

2009

# RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR ADULT LITERACY

# SUBMISSIONS

Sponsored by a partnership of Quebec  
adult literacy and adult education organizations



Quebec Literacy Working Group



The Centre for Literacy of Quebec  
Le centre d'alphabétisation du Québec



Quebec Association  
for Adult Learning  
L'Association québécoise  
pour l'éducation des adultes



Literacy Volunteers of Quebec  
Bénévoles en alphabétisation du Québec



# RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR ADULT LITERACY

This recognition award was established in 2006 by four Quebec adult education and literacy organizations in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to recognize Quebec adult literacy students for their courage in knowing it's never too late to learn to read and write, or improve reading and writing. The teacher/tutor award acknowledges providers whose dedication is often taken for granted.

To qualify for awards, learners and students were asked to describe how learning to read and write or improved reading and writing has changed their life, and what they can now do that they could not do before. Entries were accepted in any form of communication that involved writing (e.g.: essay/poem/comic strip). If a learner/student was unable to write the entry alone, a teacher or tutor was allowed to act as a scribe.

Two awards were offered in the community sector (for a learner and a tutor) and two in the school board sector (for a student and a teacher).

In 2009, learner/student awards were given in both sectors.

On October 24, 2009, the awards were presented at a special ceremony during the Literacy Volunteers of Quebec Annual Conference. The ceremony was held at the Maritime Plaza Hotel in Montreal.

*This booklet includes the winning entries and all the submissions or excerpts of submissions received from the learners and students. Because learners are at various stages in their learning development, we have left the stories exactly as we received them.*





The Centre for Literacy of Quebec is a professional development, research centre and resource library that supports best practices and informed policy development in literacy, by creating bridges between research, policy and practice.



Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL) was established in 1981 to provide leadership in matters pertaining to lifelong learning and to create a collective voice to promote educational opportunities for adults who pursue learning projects primarily in the English language.



Literacy Volunteers of Quebec  
Bénévoles en alphabétisation du Québec

Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LVQ) is a provincial not-for-profit coalition that supports community, volunteer-based literacy groups through professional development, communication and advocacy for English literacy.



Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG) is a provincial committees of school board representatives, committed to the promotion, advancement and support of adult, youth and family literacy within the English Sector.

# Winners of the 2009 Recognition Awards for Adult Literacy

## LEARNER AWARDS, Community Sector

**Trelton James**  
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## LEARNER AWARDS, School Board Sector

**Calogero J Cucuzzella**  
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**Trelton James**, *Literacy Unlimited*

### **My Literacy Achievements**

My name is Trelton James. Have you been left alone at a young age? I had problems in school. But I am going to tell you about what I achieved on one and one tutoring.

When I was young, my Mom came to Canada and left me with my grand parents. I went to school in Trinidad but I do not remember much other than getting beaten. My Mom went for me and my two sisters. On our way to Canada we stopped at St. Vincent and we attended school there also for a little while. Another bad experience at that school.

I finally reached Canada at age 8. I went to a French school so that put me behind, not learning my first language, English. French was very difficult for me. I was very nervous to read in front of people, I avoided it when the teachers asked me to read out loud. Writing assignments were very hard to understand and do.

My mother fought to get me into an English high school, another bad experience. I was attending school to be with my friends, but my mind was not in class. I was in and out of class so I missed a lot of stimulation and education. John Grant was a no-credit high school. It's just for students with difficulties. I left high school around seventeen years old.

I went to Place Cartier, and adult ed school, where I learned basic English for immigrants. After a couple of semesters I did six courses to my high school diploma. Unfortunately, I had to leave school because I found it very difficult for me to continue.

Sports were my outlet. Football was my first sport. I've been playing football for quite a while. Football is my getaway. It taught me discipline, work together, focus and communication.

I found a full time job working at U.P.S. At that time I had a baby on the way, so work was a priority.

