me. I got beat up a lot. The kids and the teacher were mean to me. I wasn't treated fairly and was called names I never got anywhere in school. I suffer from anxiety disorder. Since I have been at Keshen Goodman Library with my tutor and Cunard Learning Centre I have learned a lot. I have three wonderful teachers and they have taught me a lot since I been there. It has brought me up in my grade level.

In July 1996 I moved from Shelburne to Halifax. I was up here for almost 16 years and I have made a few friends. My reason for moving to Halifax was to better my life I wanted to get more education so that I could get a job. When I first came to Halifax I had nowhere to go, so I stayed at the YWCA on Barrington Street, Halifax. Then on September 1st, 1996 I was able to move into my own apartment.

In 1997 I started going to church then in 1998 I was baptized. 1999 I took on a babysitting for a good friend. In 2004 I completed a basic and enhanced computer skills program. In 2005 I took a 10-week portfolio course. I have volunteered at organizations and I have some work experience. I have volunteered at the Lung Association, my church and the Alzheimer's Society and Dress for Success. I have worked at LakeCity Woodworkers and Employment Services. I have also worked at Wal-Mart. I have also worked at Stone Hearth Bakery and Atlantic Superstore. But like I said I was told that I would have to get my grade 12 before I could work anymore. I have attended seminars and workshops. The people are very nice and friendly at the Cunard Learning Centre. Since I have been in Halifax I have learned a lot and I have made a few friends. I am hoping to further my education and to get a job.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Katelynn Constable - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

“Drug awareness the negative and positive things that can happen to one’s life.” Today’s generation we have a problem with lots of drug usage within the communities. People do not have the awareness about what drugs can do to one. A person that is under the influence of drugs can destroy their life and family settings. How? I suffered from a complete lack of focus in school, work, and in my family environment.

I am part of the generation that got caught up in the usage of drugs. My life became very complicated. I couldn’t even function at home or school. Why, because I was always trying to figure out when or where I was going to get my next high. I was not even sensible to talk to; I didn’t care what others had to say to me. I always told them off saying that I didn’t care what they had to say and that I didn’t want to hear it.

I even had a very poor attitude about everything in life because all I worried about was getting high. If I didn’t have any marijuana I would freak out on others and slam and punch doors and walls. That’s when I began getting into trouble with that law, and I just didn’t care. Why? Because I was high, my drug usage put me in debt all the time. Why? I always owed other people money. I would be “ticking” (paying later) marijuana off of others, or borrowing money from others to get my marijuana. Then when I did get money I had to pay it all back out. I had phone bills I couldn’t pay for, I barely had food to eat. Why? Because all my money was being spent on marijuana just so I could get high.

Now that I have been clean and sober and off of the marijuana for the past few months I and others have noticed a big change in my attitude. How? I am bubblier, brighter, sparkly and always rearing to go. I’m not argumentative towards everything now. I’m more sensible to talk to; others can now carry on a conversation with me without having problems. I look at life better now than I ever did, I’m actually caring what others have to say and take some ideas from them. I also have noticed that others enjoy being around me more; that’s including my family. Now that I am not fighting and damaging property I’m no longer getting into trouble with the law.

Also being sober has made me look at life a lot better. Why? Because I can now focus way more in school and actually learn because I’m focused on my work and not getting high. I have also learned about the value of money and how much I really do save now that I’m off the marijuana. How? I can pay my bills, have food to eat and afford to buy things I need such as new clothes, shoes, and make-up. I can also provide more for my children. I can give my children a better Christmas and birthdays. Now that I have been sober I have gotten closer to my family and that means a lot to me. So learning the difference from negative to positive of drug usage has made a big difference to my life in so many good ways. But I’m still young and I have a lot more to learn and I’m still learning something new daily.

A Learning Difference

Santana Campbell – Options Work Activity Program

From age five to age eighteen,
you learn in a public school.
Which most of the time
is not cool.

Once you're an adult,
memorizing information is easier.
You can learn better at your own pace,
at least it's not cheesier.

If you are asking how learning
makes a difference in my life,
Here is your answer,
I'm a learner for life.

A Very “Coole” Purple Day

Brian Coole – Valley Community Learning Association

March 26th is Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness. Purple is known as the colour for epilepsy around the world. Epilepsy is one of the most common, serious neurological disorders affecting approximately 300,000 people in Canada and 50 million people worldwide. It can be associated with profound physical, psychological and social consequences.

A nine year old girl named Cassidy Megan started Purple Day in 2008. She lives outside Halifax. In 2009, my wife saw an article in the Epilepsy Associations newsletter about Purple Day and wanted our family to get involved. Our family, the Cooles, got involved with Purple Day in 2009 because my daughter Jessica started having seizures when she was 13 months old. She had seizures until she was 14 years old but they are well controlled with medicine now. However, we have stayed in touch with the Epilepsy Association.

We set up a table at the County Fair Mall to make people aware that kids with epilepsy are the same as other kids and educate people about epilepsy. People started giving us donations and we raised \$300.00.

I suggested we should ask the Lion’s Club to donate the proceeds from their next breakfast to Purple Day. They agreed and they have been doing that every year since

We have also involved the New Minus Elementary School, E.M.S. and Horton High School. They sell purple cupcakes and the students wear purple.

The New Minas Children’s Centre holds a bunny hop to raise money for Purple Day and we give the children a Purple Day cake to celebrate.

We have been doing this every year and it is something we enjoy.
Wear purple to show you care on Purple Day!

It's Never Too Late To Go Back To School

Florence Penny – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

My name is Florence Penny. I live in Pictou, Nova Scotia. My goal is to get my GED so I can return to school and learning. I believe it is never too late to go back for your education.

I started in September when I met my teacher named Diane and made some new friends Sue and Luke. The first few days made me wonder if I could do it .However I stayed and I'm still here working and learning.

There have been difficult spots, especially math. I was never good at math but I am getting better.

We have several workshops. I've worked making jewelry, earrings for my grandchildren. I've went to an anger management workshop where I learned different ways to handle anger when you are upset. I also attended workshops on abuse, and resume writing. A relaxing time was one on painting.

We are working on painting trees, not my favorite pastime but it was fun. Twice a week I go for extra help at the New Glasgow School. I have made progress and I feel good about myself.

In learning and about myself, I hope to continue until I get my GED. I am not giving up.

A Big Step

Matthew Allison – Halifax Community Learning Network

I'd like to tell you my reason for coming to the Adult Literacy Program. It was because I wanted to get help with my reading in order to better myself. For years I wouldn't pick up a book, not even to look at one. But since the time I have started with the program, I have found it changed my life and me.

While I was a student in school I was insecure about my reading, mostly when reading out loud. I used to think all the other students would start laughing at me. But my skills have gotten better and now I enjoy reading. I increased my time with the ALP to two days a week so that I could also work on my math skills. After a year of tutoring, I enrolled in metal fabrication at NSCC. I have learned how to weld cut and sheet metal. I also have learned how to burn metal with a torch. I can weld different joints and angles. I love what I'm doing and my favorite part is working on projects in the welding shop. After I'm done, in two years, I would love to work out west or off-shore. I still continue coming to tutoring because my math and reading tutor are great help. My math and read has greatly improved and I'm extremely confident in skills.

Thanks to some of my family members for the talks and help that gave me the confidence for a big step.

Learning Makes an Amazing Difference

Rebecca Gower – Colchester Adult Learning Association

At the age of sixteen, I left school to take care of my mother because she had not been well for some time. Home was where I needed to be at that time. I always told mom I would go back after things were better but by the time I could have gone back, I was in my twenties. I had just had my first daughter, and after two more babies, my place was at home with my kids. My dad passed away eleven years ago, and my mother had to be taken care of; that was my job. My husband and I bought a house, and took mother home with us. Just this past July, I lost my best friend, my mother. I kept thinking of what I had told her and knew it was time for me to change.

I have been given a chance to study for my grade twelve, which I thought would be impossible for me to achieve. I have not been in school for thirty years. It is not easy for me, but I have a lot of support to help me when I am down. Sometimes I feel it is impossible for me to do, but everyone says one more day is one day closer to a new beginning. If I want to continue on this path, I know my family will be there for me.

Looking back, I always had a hard time with learning as a child. I had no help and not much support in school. Now, since I started school, I feel better about how I learn and what a huge difference learning is making in my life. Every time I make good marks, I know I am one step closer to moving on. I feel I can only go forward not backward. I took the first step to success by getting in touch with the right people to make it happen for me.

Being able to return to school at my age, it is wonderful to know that you're never too old to learn. There is always someone to help out no matter who you are.

If not for the level 2 program in CALA, I wouldn't be who I am becoming today. Being able to be part of a positive group of other learners such as myself, I am getting better at some things like learning how to read out loud, and not being scared to do so. Making group decisions with others has shown me that you can get something wrong but still have someone say, "It's OK, try it this way and see what we get."

I will be here with CALA until I move on to levels 3 and 4 and finally grade twelve. Every day I am amazed at the difference learning continues to make in my life.

Me, Myself, and I

Victoria Leavitt – NSCC, Akerley Campus

My name is Victoria Leavitt, and this is my story.

I promise you my life has been nothing but trials and tribulations for as long as I can even remember. It took hitting rock bottom before I found my way back to the top. I call this, “Me, myself, and I” because I believe I’ve lost the old “me”, found “myself”, and now “I” have a story that has a life altering end.

In 2005, my road to education came to a halt when I became pregnant in my freshman year of high school. The faculty refused me as a student because I would miss too much time since I was due that fall. My parents tried to fight for my rights with no win in the end so I was considered a “high school dropout”. I tucked my tail between my legs and wore that title as I worked minimum wage jobs trying to make do with what we had.

After years of repeating the same circle, I decided enough was enough and applied for funding and the Adult Learning Program at NSCC. I was accepted right away! But only a few days after I started the program, my life and future were stolen from me...

In 2011, I was victim of domestic violence. For a year I sat piecing my whole life back together, in and out of transition houses, attending counseling sessions regularly but all I could think about was how I could gain my chance for education back after it was destroyed so quickly. I was told that because I backed out after my contract for funding was signed, I may not get another chance. Being told I couldn’t do something only made me try that much harder.

In my moment of weakness, I found myself.

A year later, I decided once and for all this was my last chance (in my mind) to succeed, so I re-applied for funding and NSCC. It felt as if I would never see that silver lining with such a long wait ahead. Well, I must have put more effort in than I had thought because I got accepted into the NSCC Adult Learning Program again! The only downfall I had to encounter was a three week waiting period.

In an instant, my whole life changed when I received the phone call hearing the words, “You’ve been accepted!” I put so much hard work into getting back into school that I knew this time was the right time for me. I’m finally going to be that somebody I wanted so badly, the person everyone told me I couldn’t be. Having gone through such a traumatic experience, there was a void that I could not seem to fill. Even with the help of specialists and transition houses, the void continued to damage me. It wasn’t until I started going to school and learning that I felt as if that void had been filled. My journey to my future has a key, and that key is my education.

Learning Makes a Difference

Nasser Naiini - Immigrant Settlement and Integration

When I came to Canada in December 2010 I didn't know that how many problems I had in my English language skills. I was an experienced pathologist and I had studied English every now and then for 30 years. I talked in the Toronto airport with custom officers, airport workers and some passengers and was surprised that I can't understand most of their speech.

After a week we moved to New Glasgow to my friend's home and again there I found that I can't communicate well with people, bank personnel, my children's school authorities and teachers. Then I decided to solve the problem. I realized that what I had learned of English was by self study and reading, not by listening.

Then we moved to Halifax and went to ISIS to help us. Fortunately ISIS helped us in many aspects including English learning classes. I practiced speaking and listening more and more and improved a lot. Now I'm going to start English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course in NSCC to complete my language skills. I feel more confident and relaxed these days. When the home phone rings, I have no more stress and I can understand and respond to the call, although not perfectly. I also have a volunteer tutor in the library. Two hours per week I practice speaking and listening with my tutor there. We have a friendly atmosphere there and occasionally we have also potlucks and presentations.

Improving English skills gives me such a good feeling that sometimes I become interested in learning French as well.