When Keana was a few years old, I decided that I could no go on like this any longer, not knowing how to read and write. I needed help. So strangely, something happened on my way to work. I heard on the radio about L.U., so I took down the number. Literacy Unlimited is a program to help English speaking adults with there difficulties to read and write, etc. I called and came in for an interview. It took two tries to get a tutor. The first time I did not hear form them so it took me a while to call them back to get a tutor. The tutor and I meet once or twice a week. We touch everything: reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and any extra work that I want to do.

After a long day of work I am very tired but with my commitment to L.U., I pull it through. Also I get very discouraged because I always expect more of myself. I want it to come in day but I know it's a long process.

With all the work I put in I started feeling very comfortable. It boosted my self-esteem to pick up a book to read to my daughter, buying a house, being more comfortable at work, reading bills, and following instructions. I rely less on people to



help me.

Something that I would never do is to pick up a book to read. Now I have that confidence to read a novel of one hundred pages. Before, I hardly knew how to spell my numbers, months, days. Now it flows perfectly, I feel comfortable writing cheques, even with big numbers. I never liked writing before. That was my weak point but with my tutors help by pushing me, I wrote an essay. I spoke at a training workshop for new tutors last fall. I was nervous, but I was able to do it.

I was asked to drive the big trucks at my work and that requires a class one driving license. I was very proud of myself. I read twelve chapters and studied very hard. It took me a couple of tries but I pulled it off to get my permit. The road test was nerve-racking but it was a piece of cake.

I also attended a workshop program, Speaking Up and Speaking out. It's run by Literacy Volunteers of Quebec; it's to learn how to give speeches in public. I really like this program because it's a good opportunity to tell people it's never too late to learn. It helps me practice speaking.

I am happy to see results in myself, and I feel more secure in my life. I work hard and I see accomplishments.

So I had problems at school and not been able to get my diploma, but with the one on one tutoring, and my efforts, I improved my reading and writing and accomplished some of my goals.



Joani Tannenbaum (LVQ Executive Director), Paul Beaulieu (Centre for Literacy), Calogero J Cucuzzella (CDC Vimont—ALRA recipient), Patti Moore (QWLG)

**Calogero J Cucuzzella,**  
*Competency Development Centre Vimont*

### **Reading and Writing**

Reading and writing has changed my life around tremendously. I'm an adult student learner that has finally been able to pick up a form and complete it for a job interview without any embarrassment, shame or guilt.

to do with literacy.

In the past I had been making all kinds of excuses and hiding behind anything that had

Reading and writing has brought me confidence and pride. It has encouraged me to follow my dreams. It's been one of my biggest goals. I have finely made this a reality.

A million thanks go to all the people involved in this magical vision of "It's never too late to learn to Read and Write". These wonderful people make illiterates' dreams come true.

Not only am I learning, but I am having fun doing so!  
Keep the adult literacy reading and writing dream alive!

# SUBMISSIONS



**Johnathon Demers**, *Place Cartier Adult Centre*

My name is Johnathon Demers and I am 18 years old. Starting around Grade 2 or 3 everyone in the class was reading and I couldn't. I was discouraged and didn't feel like reading anymore. For the rest of the time in elementary school I would sit at the back of the classroom sleeping or drawing.

When I went to high school, nothing much changed. I sat in the back and would draw. I liked to draw buildings, castles, towers and houses. I would also go to the resource room with about 9 other students. The resource teacher would give me books that I had to read then answer questions. Basically, I gave up because it was boring and tiring and nothing else to do.

I like to go to friends houses. I have a lot of friends and chill out with them. I've worked at Loblaws in Kirkland for 2 years and bag the groceries. I don't really like it but it is a job. I guess what I would really like to do is construction work or demolish houses. When I watched the Discovery channel it got me interested.

Coming to Place Cartier Adult Centre is different from high school. My teacher encourages me even when I think that I am not improving but I think that I am staying where I am she cares about me and pushes me to work. She want to help me get my driver license and will tutor me after school. The driving part is easy but I have to do the written part. I will take the course like Math, French and English that I will need later on to do the construction work that I want to do.