Darkness is absence of light

Ranjith Embuldeniya - Immigrant Settlement and Integration

Some say learning is at kindergarten, high school and then for a few at university
May be they give up, compelled to work, earn wages required to meet adversity
Some may feel content; their knowledge seems, will sustain them in life's journey
But learning is a lifelong process, if one's to maintain sanity, and mind's purity

How can a bird learn to fly, if it does not take the first few flutterings and falters?
How can a babe start walking unless he takes the first few steps and stumbles?
How can morning break into day unless the sun rises and the dew drop vanishes?
How can man become prudent without hard work, study and all life's bruises?

The bird was made weak, but also given wings, it can fly away to greener pastures
The deer was made meek, but also given swiftness to avoid impending dangers
The toddler is helpless, but raises a cry, gets attention, its mother then nurtures
The human mind is power limitless, only if knowledge and wisdom it harbours

Einstein for years, was a unknown refugee, but his brilliant theories still hold good
A piece of poetry, a well written book, a masterpiece, for the mind it offers food
An honest approach, a just effort, an offer for peace would receive anyone's nod
Soul stirring music, an enlightening gentle word, enriches the scholar's shrewd

Darkness is absence of light they say, and coldness nothing but absence of heat
Courage is the key to meet anything daunting, as endurance is to any great feat
If heaven did not exist our efforts are in vain, and no challenge should we meet
Ignite the flame of wisdom, dispel darkness, and make it a lamp unto thy feet

If you feel you're set and done, reached the end of toil, still keep re-captivating
If you feel there's something yet undone then do it now without procrastinating
If you feel something has been lost, except character, there's time for re-gaining
If there's no end in sight and your goal is light years away, still keep on marching

If you have been a scholar right through, then go ahead there's no need to doubt
If you have been a wise arbitrator, then believe in yourself, but be on the lookout
If you have been none of these then, kneel and pray, to receive divine light
But never forget to thank, pay obeisance to parents, they gave you your birth right

Amiable is a disciplined mind, radiant is a peaceful one, your charisma is abound
Piety, sincerity, magnanimity, sobriety and amity gets a halo on your head around
The school of life teaches how to surmount any colossal rock, and not just a mound
If you're amenable, willing to learn from mistakes, you'll find yourself lost and found

Learning Makes a Difference

Kassandra Hagen – NSCC, Burridge Campus

My name is Kassandra Hagen, and as of Friday I will be 23 years old. I am currently enrolled in the Adult Learning Program at the Yarmouth Burridge Campus in Yarmouth. Deciding on coming back to school was a tough decision, as I have two young children at home. I had decided that coming back to school would be the best for all of us. It could only better our lives. I only want the best in life for my children. Continuing my education has a big part in making that happen. I want to be a good role model for them and show them that education is really important in life. I don't want them to follow in my footsteps, and quit school at a young age. I want them to finish school and do whatever they want to do in their life.

When I first started at Burridge my nerves were everywhere. It had been over 6 years since I attended school, and my high school experience wasn't the best. I have such a hard time in large crowds of people; at first I wouldn't even ask an instructor for help if there were other students in the classroom. I would sit and wait until after class to ask. After I got into the groove of things, I realized this is nothing like high school. I broke out of my shell a little bit and asked for help when I needed it. The instructors were very happy to help me, and work with me if I needed extra help with something.

One of the obstacles that I will have to overcome is doing presentations. I get really nervous, but the instructors understand that not everyone is a public speaker. They try to work with you and compromise to make it easier for you. The instructors here are really great; they try to help you in any way that they can to make this an amazing and good learning experience. They want to see you accomplish what you came here to do and see you do better for yourself.

Burridge Campus has made my life better and helped me come out of my shell. I know there is still going to be some obstacles that I will have to overcome. This whole experience has also helped me realize I can do anything I put my mind to. I feel as if I accomplished a lot, just by coming back to school in the first place. Now I have to accomplish what I came here to do. Get a good education, and learn from this experience.

My Learning Experience

William Reddick - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

When I was young I didn't do well in school. Being in school was not important and not even interesting to me. There were more important things for me to do, or so I thought. I liked to earn a bit of cash, and I liked to party too much. Then at the age of sixteen I found the world of the ring. I sure did like to box. I trained hard. Boxing made me feel good and I was good at it. My first amateur fight I won by knock out only thirteen seconds into the first round. Boxing gave me more than anything else ever did. It was a high to me like no other. I stayed with boxing until I was twenty-two years old. I traveled to Newfoundland and Labrador, all across Nova Scotia, and Quebec. At the age of seventeen I won the Novice Championship for Nova Scotia.

There was only one fight that a boxer would not fight me. He was the current champ in Quebec. He was three times my size, but he refused to fight claiming that he had injured his hand. I ended my amateur boxing career with 13 wins, a few by technical knockout and 3 losses. Man, I loved to box. I almost made it to the Canadian Olympic Team. I believe that I won that fight, but they gave the decision to someone else. I still feel that it was an unfair decision. That incident, combined with women and alcohol finished my boxing career. It's true that some of the most important things taught in life aren't covered in a school classroom.

At twenty-five years of age I became a father. My partner and I have three daughters. Relationships and being a father gave me many learning experiences. Raising children is way harder than any fight in a boxing ring. I have learned, and learned, and I am still learning about being a father. Our girls are all young adults, and it's more challenging now than when they were small. Then you could kiss away their cuts and bruises, but now their problems are adult problems and way more complicated.

Along the way I realized that I needed more education for myself and my family. I have always tried my best to provide for them. I worked hard at jobs and am very good with my hands. I like to work around carpentry and mechanics. But to be paid you need the trade.

I started back to school several years ago to help me better myself. I still find it hard. I am determined to stick with it. My stubbornness can sometimes be my greatest weakness, but at the moment it is my strength. It keeps me going. I do realize that going to school is kind of like boxing. In order to win in the ring you need to train, practice and stay in good physical shape. Education is very much the same. You have to practice, practice and practice some more.

I am learning more and more about myself and the world around me. I am getting close to the big "five-O" and sometimes I regret not staying in school when I was younger. But regrets are a waste of time, and I am who I am because of the choices I made. I like the man I am.

What Learning Has Taught Me

Christopher J. Donaldson - Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Learning is a lifelong experience, I am always learning new things and skills to succeed in a field someday.

Being the person I am, I learn from everything around me. To see it in person, learn it firsthand, was always a joy for me and the perfect pastime. To learn all there was and how things worked. Learning was a passion for me.

I was always a lover of Visual Art. Being an amateur artist myself, I aim to perfect my technique and maybe one day make a profession out of it. Art classes with Dan Munro through PiCCola taught me about complimentary colours and the many effects that you can apply to make quality art. It showed me to be critical with my background as well as the scope of the picture.

Poetry, like Art, is a deep passion of mine. But poetry is a bit different for me. It is a reflection of myself, thoughts, and feelings. It's more of a diary of emotions for me. To release the stress and tension I feel through words is an amazing help with the problems I face from day to day. Attending a class with Jenni Blackmore, I learned important writing skills as well as identifying different styles of poetry.

While attending PiCCola, I have also had the chance to take a First Aid class, even I know the importance of proper medical training in any workplace is a must. I am very thankful that I had the chance to learn proper medical skills for many types of injuries. This will help make me safer in the workplace as well as at home.

I also have attended a class about healthy relationships, where I learned the importance of a healthy relationship between couples as well as the dangers of an unhealthy one and signs to help avoid it.

Taking the chance to learn is one of the greatest gifts we have as a person, it allows us to take a blank object and turn it into a work of art, take paper and record our stories and emotions, bring people closer together and sometimes save lives. Learning gives us knowledge, and knowledge is power!

How Learning Has Affected My Life

Jessica Woodman – Hants Learning Network Association

Have you ever been so far gone that you didn't know who you were or where you were? Have you been so sick you just want to die? That's where I've been. I've come a long way in my journey called life. I've learned many things that have changed my life.

Learning has made a difference in my life because it has given me a different outlook on life. It has made me realize that the life I was living wasn't a good one and also that drugs aren't the answer. Before I came to this realization I was 78 pounds on my death bed. Drugs had a huge impact on my life, a bigger one than I realized at the time. I was doing way more drugs than someone should. Skin and bones, I put myself into a drug induced coma. I was trying to end my life because I thought I was too far gone to turn my life around. When I woke up I realized I had to live a different life for me and my children.

After I got out of the hospital I began the recovery process to becoming clean and free of drugs. I learned many skills to keep my mind clear and not to let my past life drag me back in to the huge rut I had been in. One skill was meditation and breathing to help my mind be free and clear. Another skill I learned was to not let things bother me as badly as they used to. When I get agitated, I go for a walk to try to calm myself down before I get too far gone to come back to reality.

February 16th will be one year since I've touched a hard drug. I'm feeling so much better now than I did a year ago, not having to worry about petty little things. All I have to worry about is my children and I, and making sure we have what we need to survive. I've learned that we are the three people in my life that matter the most. I have family and friends I care deeply about, but I've realized I can't do everything for everyone. Even though I would love to, it's just not humanly possible.

Learning has affected my life in more ways than one. My life has gone from one extreme to the other. I am grateful for the positive life changes I have made, which have made me the person I am today: healthy and happy.

The Unschooled

Kristy Swinimer – Barrington Community Learning Centre

It was September, and everybody was going back to school. I had dropped out at fifteen because most of my friends were dropping out too. I know it was stupid, but I'll tell you why I had made my choice to do so. My boyfriend, Damon, was in a gang. He didn't think I should go to school, because I couldn't read or write very well.

He said, "I'll take care of you."

But a few years down the road Damon said, "You are so stupid, you can't even read the newspaper!"

I told him, "Yes I can. Listen to this. "A 30 Year old Man Killed by Cougar" I told you, I can so read!" He was shocked!

He asked me, "Where did you learn to read?"

I told him an older lady came up to me while I was grocery shopping. She noticed that I had some trouble reading the label of a soup can. The older lady told me that she is an instructor at a learning centre, and she could help me with my reading and writing.

"I could even get my GED, Damon!"

"You don't need your darn GED for nothing" he said.

I told him that I wanted to go back to school, get my education and become a teacher.

Damon said, "You're twenty-five, you're a little old and not that bright, you know."

I point-blank told him I was going to do it and there was no one going to stop me this time.

You see I have learned that I wasn't stupid after all, it was Damon putting things in my head. I can be anything that I want to be, I just have to work hard for it. I left him two months ago. I am renting a place with a friend. I am going to college and studying to become a teacher, because learning can make a difference to anyone in the world, even me!

The Blessings in My Life

Melita Jackson – Halifax Community Learning Network

What kind of difference has learning made in my life? It has made many good changes. Along with my class work, I have learned from others in the program. Learning has made a difference in how I deal with members of my family. I no longer give in to their every request and help them take care of their own problems. I know that people here and also at my church can be trusted to listen and offer kindness and understanding.

But very important in having this program is that it helps me reach my goals. That is to learn to read better, do math, and work towards my GED. I love getting books from the library and discussing them with my teacher. I very much want my little grandson (2 1/2) years to come and enjoy the books and activities for children at the library. Already, I have written a book for him. I also like to work with the computer and I sometime do homework for my teacher on it. I like solving math problems and I also like things we do about handling money. I have had help to make better and cheaper meals for my family.

I do feel blessed to be here. I want to stick with the program although I am bothered with health issues. I am very good at coming to class and my teachers are proud and happy for me.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Erica Blake - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Learning has made a great difference in my life. It helps in getting a better job and to better myself. Also in learning I have learned to meet different people.

I enjoy learning about different people and their culture.

Learning has also helped me get better in all different subjects. Learning has also helped me deal with my responsibilities in life and made me a better person. Learning has really helped me cope with getting my self-esteem much higher!!!

How Learning Made a Difference in My Life

Viola Baker - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Learning has made a difference in my life because
at my school, the Adult learning Association you
can upgrade your skills in any subject.

I met a lot of new people at school.

I have become better in my math,
computer and social studies skills.

We also attend many different workshops
and went on fields which were fun.

So school has made a really big difference
in my life. I am good student in class. I
work at my own pace. I am so proud of myself.

Challenges

Connie Roberts – NSCC, Cumberland Campus

For those who didn't have someone to read to them like me; it does affect your ability to read as life goes on. It's stressful and a struggle but in some ways we are always reading some sort of words. But from pre-school to high school, and now it will always be a challenge through my life. I am determined to defeat my challenge, and overcome my fears of reading.

In my pre-school years I can remember having a lot of fun with my friends. Reading wasn't all that important to me. I think it's because my mother didn't read to me. She would read many books, but always in silence; I never heard reading. One day I asked her why she never read out loud and she said because I can't read right. But my mom had read many books. She said I put different words in there that sound like the words; it worked for her.

When I got into high school, things didn't change much; my reading abilities didn't change. I got advanced in grade 7, why I'm not sure. Then at the age of 16 I left school, and got married; thinking that it was my way out. Why would I need to read if I'm married, he can help? Then I had a family; that changed everything: I tried so hard to read to them but I wasn't reading to them the right way. I would replace a word that wasn't the right ones. So I stopped reading to them, and they had to learn on their own. I felt like it was my fault and so today they don't like to read. This is a terrible feeling of disappointment.

Meanwhile, as I got older, life changes, and challenges arise, things were very rough. I tried to get my grade 12 many times, and in many different ways. I paid for my courses online, I attended night school in Amherst many years ago, went to community college in Newfoundland. Now I'm attending the community college in Amherst. I'm enjoying my course, and doing quite well with the help of the teachers.

Now I'm attending the community college in Amherst. I'm in the Adult Learning Program, getting my grade 12. This time, I'm more determined; I will focus more on my reading, by slowing down to understand what I'm reading and asking for help when I need it. I know I will always have a disability in reading, but I can't let that stop me from reaching my goals.

Janice Story

Janice Cunningham – Barrington Community Learning Centre

My name is Janice Cunningham. I am a fifty seven year old woman, a devoted wife for 40 years, and mother of two adult children, with children of their own. One day a thought came to my mind that I would like to attend the Adult Learning Center, to finish my high school education. That day, I simply picked up the phone, dialed the phone number, and I created a new beginning for myself.

I want to prove to myself I can achieve and reach my goals. I have returned to school to have a better outlook on life's opportunities, and a whole new world of open doors.

The hardest thing about going back to school is concentrating on homework, and speaking out in class. Also, as adult students, with homes and families, we are often exhausted before even getting to class, where learning new things can be challenging. My personal goal is to focus on achieving my G.E.D. because this will be the best reward I can give myself. I have been taking some Continuing Care Assistant courses because that is what I would like to become.

With support from family and friends I will be successful in reaching my goals. Learning will take me where I want to go.

How Has Learning Made a Difference in My Life?

Doreen Young - Western Halifax Regional Municipality Community Learning Network

Learning has made a difference in my life in many ways. In April 2002 my only child lost his life working for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan. This event put me into a severe state of depression. All I wanted to do was stay home; close the curtains and the lock myself inside and away from society. In essence I shut out everything the world had to offer. Life was passing me by and I did not care. I felt dead inside. Although, I was selected and honored as the Silver Cross Mother for Remembrance Day in Ottawa 2002 a dear friend of mine cared enough to mention that I needed to start living again and that started with learning again. I decided to pursue my GED and try to fulfill a lifelong goal not only for myself but also in memory of my dear son.

Since I enrolled in the GED program I find I am making better decisions about so many things in my life. Things like the food I eat, my finances, the way I allow people to treat me, and the way I treat other people, too. Through my many tears and frustrations I am finally able to understand math concepts and how to structure an essay. Every time I open my schoolbooks I can feel myself holding my head higher and walking with more confidence. More so than I have ever felt in my life before.

I plan on writing my GED exam in June of this year and I am confident I will obtain my grade twelve equivalency. This will, in turn, permit me to take a course in bereavement counseling and counseling for abused women. I have survived abusive relationships in my life, the death of my only child as well as breast cancer. Learning has given me the strength to continue moving forward and pursue the career path that I have always wanted to travel down. This is how learning has made a difference in my life.

How Has Learning Made a Difference in My Life?

April Harvey - Western Halifax Regional Municipality Community Learning Network

Learning has helped me improve my work ethic and familiarize myself with more of the educational program that is available to me. I have a learning disability that I am overpowering by continuing with my studies. It is my opinion that I am becoming a genius at many things in life. I am currently trying to get my Early Childhood Education Certificate and start my own day care one day. I worked in two Day Care facilities and two elementary Schools. It was the best experience outside of babysitting for me. I am a single mother of two and the education I have gotten has helped me be a better mother by providing a better education to my children. This has helped with their development and their education. We're a buxom family who are healthy, happy and cheerful and things are only getting better.

I am a Volunteer Fire Fighter with the Hubbard's Fire Department. Learning has helped me save people's lives. With my Medical First Responders course and training I am studying to become a Paramedic. In this field there is no time to make an error. Learning has given me the confidence I need to succeed at this. As a fire fighter we are very dedicated to our community and the people in it as well as to continue learning. Learning gave me the knowledge to save my ten-month-old son's life when he was choking. I kept a clear mind and knew what I had to do to protect my children.

The learning program I am currently attending has helped me improve and gain a better knowledge in the two fields of work I am interested in. Learning has given me the courage to never give up and to follow my dreams. Learning will help me make the best for my two children's life and for mine. Continuing to learn makes me feel like that my brain is dynamite and the substantial amount of knowledge that I am taking on is bound to incite a better leadership role for me in the future. Learning has improved my attitude towards life. As a work from home mother my improved math and computer skills have make it easier for me to be at home watch my kids grow up. It has given me the confidence to start teaching them myself. Learning has helped me to keep an open mind; experience a variety of things in my life, and it has inspired and motivated me to become what I want and to be the best at it. This is how learning has changed my life. Thank you

My Education, My Career

Natasha Clarke - Jessome – NSCC, Marconi Campus

Looking back on what should have been my high school graduation; I remember seeing all of my closest friends in their caps and gowns. They were quite happy and excited to be graduating and moving on to bigger and better things. While I stood at the side lines watching, wishing I was with them that day, I was trying to understand why I just didn't go to school and finish my education.

While I was at home with my baby, I started to think about my life even more. Towards this, I watched my friends experience the college life style that everyone should have to experience. Most of them eventually graduated from post-secondary study with their Nursing, Business and Education Degrees. This had a significant impact on me; as I felt like I was never going to have an education for myself. Thus, I felt very discouraged.

How could I look into my children's eyes and preach to them about the importance of education, or even tell them to go to school and then to college to get a career if I didn't? That was something that played on my mind for a while; as I did not want to be hypocritical. Every parent wants the best for their children and are willing to set good examples for them. Ultimately, every parent wants to give them nothing but the best in life. But, unfortunately with no education, I knew that would be difficult to accomplish.

With this in mind, I debated back and forth for a while; as to whether or not I was ready to go back. Then, I decided it was time to enroll. Looking back, it was by far the best decision I have made for myself. I actually feel like I'm setting a good example for my girls. Coming back to school also made me feel confident that I could succeed with my studies.

Now, I am very happy that I've had the chance to return to my studies. With my family in mind, my goal is to get a well-paying job that I would really enjoy doing. This would also give me a huge sense of self accomplishment; whereas I am actually doing something that I was frightened to do for so long.

Although I do have a long road ahead, I now see that I have opened many windows of opportunities to explore. With the right amount of courage and personal determination, I feel I can accomplish the many goals that I've set out to do in life!

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Theresa Redden - Western Halifax Regional Municipality Community Learning Network

Having a child with a hearing impairment motivated me to continue to learn. I had to learn how to find ways to communicate non-verbally with my child. I had to learn sign language from the start of her life and now know why it is so important to continue to learn. My children are now leaning to use a computer, and therefore I had to take computer classes and improve my own skills so I could learn how to help them. As a result I can now play games and help them with their homework online.

Learning how to better use the computer will open more job opportunities and help me to better provide for my family when they get older. What I am doing now will benefit all of us. A better education is the best gift that I can give to my family and me. My children and I learn together, which is one of the most important reasons why I have to keep learning. I want to show them that continuing to learn is important, and I do that by getting up in the morning and going to school just like they do.

With learning new skills I have become a more reliable worker for my employer. The more knowledge I get the better I am making myself. My ultimate goal is to one day get my grade twelve diploma, and to do that I have to keep learning. Having an education will provide more open doors not only for me, but also for my whole family. Learning one step at a time will help me achieve all of my goals and help me become a better caregiver to my children and to show them that they should never give up on themselves.

Learning has been difficult, but very rewarding at the same time. The greatest benefits come from our biggest challenges. This is how learning has made a difference in my life.

My Journey Back to School

Noel Spencer - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

At the tender age of sixteen I became a single mom. I knew it would be hard, but I decided to keep my baby. This decision to keep the baby meant that I had to quit school. My parents were older at the time and disappointed but they stood by me and helped me a lot.

Because my parents were supportive I decided to return to school after the baby was born, but it was very hard, as I found I had nothing in common with the friends I had known for a while. Each day I went home after school to look after a baby while my friends went to cheerleading practice, dances and hung out. I had responsibilities and eventually it got too hard on my parents so I decided to quit school and raise my child.

I thought that when my child started school I would return back to the classroom myself, but before returning I met the man of my dreams and got married. Two and a half years later I had two more children. I ended up being a stay at home mom.

When all three children graduated and eventually went out on their own I decided that it was finally my time. So in 2010 I entered the Adult High School in Glace Bay. This turned out to be a bad year for me, during our Christmas break I fell and broke my ankle. I was in a cast for 6 weeks. I started to fall behind in my studies because I was going to physiotherapy three times a week. Shortly after physiotherapy I had a heart attack and had bypass surgery, it was a long recovery period.

Once I started to feel better I started to think about school again. So this January I started classes with the Adult Learning Association in Glace Bay. Even though I have five grandchildren, the oldest is thirteen; I hope to get my grade 12 before him. I hope to get my diploma, I am very determined to get this and I would like to maybe take a course that would allow me to work with children with disabilities.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Dawn Crocker - NSCC, Annapolis Valley Campus

"Learning has literally saved my life!" I have learned to appreciate my abilities. I "now" think, and step outside the box. I have learned I can achieve any goal I focus on! Two years ago, my life was in ruins. I was menopausal (surgically induced). Panic attacks caused me to withdrawal from loved ones, and relationships with my children paid dearly. A marriage separation left me virtually penniless so I move in with my mother, and my aging ill, partner. When I thought life couldn't get any worse, It did. I became bedridden with illness: Crohn's flare-up, Colitis, fistula and tag.

Life felt so empty. How was I to survive, and provide myself with the medications? My body's so sickly... blah, blah. I prayed for mercy; I began to ask if I could come home now... "God said no." Obviously!

Life began to shift...

I received my self-awakening a few months later. It was the day that I screamed with great despair "I am done! I want to die now!" As sad as that may sound, It is also the day I truly realized I had been running from myself for many years. This was a turning point in my life like no other.

On this day, my new journey began...

I learned to really notice where I was afraid to take responsibility for my life. I began to see, and understand my fears... I noticed that although I have no real big fears of achieving, I would break out into a cold sweat when being taught'. All these years I thought I was afraid of LEARNING. But really, it was only my frightening, misguided childhood views impeding on my ability to change myself.

I started studying how to improve my mind. I realized that not only was I responsible for what I had to show for in life, but I was sure to attract more of the same if I did not transform my entire life-long way of thought processing. I learned to be happy with what I have, but strive for better. I've discovered why happiness of others is essential to my own. "I found true self-worth."

I found my way....

Two years later, and my life is unfolding in ways I never thought possible. My health is better than it has been in 10 years: relationships are healing; I've gone back to school; I am class rep, and I am currently running for VP Activities; I Serve on the OH&S committee; I volunteer; I have taken Health and Wellness workshops; and I have received level C CPR.

Even when faced with almost losing my 22 year old son in October, I knew I would continue to rise above all obstacles I may face in life. I now give as much energy to my dreams as I once gave to my fears.

I've learned that "learning" is the key to opening all doors. I only have to walk through them...

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Tyler Jacquard – Halifax Community Learning Network

To find out how learning has made a difference in my life you need to know a bit about my life. I grew up with a mother who did not support me. In fact I had to support her, working full time while going to school. I will admit that my first time in grade eleven I did screw around, often cutting classes and not really trying when I did show up, but the second time I tried my best. Unfortunately the deck was stacked against me. Not only did I work long hours to support my unemployed mother, which interfered with my studies, I also had the bad luck to catch pneumonia, which caused me to miss a month of school. While I was sick, nobody helped me to keep up, not my classmates or the teachers. In fact, when I finally got back to school and asked my teachers for help catching up they told me if I wanted to pass my exams I should have been at class. Missing that time and the lack of support I had upon my return broke me. Due to this, one day I didn't have the will to get out of bed, my mother came in to my room and said to me "if you don't get up to go to school you might as well not go back", so I didn't.

What I didn't realize growing up was that I loved learning. Each job I had I soaked up all there was to know about it. Because I learned so quickly was one reason I moved up to supervisor positions so quickly and was put in positions of authority over others. Being able to learn new skills in the workforce is one way that learning has made a difference. People see me differently when I am in a position of authority which helps me to see myself in a better light.

Another way learning has made a difference in my life is that I was able to get my GED in January of this year. This has changed many things for me. The job market has opened up for me. I am able to apply for more jobs than before. This is important so I can support my family; my wife and four month old daughter. The most important difference learning has made in my life is that I can look at my daughter and be proud that I have worked so hard to get my GED. That I can tell my daughter, it is worth it to stay in school, to strive towards her goals, whatever they may be, to work hard and to always continue learning.

I have learned a lot of things in my life, and the most important things that I am learning now have nothing to do with working or school. I am learning what it means to be a man, to be a good person and to take responsibility for the decisions that I make today as they can affect tomorrow. I currently have the best teacher in the world for that, my daughter Kairi.

Education

Reza Amiri – Cunard Learning Centre

A long time ago I was young. I could not go to school and I missed going to class. The reason for this is because the government stopped hundreds of people with my nationality from going to school in Iran. Now I'm at Cunard Learning Centre where I'm studying my high school. Now I feel happy, grateful, and hopeful because I want to finish my high school diploma. I'm now studying at Cunard Learning Centre to improve my English and then go to NSCC. My goal is that I have a lot of knowledge and education in my life. I am very thankful and appreciative for all the people who are helping me and teaching me to learn new things and obtain knowledge.

Learning about Current Events Has Made a Difference in My Life

Darnell Miller – NSCC, Annapolis Valley Campus

In science (sustainable environment), my learning has made a difference to me to know how and why things in and out of our areas, in Canada, Nova Scotia, Digby and in the world are going wrong. Not enough said learning makes a difference. We who are eco hogs and have a short supply of hog, beef, grain and corn. Supply is low. Greenhouse gases cause global warming floods and drought there wasn't enough to feed the live stocks and feed us humans who are poor while some of the 20% rich of the world consume and waste 80% of the resources. I've learned about ecological foot prints statistics, Alberta oil sands, B.C shores, hay west movement, \$1billion satellite launch when the folks should be on cleaning and maintaining sustainable environment. Not enough said on current events. This learning has made a difference in my life because, this is not the Canadian way I voted for....

In political science, current events Learning makes a difference to know the step's of how laws are passed, not a enough said current events dirty politicians spending money that wasn't theirs to spend. Current events learning makes a differences, In Political Science learning makes a difference, when one reads in a news paper etc, etc that's going on wrong out or in your area's Canada or the world. Laws have been made to take from the hard seasonal worker which adds more to the statistics 80% poor while 20% rich stay rich. The health care and pensions for our elderly have been lessened and prolonged and there's not enough for education. Learning makes a difference. History in the making, lessons I've learned that our beloved baby boomers are soon to step down and retire when we take over and want a better way of living, then the past and current events in Canada learning makes a difference, In Canada the protesters are on picketing lines in Montreal to St. Xavier University in Nova Scotia. While in Nova Scotia university students pay the most money to enroll, current events learning has made a differences in my life. If in the UK, theirs are free. Shouldn't they be in Canada as well? God bless the Queen. Learning makes a difference and there's enough it's said in current events. History lesson in the making about Idle No more to THE Forgotten People Aboriginal Society (TFPAS) learning has made a difference in my life. On Jan 9, 2013 the Canadian Federal Court ruled that Metis, non-status Indians are indeed Indians under a Section of the Constitution Act and falls under federal jurisdiction. And last but not least history lesson from the 1500's black slavery, slave trade from Mexico was outlawed 30yrs before the USA and Canada got rid of it before the USA, 400 hundred years of building nations and I don't recall a thank you or sorry from any Canadian government? That's what I've learned that has made a difference in my life since I've been out of and picking up where I left off since I've returned back to D.C.E.C since 2007 and my last published entry my current event is to full fill my goals through Adult high school, community college and based levels 3 & 4 plus NSCC.

My Life Teacher

Sarah Ripley - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Some people say learning is about how to walk, talk, eat and learn how to read and write. I agree with this but no one says anything about being a mother for the first time. That is a lot of learning, and a lot of trial and error.

When I was 19, I became pregnant in December of 2009, the father and myself were extremely happy to find out we were pregnant. When February came along, me and the baby's father broke up, and I knew then that I would be a single mother.

The day was September 6th. 2010, I started going into labour at around 2:00pm. My mom took me to my biological mother's house and from there we went to the hospital. Because I think my mother "hates" me she made me walk up the stairs at the hospital while I was in full labour. After 13 and a half hours of labour, Dr. Fynn came by and checked me, I was dilated to 8 and a half centimeters and wouldn't progress anymore so I had to have a C-section. At 3:20am my daughter was born at a beautiful 9lbs and 5oz, from there on I knew that I had to teach her right from wrong, and teach her how to talk walk, crawl and everything a mother is supposed to teach their children.

When Peyton was a few weeks old, I came to a spot in my life where I didn't want anything to do with her and became depressed, to this day I still don't understand why. When she was four months I came out of my depression because I started dating a guy who made me realize that life is so much more than everything I thought, and he taught me that life and being a mother is a beautiful thing.

I missed out on a lot of my daughters firsts because of my depression, everyone used tell me that it will get better once she got older, and it really has. Now that I look back onto the past two years I realize it wasn't anyone else who made me get out of my depression it was my daughter who taught me how to be the best mom that I know I can be. She also taught me how to love something unconditionally, and because of this my daughter is my teacher in this life, she's full of life and really is an old soul.

In conclusion I want to say that it doesn't matter what age the teacher is just remember the little things in life, because you will never forgive yourself if you let it slip away from you.

How Has Learning Made a Difference in My Life

Wendy-Lynn Ripley - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Learning has made a difference in my life, if we didn't learn about everyday life needs like school work, relationships and parenting skills, we wouldn't be anybody. We need these skills to survive.

Learning has given me the ability to read, reading is an everyday need. We need to know how to write, for there's always something that needs our signature or signing a child's homework book for school. There's Math too, if we didn't have math skills how would we be able to pay bills or budget. These skills are an everyday must in life to survive.

We learn how to have social skills. We need them for work, school and relationships. We need to learn how to get along with others and work with the public. Communication is a must in a relationship because if there are no skills, how would society survive?

Learning then taught me to be an awesome Mommy. I needed parenting skills. I needed to learn how to be a Mom, from cooking, cleaning, giving love and all the mommy things I've learned along the way.

The things I have learned to this day, have enabled me to survive through everyday living. Learning is life, there's always something new to learn every day. So think long and dream big, for it's a big ole world out there.

My Education

Margaret Naboi – Cunard Learning Centre

When I was young, I wanted to go to school but I couldn't go to school because my country was at war. My school started in Canada. I started ESL at St. Agnes Church. I was there only three months then I stayed home with my children. I stayed home because my children were very young. When I came to Canada, I really wanted to go to school to get a high school diploma then I could help my children with their homework. I also wanted to go to school because I can learn to read better, write better and get a better job. I think education is very important. Now I study at Cunard Learning Centre and I am working towards getting my high school diploma.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Lila Harris - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

My name is Lila Harris and I had a tough time in my school years. I was forced to quit school and that made life so much harder!

I went on to have four kids and was not able to go back and get my Grade 12, so getting a job that pays well was not an option for me! But I had heard of a program that upgrades you to be able to go get your GED, and to understand what you are getting yourself into.

When I got to this class I knew nothing about the Math and Communications, due to dropping out so young! Now I know all my times tables, and I'm finding mistakes that I have done when I reread my work. Before, I could not see what I had done wrong. My instructor has been able to show me that if I stop and think about what I am doing, then I will find the correct answer every time. It's true; if I take my time I do have wrong answers, but now I am able to spot my mistake and correct it. I am planning to do my GED because I have a daughter that is in Grade Primary and she tells me every day that she will never drop out because she wants to be a doctor. She said it would be nice if we both became doctors.

Now I know it's too late for me to become a doctor, but knowing what my daughter wants to be when she grows up makes me want to find out what I really want to be in life. I used to feel like if I went back to school at my age that I would never learn anything, but to my surprise, I knew a whole lot more than I thought. And it feels like it's all coming back to me now. I was so worried that I would feel like I could not get it, but when you have a great teacher like mine, then, things seem to be easy. Also, my attitude towards life is so much better; I feel like I can do anything and it makes me smile.

Two years ago I thought there was no point in trying to get my GED, since I was 29. Now, I am 32 years of age and I've never felt better about my upcoming future with my kids and about life in general. Before, I was in a place that did not make me feel like I could do whatever I wanted to do in life, but now I have just recently got placed in low income housing, so I have more time to focus on what's going on and what I need to be doing. I moved out of a one bedroom place and into a three bedroom place. I feel better about my chances of being able to find work and being able to afford things for my family.

I am happy because learning is making my life much easier!

Making a Better Life

Max Herman - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I would like to write this story today. I have to think very hard. Reading my stories out loud in the classroom is new to me. I might be fooling myself, but I think I am doing very well. I am reading much better, and writing much better. I would like to get better at Math, but I have learned a lot so far.

I can go grocery shopping now and read the labels on the boxes and bags. Now I can make a cake. I can also read the recipe to make pancakes. I can read instructions on the pizza box to know how to bake a pizza. I have learned how to use my new stove. I followed the manual after I burned up two pizzas! They turn out well now.

I like to read the newspaper to read about cars and trucks. I can learn what's wrong with them.

When I pick up my prescription I can read the labels on the bottle to know how many pills to take.

I feel much better working in the classroom now. I enjoy sharing my stories.

Think big, dream bigger.

Krystyn Slauenwhite - Bedford Sackville Learning Network

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you would do whatever it takes to get there? Well, I am a big dreamer. I realize in order to pursue your dreams you have to work hard to get there. Having said that, I realize I need to complete my education to accomplish my dreams. I was homeschooled from Jr. High to High School but didn't receive a high school diploma. I didn't think I was smart enough to pass. It wasn't until this past summer that I realized I needed my GED to be able to apply to a local college I want to attend. I searched for Adult learning centers and was happy to find that there was one only a few miles away from where I live. I believe in order to get to where I want to be I need to complete my GED. I have developed the term "doing what it takes" to reach my goals in life and I can't wait to finish this part of my journey so I can be even closer to realizing my dreams.

One of my dreams is to work with children. I believe that children are our future and we must help them become the best that they can be. When I was a little girl I remember lining up my stuffed animals and reading to them as if I was their teacher. Once I complete my GED course I plan to go to NSCC to take Early Childhood Education. My goal is to someday become a certified teacher who not only teaches kids but influences them as well. I once read a saying that goes like this – 2 teach is 2 change a life 4ever. I want to see kids succeed and not let them just get by. I also want to be a positive role model for the kids that I will teach. I want to be someone they can rely on to help them when they don't get something right away.

If it wasn't for our instructors taking the time to teach us because they want to be there and want to see us pass our GED, I wouldn't still be here. I would strongly suggest anyone who didn't complete high school or who needs their GED to pursue this program. It is never too late to come back. I watch the older adults really start to believe in themselves because they are getting it. That is how I feel now going into this. This course equips you for success. I can't wait to be one step closer to my dream after I complete this course.

You Don't Get Anywhere without Education

Jessica Crim - Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

So, my name is Jessica Crim. I'm 20 years old and have no job and uneducated for a matter of fact. Why, because I was a high school dropout.

I was a teenager. I did what teenagers do best, sleep, eat, hang out with friends, and mostly ditch classes. Why did I do these? Because I thought that you didn't need a education and school was un-cool. Hmm... guess I was wrong about that one. This brings me to where I'm at today; jobless and uneducated.

I am currently studying to write my GED in May 2013. Hopefully I will be ready, and be able to pass. I am attending PiCCoLa for extra help. Which is the biggest help I've ever had in a long time. They actually help me and I actually want to be there for the help. This is very important to me to get my GED for my family.

If I succeed in passing, I will have my education that I will need to find a proper job to support my family needs. It also will help me learn that when my kids get older and start high school, I will understand of why they do not want to go, but at the same time, I won't. Whether they like it or not, they will be going. They are not going to be like their mommy; jobless and uneducated.

I now know how important a education is for anyone, not just me, but you too. No one will even look at you if you do not have that piece of paper saying that you are a high school graduate. I really thought I could have got a job by now, but I was wrong. No education means no money. I couldn't even flip burgers. Like who needs a grade 12 to flip burgers? Apparently I do.

So, therefore, learning has made a huge change in my life style, as I am studying a lot, going to all my classes. In other words being good.

I never thought when I was younger that I would be in this stage. Well what I mean is. I got nowhere in life yet.

It kills me to watch all my friends that I was in school with to go to college, got high end jobs, and have a career on their plates.

And what do I have? Nothing.

Coming from experience. Stay in school. Get an education. Cause if you don't, you won't get very far in life.

Learning Makes a Difference

Nick Oakley - South Shore Work Activity Program

“Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it.”

-Thomas Fuller

Based on my views of how learning makes a difference, it can help and inspire us to do more!

In these paragraphs, I will tell you about how learning can help and inspire us to learn more!

Help. In my perspective, help is a way of teaching and learning - a way of how we view the horizons of our lives. It is based on our primitive way of thinking called curiosity. We ask others and ourselves how we can learn and do so much more.

From the evolution and the dawn of our species we learn through teachers and through other method of learning. Our first method of learning was mimicking the animals and other embodiments that we call Deus (which in Latin means “Gods”). We use that to our advantage and twist them into stories of our ancestry tribe. Then we turn them into riddles and superstitions, and later turn them into proverbs, based on lessons or consequence that we experience.

Inspiration. We inspire to do anything that we want to come true. Based on learning, it is easier to make those dreams come forth into reality through many means such as through our training, practices, etc...

In conclusion, based on learning I take advantage of critical thinking to make the inevitable alterations to my life, which I take for granted. Thank you for taking the time to read my views based on my interesting perspective about learning.

Changes

Samantha Grayney – South Shore Work Activity Program

It was a mild February morning. The small office portion of the building was lively with activity. There was a young woman working the reception desk very focused on her work. She looked up feeling someone watching her, “Good morning,” she said smiling, “how can I help you?”

“I’m John Brown; the local paper sent me to interview Samantha.”

“Oh, then I can help you, if you just give me a moment. I knew to expect you. I just have to let Karen know I won’t be at the phone,” she explained standing up and knocking on the door across from her desk and poking her head in. Getting a nod, she returned back to the reporter with a smile. “Why don’t we go down to the cafeteria?”

“That sounds like a good idea.” He nodded and motioned for her to lead the way. “How do you like working here?” “I love my job. I get to meet a lot of great people, whether it’s in person or over the phone.” Samantha answered, “I didn’t always like talking on the phone, or meeting new people. I had always liked the idea of helping people though,” she explained as she took a seat at one of the tables gesturing for him to take the other seat at the table.

“Could you tell me what happened to change that?” John asked sitting down as well.

“I can. I started attending the South Shore Work Activity Program,” Samantha answered smiling again. “I had no idea what I wanted to do as a job when I started the program. I was very shy, nervous, had no confidence in myself, and I was pretty sure I was unemployable. I actually thought there was something wrong with me that I couldn’t keep a job let alone find one.”

“So how did the program help you to make those changes?” John asked.

“While in the program I learned a lot of things, not only about how to get and keep a job, but about myself and the people I work with. I found that one of the work areas I really did well with was one that I didn’t want to do. I strongly dislike talking on the telephone in my personal life, but in a professional manor I am more than comfortable. My typing skills became much better while I was in the program, and I did my first placement at Bonny Lea Farm. I really enjoyed the work. Between phone calls and helping walk-ins I worked on upgrading my English skills.”

“It’s clear that you learned a lot in this program, and it has made a definite impact in your life,” John said, “But what would you say was the biggest change in your life from the learning you did in that program?”

“I would say the biggest change was that I learned I could find a job and that I could keep it,” Samantha answered, “Because of this I have a stronger sense of self and better working relationships with my co-workers.”

Learning Makes a Difference

Paul Mailman - South Shore Work Activity Program

In 2010, I enrolled in the South Shore Work Activity Program for the first time. Then I came back to the program in 2012. I have attended classes such as upgrading, where I am learning English and math. At first, I was struggling in English. I was given some English books to study, and at first, I found it hard, but I did not give up. By the end of the program, I hope I can understand what I have read and how to understand my English better. I have also read books in other areas of the program, and I understood what I have read as well.

Another subject I struggled in was math. I started working on adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying whole numbers. I found those hard at first, but after awhile I understood. Later on in the program, I was given another workbook to work on called Fractions in the Workplace. At first, I found it hard and frustrating, but I kept on trying, and by the end of Level 2 in the program, I finally understood my Math and English.

Another barrier for me in the program was in the woodworking class. I did not understand how to do the project I chose to do and could not do it independently. I needed a lot of help to complete the woodworking projects. The trouble I was having at first was being able to read a measuring tape and finding the middle of the piece of wood, but by the end of Level 2 in the program, I understood how to complete a woodworking project on my own.

I am attending a job placement at Chester Foodland; I work on Mondays and Fridays from 9 am-3 pm, then on Wednesdays from 9 am-2 pm. My Job duties are stocking groceries shelves, gathering grocery carts, taking out the cardboard and plastics to the garbage bins, and helping the customers find the grocery items they need. In the program, we have a customer service course that we take. It helps me deal with complaining customers, help them solve their problems, and help them find certain items in the store. By the end of the program, I am hoping to find work in a grocery store stocking shelves in Bridgewater.

Finally, I found it hard to listen to what people were saying to me. When they were giving me a task to do, I would only hear half of what they were saying, and I would go and start to do the task while they were still explaining the task to me. Now I am working hard to overcome my issues such as listening skills and learning skills. By using the tools that I was given, I have found life a little easier. I still have to work harder on overcoming my barriers, but it does not take me as long to understand how to do tasks.

The Greatest Learning Journey With My Children

Leanne Burrige - Colchester Adult Learning Association

Hello, my name is Leanne Burrige. I am a single mom of two children, Damian 6 and Rihana 4. I am struggling to raise them by myself and wanting to make a better life for all of us.

Learning has made a difference in my life by giving me the opportunity to help my children now and in the future. Education is very important in today's society and for generations to come.

My son Damian is in grade one and my daughter Rihana will enter primary in Sept. I want to be able to help and guide them through the years, I don't want to see them fail or drop out of school like I did in grade 11.

I have been recently attending The Colchester Adult Learning Association [CALA] Level 2 at the NSCC in Truro. I am hoping and excited to be placed in Level 3 in September.

I am very excited to be able to return back to the Adult Learning Program, not just for myself, but for my children. I know it will feel good and I will be proud of myself to be able to graduate with a high school diploma at the age of forty- three. I feel confident that I will better be able to help my children succeed in school and life.

In addition, learning is very important to me because after I graduate with my grade 12, I would like to reach my goal of becoming a CCA support worker. I plan to then continue my learning journey when I obtain a good and secure position to support myself and my children.

This is why learning is important to me. Thank you for giving

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Laura Smith – Queens Learning Network

Learning is an important necessity in my life. Every day, no matter where I am or what I'm doing, I always learn something new. When I first found out that I was pregnant I learned a lot about how to raise and care for someone else besides myself. I've learned how to change a diaper, bath and feed my child, and how to figure out all the signs that my child was giving me when she couldn't talk yet.

As far as the social part of my life, I've learned that there are people in the world that you can talk to and trust, and that there are also people in the world that you can talk to but you can't trust because they might turn their back on you. In my every day need of learning, I have learned how to do house and yard work. For example, I've learned how to operate a washing machine and dryer to wash and dry clothes, I learned how to wash and dry dishes and put them away in the cupboard and I learned how to cook nutritious meals for my daughter and myself.

During the first few years of school, I learned how to read and write, recognize and remember how to do my addition and subtraction; I have learned how to be polite and be responsible for my belongings and to respect the belongings of others. I also have learned how to manage my income every month to pay my bills and buy groceries that will last from month to month.

For all that I have learned in my life, I would be glad to pass everything that I have learned down to my daughter. By benefiting from all I have learned in my life, I would have to say that my learning days have been well worth while because now, where my daughter is getting older, I can teach her all the living basic needs in life that she needs to graduate from high school, for her to know how to manage her own bills and groceries, and to provide for her own family when she gets older.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Vicki Furlong – Halifax Regional School Board

Why learn? Is learning really worth my time? I realized our brains are like sponges, at any age. After 22 years I decided to go back to school to get my grade 12. There have been many life changing events since I started FLEC's Adult High School in September. Coming back to school has given me the ability to be able to work again one day soon. It has raised my confidence and self-esteem. Learning has taught me how to be a better reader and writer. Learning has made a difference in my life because I now have the skills and emotional strength to pursue my future, career, and my personal goals.

Returning to school after 22 years was a decision that didn't come easy. After being hurt at work 2 years ago I was told I could no longer do manual labour jobs. I was left with the decision to go on disability or go back to school. I am also a mother of two; I have raised them by myself for the last six years. I am recently engaged to a wonderful man who supports me in my decision to go back to school. Returning to the classroom having to get used to immature teenagers all day was a challenge all on its own. I had to learn how to be a student again and fast. I haven't had to write an essay in 22 years let alone study for a test. It was like learning how to walk all over again. When I first started I found it overwhelming and very stressful and I had my emotional rollercoaster moments. There was times when I said I must be crazy trying to do this at the age of 39. As time went on it got easier and now I don't find it as stressful and the work isn't as hard. But I have to say it was the best decision I ever made and it has completely increased my confidence and self-esteem.

I have learned to be a better reader, by slowing down when I read, and going back and rereading what I don't understand. I have also learned to use the dictionary for words I don't know. I learned how to analyze what I'm reading by looking for important information before making a conclusion. I also learned how to be a better writer; I would not have been capable of writing this essay back in September without having taken an English class here at FLEC's. I learned that the better your vocabulary is the better your writing will be, and the better you will understand. The dictionary and thesaurus has become my faithful friend. I have also learned how to use several programs in a business technology class I took in the first term. I have used them on a regular basis in and out of school. I have brought a lot of other useful learning tips to my other classes and to my everyday life.

My future is what keeps me here. At times it can be extremely hard to focus with the immature teenagers and the lack of respect for authority. But I refuse to give up! "I can't" is not in my vocabulary. I want my grade 12 and I want to attend college. I have been looking into a few possibilities that I would like to do when I graduate. As much as I like learning, I can't wait to be back in the work force. I want to be able to take care of my family again like I always have. To have my independence back will be the best day of my life. With my new found self-confidence and skills I feel ready to start in a new career that I will enjoy doing.

They say when one door closes another one opens. Opening that school door was the scariest day of my life. But it was the best day of the rest of my life. Learning to be a student again was hard and there were many late nights trying to figure out my homework. But I refused to give up. I finally figured it out enough to be able to write this essay to you today. I plan to continue to use the skills I have learned and will continue to learn, in school now and in the future. I will continue to work hard at learning so I can go to college to study for my dream job. That day will be a great success for me and my family and to have the feeling of independence back once again, will be amazing!

Learning as a Young Mother

Susie McLellan – Hants Learning Network Association

As a young mother, you learn new things every day. The biggest learning experience for me was when I had a child at a very young age. Learning has made a difference in my life. I had a child when I was 17 years old. I had to learn about being a mother, which eventually came naturally to me. I was a child having a child!

It was really difficult at first because I had no idea how to look after a baby or anything about motherhood. I had to take responsibility for my actions. You can only learn from your mistakes after you admit you've made them. I moved out from my parents' house, got a job, and that's where my life began. I moved into a small three bedroom house. There was so much to learn: paying bills, buying groceries, housekeeping habits and budgeting pay check to pay check.

My childhood experiences affected my life as an adult. I was taught how to show affection, manners, love and respect others. Parents are the first teachers of children; that's why I taught my child the same traits, as he grew. There were so many ups and downs, but the only way to climb over difficulties is to work hard and never give up.

I never had the chance to graduate from high school. It seemed like I was missing out on everything that life had to offer. I was so young. I learned in time that one little mistake you make, you will have to live with that forever.

It's been almost 16 years since I had my son. I now also have a daughter who is 10. I'm 32 years old and married. Many years have passed by and I'm now going to school upgrading in hopes to get my G.E.D. I'm starting where I left off 16 years ago. With time and patience, you can conquer anything you put your mind to. It's never too late to get an education to better yourself as a person.

Learning is important to your growth and development. Most goals I set for myself, I have achieved with hard work and dedication.

In conclusion, one of the things I learned is that there are people who love you, there are people who care about you, but until you learn to love yourself, until you learn to care about yourself, until you learn to respect yourself, you won't truly appreciate the love, care and respect of others.

How Learning Made a Difference in My Life

Frances Hunt – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I was almost six before I started school and I struggled from the time I started. I had trouble being in a class with a lot of people because I needed more help from the teacher.

When I got to grade three, the school decided to put me in a special Ed class. There were only a few students there and I would get more help. The one thing that held me back in school was my reading. I didn't like to read books and I would get lost in the story. One thing that was really good was my memory and that is how I studied my test. I stayed in the special Ed class until grade nine. Then we moved into town. I tried to get in the Special Ed class but they said there was no room and I was too old, so they had to put me in a regular class. I knew this would be hard for me because I was use to having more help. I failed every subject except French and then they were going to put me in grade ten.

I decided to quit school and go to work for a while. I was feeling bad that I didn't finish my schooling. I had the opportunity a year later to go back to school. I went to a Christian school and they put me in a level that I could understand. I went to school for two years there and I graduated with a grade twelve on a vocational level. This meant that I had twelve years of school. I went through life thinking that it would be nice if I could accomplish getting my grade twelve.

I am now forty eight and I am in Colchester Adult learning Association (CALA) in the level two program. I have completed my math but I am having trouble with my reading because I can get lost in a story and sometimes I find it hard to comprehend what I am reading about. However, I am determined that I can achieve moving up to level three in the NSCC. I know I am going to need more help with my reading and other subjects that I found hard when I was younger. I know that there are tutors who can help me. I want to continue working to get my grade twelve so that I can do other courses that would benefit me in the workplace. Learning has made a difference to me now because no one calls me a dummy and we are all here for the same reason. I know I can do it if I don't give up. I just learn in a different way and I am hoping that reading someday will be something that I enjoy. I plan to make a difference in my Adult Learning. It is never too late to fulfill your dreams.

Lessons Learned

Beverly Chester – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Life at home, in all its dysfunction, was completely unbearable. At sixteen I had all the answers, I didn't need an education. In those days jobs were a dime a dozen. Returning to school was a no brainer.

Growing up, things were crazy at home. I never knew from hour to hour what would happen next. Living in a household with a crazy family was, to say the least, unpredictable. Being the youngest of eight children, I got my share of teasing and beatings from one sibling or another. I felt angry and bitter all the time. Every day I dreamed of a place where I would be liked and treated special. My Father was a drunk, a nice one, but, none the less a drunk. He was never at home too long. Mother, well let's just say she was so lost in her own problems, was completely unavailable.

I got my first paying job when I was sixteen. I started working at McDonalds and life as I knew it changed! All of the sudden I had money, wow, that was new for me. I was on cloud 9. I worked after school and on the week-ends. Soon I was skipping classes and taking extra shifts. I needed to make more money. I was saving for my own personal heaven. After a few months I decided I knew what was best for me. I would quit school and work full-time; I wanted my own apartment. My managers at work couldn't say enough good things about me in that I was doing a good job and that I had great potential. They even explained to me about the management programs. I thought that one day I could run my own store perhaps even own my own McDonalds restaurant.

Within no time I became a social butterfly. I went to parties every night after work but I never missed a shift. I soon realized I had no money left for my apartment. That was my first "big" lesson learned.

Eventually, I grew bored at McDonalds and decided it was time for a change. I found out that I could quit one job in the morning and have a new one by afternoon. This became a way of life for me; going from one dead end job to another. As I grew older, the jobs and the pay got a better, but still I never settled into anything...another lesson learned.

After having my children, the youngest 7 years old, I realized "POW" I'm 46 and I have another 18 years to provide for my girl. Returning to school seemed like the best solution for me. Although I am scared to death, I am also quite excited! So here I am, ready and willing to do my best to get a high school diploma. I am praying everyday that I can find a career I like. I believe that attaining this goal will be the key to new opportunities for me and my family.

I have entered the CALA program to prepare for the ALP at NSCC. The road ahead will not be easy. However, with hard work and determination I feel I will succeed and attain my grade 12 diploma. If I knew then, what I know now.....my learning journey may have taken a different path, but it is the life lessons learned along the way made a real difference in my learning experience.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Joanna LeBlanc – Dartmouth Learning Network

As a young girl I was very inquisitive and a little dare devil, destined to look for adventure. It took me two attempts at getting grade ten, failing all my public exams in grade eleven and giving up on school, from lack of interest.

I then decided, to go to community college to get a trade in “Sewing and Dressmaking”, while working part-time at Kentucky Fried Chicken to pay for course supplies. I couldn’t seem to commit to anything. My course being nine months, I gave up at six months to join the Canadian Armed Forces. I had a five year career as a cook, went to the Canadian Forces School of Administration and Logistics twice for cooks courses and finally writing my interprovincial Red Seal at the University of Barrie, with an average of 71%.

From there, life changed. I got married, had two daughters, but still working as a civilian cook. Eventually, the government eliminated the civilian cooks position. I was forced to go into a cook’s assistant competition of 24 people, earning first place and getting a job at the Naval Officers Training Centre.

Finally in 1992 my family and I moved to Nova Scotia, transferring to the Stadacona Hospital. From there I went from job to job, never feeling fully satisfied that I didn’t finish school.

I gave up my last job to get my GED and found the Dartmouth Learning Network. I’ve never felt such self-satisfaction and am truly grateful for the teachers, tutors and volunteers at the centre.

I don’t know where I’ll go from here but I do realize now, how important an education is, and at 51 years of age, I’m never too old to learn.

Prosperity, gives all of us life’s rewards. If you focus on a goal, stay on that path and you will find success.

I feel no regret for my past, its taught me many lessons in life, and thanks to the Dartmouth Learning Network, my future can lead me in the right direction, taking with me all that I’ve learned, so now it’s up to me.

I Know I Will Succeed in My Latest Journey of Learning

Toney Downey – Dartmouth Learning Network

I started school in a culturally and racially distinct community. My reflections revealed a social and academic system rooted in flawed policies and social misperceptions centered on race and equality. Most of the teachers came to the class only because it was their duty, and paid little attention to the people they were supposed to teach. I didn't learn anything.

In addition, I was grouped in with older students, and since I was one of the brighter ones in the class, this often led to conflict with other students, both inside and outside the classroom. I'm a very motivated individual, when it comes to learning. I constantly asked for homework to improve my learning, but was essentially ignored by the teachers. While my experiences were largely negative when it came to learning, I did experience some glimmers of light as I moved on to another school, but these were, in the most part, due to the dedication of a few teachers who did not accept the status quo when it came to the racial divide.

Still steeped in the restrictive attitudes then in place, I, without consultation with me or my parents, was told when I completed Grade 9 that I would finish my academic education and would be going to Community College to "take a trade". Everything had all been "arranged" and I could have my choice of a limited number of vocations for which the authorities "deemed him suitable".

I finally decided on a printing career, and after a two year program, and despite a limited academic background, successfully graduated and started my career in the printing business. The training program at that time was largely a hands-on method, and computerization had not yet been adopted in this industry. I did not have any problems getting work and through my first two employers, who recognized my skills and my attitude toward work, even learned to improve my reading, writing and math skills.

Seeking to improve my lot in life, I headed to a large central Canada city and was able to very quickly secure employment with a local printing firm. My skills soon became evident to the owner, who told me that I knew more about the printing business than he did and quickly adopted my skill sets in running the business. I remained in this city for about 23 years. Marriage to a woman from my community and three children later, I wanted to return to my home province and seek employment in a quieter and friendlier place.

My giving this all up and moving back to NS was not without worry and fear. After a few months back home, and with aspirations to seek trades training in another area, I realized I would have to upgrade to a GED level in order to gain acceptance to a community college. Despite a nervous start, I have applied myself vigorously and am concentrating on areas where I know I have deficiencies.

Every story usually comes full circle, and I'm no exception. I continue to progress in GED, and, through a local employment initiative program with a cultural focus. Buoyed by an innate confidence built on my struggles, I am still a very positive individual. My interests, past and present, are deeply rooted in a spiritual belief and a passion as a musician. My focus now is on my relationship with my wife and children, particularly my older son, who is now involved in sports in the local community.

I admit that things have improved over the years with respect to social acceptance of the "culturally different", but still experience some resistance and my great hope is that my children will grow up in a kinder and gentler world.

I know I will succeed in my latest journey of learning.

Learning is Important

Helen Pike – Valley Community Learning Association

Attending the Valley Community Learning Association it has made a big difference in my life. It has opened my mind to learning and has given me courage and an opportunity to complete my education. I have learned about the Canadian way of life, and I have made some good friends. My education has been a long journey from St Vincent and the Grenadines to Nova Scotia and I enjoy going to school every day .It has helped me to develop my understanding and knowledge in Math ,English, Reading, Science ,Social Studies and Language Arts.

I have become more confident and have developed a stronger self-esteem .I have proven that I can do anything that life throws at me .I enjoy learning even when things seem grim and difficult .I have become more willing to try new things ,even when I am scared. I have become more opened-minded .My self-esteem is much stronger. I am more confident and relaxed, able to help my classmate. I feel better about myself and this is a great feeling .At first I was a very shy and afraid to try new things. I didn't like speaking in public ,I am more outspoken now .I am able to complete my assignments independently and have learned that making mistakes is okay.

I have a lot of support from my husband, family, friends, teachers and classmates .I Attending VCLA has been the best decision I ever made for myself .It has shown that I am not alone in not having an education and that there is always help when I need it .My future seems much brighter .It is important to always have faith and that it's never too late to learn. Learning has made many differences in my life.

Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Alessa Toney – Valley Community Learning Association

Learning has made a huge difference in my life; in one way or another. Learning has helped me do the things that I have to do and helps me with my day to day experiences. Learning in my program and from others has helped my confidence with reading. Learning has made me more determined to overcome my disability.

I want to learn from other people. I want to learn about babysitting. This will help me learn how to take care of babies. It will help me have patience when I'm around children. I will learn how to cook and clean so I can keep a clean environment.

My confidence in reading has helped me understand the ingredients to make delicious meals. I have made better salads because I can read the ingredients better than I use to. I have better learning skills.

My determination to overcome my disability has been a learning experience. I have learned to use technology such as a computer. Computers make my school work much easier to complete. My computer helps me with many subjects such as spelling, sentence structure, grammar and looking things up.

Learning has definitely made me more confident. I would recommend learning to everyone. Learning builds confidence and the determination to learn more.

Learning Success

Tanya Salsman – Valley Community Learning Association

Learning has made a difference in my life. Learning has given me my confidence, since returning back to school. I'm more focused on my future than I was a few years ago. Learning in the ALP program is getting me back on the right track.

It took all my courage to go back to school, after being out over ten years. Now I feel I can write the GED. Also, I am looking into what courses are offered at Kingstec. I am proud of my success in learning.

I want to be a good role model for my children. Returning to school, to get my Grade Twelve, will show my children, you can do anything you set your mind to. My success will be the key to showing my children a better future. I feel they are proud of my accomplishments.

Today I have many goals. One of these goals is to go to college. I'm excitedly preparing myself for a better future. Learning has opened so many doors for me. I am proof that you should never give up on yourself.

My Journey

Andy Ewing – Dartmouth Learning Network

From grade 1-4 I was a straight A student. I loved school and never caused any trouble. When grade 5 came around, I had a teacher who was very strict and would take me in the hall and yell at me for not doing my homework. I was scared of her. I would cry and would refuse to get out of my pajamas to go to school if I didn't have my homework done. From that year on I did not like school at all, even though most of my teachers since then were nice.

In junior high, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, and skipped school constantly. For 2 years, that was my life. When the teacher walked around handing out school work, she would walk past me and not give me a sheet, knowing I would not do it anyway. I wasn't causing any trouble or disturbing the class so they didn't kick me out. That year in grade 9, there was a math test every child in Nova Scotia wrote. I got the 3rd highest score in the school on it. On my report card that year I got a 0 in math.

In September of 2012 I became a learner at the Dartmouth Learning Network. I am now in the level 2B class, and also have a mentor to help me with my math. I am getting ready for my grade 12 Adult Learning Program at NSCC, which hopefully will lead me to a trade and a comfortable life, without financial problems. I'm trying my best to be a success in life, and having a lot of fun doing it.

Please Do Not Give Up If You are Determined to Succeed

Jeff Cluney - Dartmouth Learning Network

In 2003 I went to Dartmouth Work Activity Society also known as (D.W.A.S.). While I was attending there, I noticed I needed more academic learning time than the 3 days they had for us students. I asked the instructor if they had or knew of another place that they could provide me with a teacher who stands up in front of the class to teach students like a public school of some sort. He said yes, and I asked would I be able to attend there? They took me aside and set me up with a C.A.T. test to see if I was at the level in order to attend that program. The program I was told about was called the Cunard Center in Halifax. At the Cunard Center there was a teacher in the class present with you to teach the students the skills we needed to get our Diploma and to go further in life with our learning abilities so that we can move on and get a career or a job that fits our needs. The school was full time Mon-Fri so it gave the students more time to learn instead of only three days of academics. So when I was there I passed both levels 2,3 and then I moved on to the Flexible Learning Program also known as (F.L.E.C.) The good thing about that was it was in the same building so I never really had to travel too far.

As I was attending (FLEC), I found out I had a son coming along. Then I got frightened by the news only because I was in school full time but they say when you panic things get messy so I didn't. I just needed a job. I said to myself at the time that the program I went to was different hours. I noticed then that I was in a dilemma. I then had no choice but go to work and take care of my son only because at the time school would not feed my little one and so I did. After awhile I wasn't making enough money and tried doing all these different jobs. In the meantime, I was hitting dead ends everywhere I would go. I said to myself I've got to go back to school to get somewhere better in life since I quit and haven't finished receiving my Grade 12. I then tried everything in my power to do so.

I went to NSCC to set a testing date, and went to do the test and failed but that never stopped me. I tried all different things to get back in school and had not found any resources until one of the instructors at the NSCC mentioned the Dartmouth Learning Network to me and gave me the number to call so I did. I called and received a date to go in and talk to someone. I arrived on the day of my assessment and met Zoe, one of the coordinators and it went GREAT!!! I received a call about a week and a couple of days before my Birthday (Oct 13, 2012) to say I had be accepted into the program. I was excited because of what I had done and tried to do and had not succeeded but they say if you give up you will be guaranteed to fail. So I want to let people know that if you proceed with your GOALS that ANYTHING is POSSIBLE. So PLEASE DO NOT GIVE UP, and if you are determined you will succeed just like practice does not make PERFECT!! It makes you SUCCEED in the finer things in LIFE. And now I am here at the Dartmouth Learning Network to do that. I started on Oct 13, 2012, on my Birthday. How ironic is that!

I am still attending now on February 17, 2013. I have Classes Mon-Fri with a teacher whose name is Mary. She is GREAT also. If you want to go back to school this is the place to start. I would RECOMMEND this place to any person out there who really wants to. Please just stick to your goals, try hard and never give up because anything is POSSIBLE and don't ever think in the long run that you are too old because I am 29 and I'm still going. BETTER LATE THAN NEVER!!!

Struggle to Success!

Tyrell Sparks – Dartmouth Learning Network

Once there lived a boy name Tyrell Sparks. He was very intelligent, sarcastic, friendly, easygoing, relaxed, honest, & unique. He had 2 brothers, one named Jacob and one named CJ. His brother named CJ wasn't really his real brother. He was more like his cousin but they grew up together and were born almost on the same day and in the same crib together. They had each other's back through thick and thin. They went to the same school but I'm going to tell you about that a little later on.

I was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I grew up in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. It all starts when I went to Humber Park School. I only remember grade 6 because something bad happened to me in grade 6 that I will tell you about. I'm very athletic, friendly, and active. I played many sports like baseball, hockey, soccer, etc. I did not have a lot of friends. I tried to make some but it was hard at school especially getting to know the other kids like white kids or black kids or mixed kids. I did make one friend eventually. His name was Billy Z. We became great pals and then I met Kyle. We were hanging out one time. I remember we jumped over this woman's fence and damaged her stuff. She was ticked off like a bomb. I think we got in major trouble but I was only young and I didn't even know better. One day I decided to use my bike to get to school faster. After class was over, I went out to get my bike. I looked outside and saw it was torn to pieces; then a sudden feeling hit me. I was thrilled: 4 boys walked up to me and threatened to beat me up! Then a couple of other boys helped me find my bike parts. The tires were flat and my bike was okay.

I have been through a lot of shenanigans in my life but I want to tell you about some struggles that happened in my life, and one that was a horror. The horror was when I was loving school at Humber Park School and my parents suddenly decided to divorce. So I had no other choice but to move with Mom to Halifax to a new school named Fairview Heights. I never made any friends there until after I went to the next school across from Fairview Junior High. I made one friend that still today I love to hang out with.

I was done with junior high school and moved on to high school. This was the last step of ever getting out of school, even though that I hated school.

I'm going to tell you about how I started being late! It all began back in junior high when I started to officially hate school because I couldn't fake anything. I would go over my brother's house (CJ) and he would ask me if I was going bed. I'm like, "Of course, man, it's 1 in the morning! He said, "Don't worry, man, just stay up." So we did and we ended up staying up all night until 6 am. It became such a bad habit. I started doing it more. I still do it now today but I am really trying to change this.

Another thing I would like to mention is that I like to write music. This began back at school in Fairview during my junior high years. I saw one of my friends writing these raps. I knew what it was so he asked me to join him with it so there it all began. I started writing raps and then I began to write poetry but I wasn't so good until I progressed with more vocabulary.

I am really different in my own way. In general for each race people tend to think that every race is the same but everyone has their own mind, their own personality, and their own gifted thoughts or, as you would say, a brain. But that's the end of that if you don't look up the definition of different.

I have learned that struggle is a big part of how to get success. If you don't struggle you won't reach success. I am now at Dartmouth Learning Network. I have learned to be greater with my math. I actually love math now even though when I was in high school I hated it. I love English now because I'm good with words. I love to write. My vocabulary is progressing very well because I write songs, poetry, and story novels. I know I write too much but I love it. I thank God I found this school to actually help me think about the right things in life that I need.

I am Happy I Started School

Elvida Andrews – Dartmouth Learning Network

I was born in St. Anthony, Newfoundland. I lived in a fishing village until I was six. Then my mom and dad moved back to St. Anthony. My dad got work at the fish plant. I started school in September in St. Anthony. I had already done grade 1 in the fishing village. I told the teacher and principal that I already did grade 1, but they didn't believe me. I did grade 1 over again. From grade 2 to grade 6, I failed every year and I would be doing the same grade over. Then they finally put me on to the next grade.

The last year in school, I started in September and in October I had German measles. When mom got the family allowance, mine was gone. The principal phoned in and got it cut off. Then I quit school.

I didn't have a good childhood growing up. It wasn't good at home or at school. I grew up with violence at home. My brother and I were very close growing up. I guess the reason was it was just the two of us. We had another brother and sister but my sister spent her time in the hospital. She didn't come home to stay until she was 7. Our brother died at 4 years of age. He just laid there and couldn't move, sit up, or talk.

At school the students looked down on me because I was poor and couldn't learn. I didn't think I could work because I was put down so much growing up. I did baby-sit and I wasn't fussy over that.

Then I got a cleaning job in St. John's, Newfoundland, working in the hospital. I worked there for awhile and then came home to draw my unemployment. I was home for awhile and then I came out to Nova Scotia. I got work cleaning houses.

I was doing good here in Halifax. I met my husband here. He was from Newfoundland, too. We went home and got married. I had 3 children born there. I worked a couple of times at the shrimp plant on a work-mate program, but mostly I was a stay-at-home mom. My children grew up and are now on their own. I have 2 grandchildren, but you can actually say I have 3 grandchildren. I will always be nanny to them.

My husband and I came back to Nova Scotia and this is where we are staying. I was looking for part-time work but couldn't find any. I went in to the Native Council because I am part native. My case worker asked me about going to school. I said I didn't want to go but then I said yes. I'm happy I did. Now I know I can learn. I still have lots of trouble in math, but I am learning how to do it with Cathy's help. I went from level 1 to level 2. My level 2 teacher is Mary. The 2 teachers tell me I am smart. I didn't think I was because I was put down all the time. I did get a part-time job at the Native Council cleaning the offices. I am doing excellent at my job, according to my supervisor. She gives my report to Cathy, my Employment Readiness instructor.

I am happy I started school. I really enjoy going, and I have more friends now. I am going for my grade 12. With the teachers' help, I will get there.

Keeping Up With My Daughter

Jessica Brooks – Dartmouth Learning Network

I have lived in Dartmouth all my young life. My Family at the time moved to Cole Harbour from North End Dartmouth. It was a big change for me. I didn't like the people that lived out there. I was very happy in the North End. So when I went to school everyone was on a higher level than I was. The education was a lot more advanced than where I was. Also, I had a reading disability which made it harder for me to learn. I dropped out because I felt like school was too hard.

I ended up getting pregnant with my angel, as I call her. She saved me. I was a mommy. When I would look at her, she made me want to better myself. Then I got pregnant with my son. Nicole is so smart so I need to keep up with her. So I heard of Dartmouth Learning Network and I thought it was time for me to get my life back. The hours suited my mommy life.

My goals are to get my GED and/or my grade 12. From there I hope I really get to know my talents to start my career.

My Story

Mona Stockley – Dartmouth Learning Network

I was born in Ingonish, Victoria County and raised in St. Peter's in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. I have five other siblings and my parents were married for 35 years. I fell out of school when I was 16 because I said to my mom that I couldn't stand going back with people who were mentally challenged and being hollered at by my classroom teacher.

When I turned 16 I moved in with my soon-to-be-husband and his family. He was 18. His parents had us get married when I became pregnant. At 25 I left with my two daughters and went back to my hometown of St. Peter's. When they turned 18, my daughters left home. Off they went to Alberta and had boyfriends. Soon after, in 2007, they made me a grandmother at 42, so that's when I moved to Dartmouth.

I live in supportive housing me, I have my own apartment. One of the counselors asked me if I would like to go back to school in 2011. I'm in school now at Dartmouth Learning Network getting educated and trained for my grade 12 diploma. I also volunteer at the Dartmouth Learning Network as a Greeter for the evening GED Program and an office helper during the day. I live on my own and love doing things by myself every day and I've never been happier.

We'll See What the Future Brings

Laura Holland – Dartmouth Learning Network

Hello. My name is Laura Ann Holland. I was born on January 7, 1988 at the old IWK Grace Hospital. My parents are Susanne MacDonnell and Neil MacDonnell. They got married when I was 2 years old. My mother was pregnant with my sister Melissa. My sister was born on October 4, 1991.

My childhood was good but we moved a lot so it made it hard to make friends. I went to so many schools it was hard to keep track of them all. I hated school because I was teased a lot. I was getting called fat, teacher's pet, and teased because of my speech and my clothing. I was also in the IPP program.

Then my mom and dad split in the year 2001. It was hard for my sister and me. So my sister and I tried to get them back together, but it never worked.

When I turned 16, I started my first job at Dairy Queen. Then I applied at the Country Inn & Suites during March break and I got the job. I have been there ever since. I worked at Mark's Work Wear House doing seasonal work. Now I've worked at KFC for almost 4 years and the hotel for 7 years.

I moved out of my mother's place at age 18 but I turned 19 two days later. I had a roommate but it never worked out for very long.

I applied at Eastern College but the classes were too big for me. I learn hands-on. So I had to drop out of that school. My friend Karla looked up schools and she found the Dartmouth Learning Network. So I applied and I received a phone call from the school saying I got in. I have been there ever since that day. I enjoy the classes and teachers. I have learned so many things now.

My learning journey is hands-on and one-on-one with the teachers. I'm determined to get my life on track with no one bringing me down. For my future, I want a good-paying job and a career. I still haven't decided what I want to do yet. I was thinking about working with children but the pay isn't good. So we'll see what the future brings.

Discovering I am Good at Math

Mary-Anne Whitenect – Dartmouth Learning Network

My name is Mary-Anne. I grew up in Cook's Brook until I was 12. I went to Middle Musquodoboit Rural High until Grade 10. Then I thought I was smart to move with a friend to Sackville and finish high school in town. So I started going to Sackville High. I met lots of people there. Too many people and got side-tracked by hanging out with them and missing school. I eventually quit school.

When I was 18, I started back to school and started going every day. Then when I found out I was pregnant, I finished school as far as I could. Some of my Grade 11 was done. Then I moved to my mom and dad's in Meagher Grant. My mom helped me a lot with my son. I was living on my own and had no transportation to go anywhere.

I started to look for a place to live in town where I would have access to a bus. I have been here three years now and last year I decided to go back to school and started attending the Dartmouth Learning Network. I am in Level two and really liking it. I am ready to learn now and am finding out that I am actually really good at math.

I Want to Help People, Improving My Reading and Writing is the Best Way I Know How to Help People

Terry Wilson – Dartmouth Learning Network

In October 2011, Terry Wilson of Dartmouth was introduced to the Dartmouth Learning Network. He had attended many programs throughout his life with little success. “I realized that if I wanted to improve my reading and writing this place was the only place that was going to help me,” says Terry.

For several years Terry has been a volunteer with the Halifax Chapter of Peoples First. Established in Nova Scotia in 1989 the goal of People First is to promote equality for all people who have been labeled intellectually disabled. When you ask Terry why he became involved his message is strong and clear, “I wanted to help close down residential institutions and help people live better lives and become more independent. I think living in a small group home is a better way to make this happen.”

Terry was and still is determined to “make change happen.” He has a plan and he is sticking to it. First step was to enroll in the Dartmouth Learning Network. Second step was to work hard to improve his reading and writing skills (Terry loves to write short stories that are often based on his life experiences and his friends). Third step was to become the President of the Halifax Chapter of People First.

Terry approached his classroom teacher, Cathy Cusack, and shared his goal with her. When asked what steps he needed to take to make his goal a reality, Terry without hesitation said “I need to write a speech and deliver it at the People First Annual General Meeting. Can you help me?” And so the journey to becoming the President of the Halifax Chapter of People First began.

“There was never any doubt that Terry would achieve his goal,” say Cusack. “Terry believes strongly in the cause of People First. Helping him achieve his goal was simply a matter of working with him to put his words on paper, and then helping him practice delivering the speech in front of a group of people.”

In the fall of 2012 Terry Wilson stood before a group of people at the People First Annual General Meeting delivering a speech he had written and practiced with his classroom teacher. “Helping people understand People First is important to me and those who are part of our organization. I want to help to raise money and to bring in guest speakers. I want to work towards closing down institutions where large groups of people who have been labeled intellectually disabled live and move them into small group homes where they will have a better quality of life. I want to help remove the label intellectually disabled. We are all capable of learning and doing, for some of us it may take a little longer to get the job done. I am 59 and I am working hard to improve my reading, spelling, writing and math. I plan to work hard to make those changes happen and when I have done everything I can do here in Nova Scotia I would like to become President of People First Canada.”

In October of 2012 Terry realized his goal of becoming President of the Halifax Chapter of People First. With the help of an advisor he is learning how to lead meetings and create action plans and is enjoying his new role as President. Terry continues to attend classes at the Dartmouth Learning Network. "My teacher spends lots of time helping me, and because she helps me I can help others," says Terry.

Learning Has No Boundaries or Age Limits

Debbie Downey – Dartmouth Learning Network

Hi, my name is Debby D. I moved back home about four years ago from Calgary with my son Luther. It was only for a visit but I decided to stay and help my mom with my dad and help my daughter with her son.

I needed something to do in my spare time so I decided to go into a program called Women Unlimited. It was a great program - very positive and the teacher was very inspiring. After I finished, I took an Oil Burner Trade. When I finished my Oil Burner Trade, I didn't feel comfortable with doing it because I didn't have my grade 12 so I decided that the next trade I took I would get my grade 12 first. So here I am ready and willing to learn at the Dartmouth Learning Network.

After I get my grade 12, I plan to go to Culinary School. When I was a young girl growing up, I always enjoyed cooking and planning menus for my family and for special occasions. Cooking is my passion and I just pray to God that He will give me the knowledge that I need to move to the next chapter in my life.

Moving Towards My Grade Twelve Diploma

Trina Cromwell – Dartmouth Learning Network

I was born in Halifax, and raised in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. My mother is from Cape Breton and my father from Dartmouth. My dad was a big idol of mine. He was the first black firefighter in Nova Scotia.

I left school to go to work in grade 10, after repeating it for 3 times. I found out in 1999 that I had a learning disability. I worked two jobs for a long time as I had a small child to look after but soon decided I wanted to restart my learning journey.

I started at Spell Read and here I am today at Dartmouth Learning Network learning more. To this day I have 3 kids. I have been with their father for 25 years this month. My goal is to learn as much as I can and walk away with my Grade 12. I want to have a good job to make my kids live the way I was raised.

Upgrading My Forgotten Skills

Allison Rouzes – Dartmouth Learning Network

Here is a short journey of my life. I was born and raised in a small fishing community on the West Coast of Newfoundland. I am the eldest of 4 siblings and the 2nd eldest of 40 grandchildren on both sides. I struggled through school most of my life. I had lovely, patient parents when growing up, and a non-violent home. I respected my elders. I was a shy, quiet girl who never got in trouble.

I was a high school dropout at the age of 17. I decided to move up to Nova Scotia with my aunt in 1988. I have a good life, I have been with my partner for 24 years and we have 3 handsome, wonderful, active boys. Life is good!

Now that my children are getting educated, I thought it was time for this stay-at-home mother of 16 years to do something for herself. I wanted to upgrade my forgotten skills. I began searching the Internet and came across the Dartmouth Learning Network. I picked up the phone and asked for information. Mary Moore set up an appointment. I was tested. She said I'd probably be starting in her level 2B class in September of 2012. I was a little nervous at first but I'm glad to be here. The teachers are awesome, and the students are fun to be around. It is such a positive place to be.

My Story

Mona Kelly – Dartmouth Learning Network

I was born in Wolfville, Hants County, Nova Scotia. Going through school was very hard. The teacher did not want to take the time to try things in different ways that I could understand or maybe just too much was going on at home. I had an older brother who seemed to always make high marks. I know he studied hard but was able to understand. I got my grade 8 and then I hitchhiked out when I was 17 years old.

I have always been able to get a job by talking to the people in charge. I feel that I need to learn today so that I may understand the world and its surroundings.

I first started to read about 2 years ago. I did this so I could read to my son. I found that it didn't matter if I read something wrong. After I would read a story I would call my friend for some of the words.

My goal is to get my GED. I think I will always have a problem with school. I learn different than most people but I think there is hope if I keep on trying.

Life Decisions

Eric MacDougall – NSCC, Marconi Campus

Hi, my name is Eric MacDougall. I'm writing an essay on why I'm trying to achieve my grade 12 at NSCC. When I was young my family didn't have much money; we grew up on a farm. We were always working, trying to earn a dollar. As time went on, I started missing time in school so I could receive more income. I realized I was missing too much time and my grades were down, so I registered to a trade school, attending classes with heavy duty mechanics. I then started to skip classes to be in the shop all day in order to absorb all the information I could and improve my skills. On my second year of this trade, I was out one weekend with a few friends and one of them needed a drive home, so I gave in eventually even though I knew I was doing wrong. I hit the road with my cousin and friends with the mindset to do good and help out a friend. We reached our destination so I started back the way I came.

Along the highway, I came across a vehicle pulled over with their four way flashers on. Being 2 am in the morning, I figured we would stop to see what's wrong because god only knows when the next vehicle would come along. The car shut down on her so we tried to get it going but didn't have the tools or parts to fix it there. We pushed it off the side of the road and gave the girl a lift home; only we didn't make it there. It was December 6th, 2008. I rolled the car and the young woman was ejected out of the rear seat of the car. As soon as everything came to a stand-still I checked to see if everyone was ok and noticed she wasn't there. I climbed through the smashed window and found her on the side of the road unconscious. I hollered for my cousin to call 911 and they walked me through the steps until help could arrive. She ended up passing away for a few weeks in the hospital. It impacted my life along with my family's life.

After being in and out of courtrooms, I still found my way to press forward in spite of everything that happened to get my education but was unable to finish it before I was sentenced. The judge said it was the hardest case he had in 25 years. I was sentenced to two years. As I went through all the corrections, I started to work towards my grade 12 again by studying for the GED and the prison supplied classes. I attended these classes for two months then my time came up for the parole board hearing. My family supported me and helped me register for another trade. I was granted my freedom on conditions, and was moved to a halfway house in Sydney.

The first night couldn't sleep. The next morning I attended classes at the college taking Metal Fabrication. Which is a 2 year program offered by excellent instructors. That summer after classes were out, I put in for a transfer with my parole officer to be moved to the Yukon to work with my uncle. I was granted the approval for work. The work was slow for drilling, so my uncle and I went to a fabrication shop and after trying me out, they took me on. I had the chance to work with a lot of knowledgeable people and learn various things, along with working with my uncle if he needed a hand. I returned for the fall as classes were starting back up and met a girl that attended classes at the college. So I started to dig around a bit and found out they offered night classes. I signed up as I

had trades but no grade 12 diploma to receive the certificates. So I'm currently attending my second year in Metal Fabrication, global and science at NSCC.

If you have a dream, don't give up on it because as a man that I once met said, "A 15 second decision could cost you 15 years of your life."

How Learning Makes a Difference to Me

Nate Thorburne - Yarmouth County Learning Network

Learning makes a difference to me because it makes me feel good. If I work somewhere, I know how to count money right. I know all the pairs of numbers that add up to ten.

I like coming to school so I can brag that I'm learning something and my friends are not. I want to convince the other guys to come to school, but all they do is sit and text all day. One day, I'll be able to get a job. I might even build something mankind has never built!

Coming to school helps me by giving me something positive to do and gets me out of the house. I feel smarter by coming to school and I learn something new every day.

How Learning Makes a Difference to Me.

Brittany Ritchie - Yarmouth County Learning Network

Learning makes a difference to me because I can get a better education which leads to job opportunities and a better life. I've wanted to get an education but didn't think I'd have the chance.

When I was in high school, it was horrible. Only the preppy kids, who were doing well, got attention from the teachers. I didn't feel I could succeed; the teachers didn't like me at all. As a result, I skipped class, got in trouble and hung out with friends. Teachers and the principal only cared about punishing me, not teaching me.

Now that I'm in adult school, it feels like I have a chance to get educated. The teachers make sure everyone gets the help that they need. Now, I'm doing better in school, I think I can succeed. I'm actually doing my work, I've learned it's much easier when I'm organized and I come to school pretty much every day.

I can have a career with an education, not just be stuck in a dead-end job at a fast food restaurant. That is how learning will make a difference to me.

How Learning has Made a Difference in My Life

Cindy Sutherland - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Learning has made a difference in my life. This year I decided to try and upgrade my education and joined CAN-U. Learning has gotten me more active and moving out so that I can meet new people. I don't sit alone at home all the time anymore. Learning has made me use my brain again to get it working and alive, plus learning has taught me how to do basic research. It is also helping me get ready to write the GED.

Learning has gotten me out of the house. After my daughter graduated from high school, and left home, I was becoming somewhat of a hermit by not wanting to leave my home. I became isolated and disconnected from the outside world. When I was sure I wanted to try and upgrade and improve my life by learning, it scared me to death. But, it got me out and back into the real world of living. I have met some really interesting people and made some nice friends that I didn't have before.

Learning has gotten my brain jump started and working again and improving my understanding about people and the world around me. I was becoming lazy by not exercising my brain enough. Now, by learning and applying exercises to learning English, math, reading and, trying to write essays, along with many other things I'm getting my brain back in form.

Learning has taught me how to widen my research on the computer. For example, by looking up things about our history, important historical events and people, where and when these things took place and why they happened are now available to me through research. So now when I'm talking with other people, I know what they are talking about with a better understanding. Furthermore, it keeps me informed about the things that are happening in the world around us right now.

Learning can also help me so that I can upgrade enough that I can take a course or write my GED. Then I can get a good job that, I would like and enjoy doing want to do every day.

In all, upgrading has taught me that I can learn, and do anything I set my mind to do. Yes, I may need some help from others to get started, or to finish but it gets done. I find learning new things interesting and fun at times, and at other times it can be scary. In all to me it is very enjoyable.