**Michelle Telesford**, *The Learning Exchange*

**Recognition Awards for Adult Literacy asks "...What can I do now that I could not do before?.."**

I extended my limits by reaching out to learners who need help to overcome their fears because I realized that I'm not the only one who has a story to tell.

I can now tell my story. A door opened for me, an opportunity to learn how to write my own speech became available, a project called "Students Speak Up and Speak Out".

I completed the application and was selected for the workshop on writing and delivering a speech to the public.

Here is my story, in speech form on how I overcame my limits.

## Literacy Extends My Limits

There are limits to what I can do.

There are limits to what I can become.

Fortunately, there are ways to extend my limits so that I can do more things.

And here are ways to extend my limits so that I can become better in some areas of my life.

**Literacy is the best way for extending my limits.**

*Ladies and Gentlemen*, my name is Michelle Telesford. Please allow me to tell you how literacy is helping me **extend my limits** and have more fun. First of all, let me tell you what literacy is. **Literacy is the ability to read and write.** Literacy makes it easier to learn things that are important.

Let me tell you a true story.

Many years ago, in order to get home from class, I use to take the **#193 bus** in front to the **Jarry metro station**. One day, when I came out of the metro station, **there was no bus**. I waited exactly where I always boarded the #193 bus. **The bus did not come. I walked for many hours.**

In the mean time, my father phoned the **police** and reported that I was missing. **It was almost midnight when I got home**. The police officers did not believe me when I said that **I walked all the way from Jarry metro station** because there was no bus. The officers insulted me, **and made me cry**. **My father believed me.** He thanked the police officers, and asked them to leave!!!

The next day, my father went to find out why the **#193 bus** had not come. He saw that the street was closed where I usually boarded the **#193 bus**, he saw a **big tractor in a huge hole** in the street **and** also saw that there was **a big sign** stating that, because of the road work, **the bus stop had been moved a block away.**

Right away, my father understood that I had missed the bus **because I could not read the writing on the sign.** That is what happens when we do not know how to read. **WE MISS THE BUS.** We also miss all kinds of **wonderful opportunities**.

At the time of that story, I was eleven years old. So you may wonder why I was able to read. **Let me explain.**

A few weeks after I was born, doctors found out that I suffered from **severe epilepsy**. At *The Montreal Children's Hospital* I had to undergo many tests. Some tests showed that I was **spastic**, or **partly paralyzed**, on the right side of my body. Other tests showed that I would have some special problems learning some things like reading and writing, and counting. My father has always tried to find ways to help me overcome my disability. Until I was about six years old, I could not walk properly. My father found doctors to operate on my right leg. Until I was about eight years old, could not speak. My father found a speech therapist to help me learn to speak.

I have always loved music, from children's television shows to today's music videos. I especially enjoy the music of **Elton John, Celine Dion, and Stevie Wonder**. They make me see that music can express what I feel inside. I wanted to be able to read the lyrics of all their songs. Because I liked to sing, my father helped me learn to listen to music, and to sing along while following the written lyrics, it is a wonderful way to learn to read. It is also a fun way to learn how to spell new words. That is a big help when you want to write correctly.

When I was about eighteen years old, I transferred to **Paul VI School**. That school had special programs to help each student learn as much as he or she could. At School I discovered that I must practice every day in order for my reading and writing to improve. One thing I liked was reading story books because my father was always reading my favourite stories with me.

From the time **I had my tutor**, my reading improved a lot. She taught me to **read words on a computer screen**. She also taught me how to **type words on a computer**. She even taught me how I could help others **by being a Peer Tutor**. That means I teach another student. My student is special. She learns in different ways, and needs a lot of attention and encouragement. I feel lucky to be able to help her learn.

Literacy extends my limits every day. Thanks to literacy, I can fill out forms. I can read all kinds of **information** in the **newspapers**, or on **television**. I can be more helpful to others. And I shall never miss the bus again.

**WHAT ABOUT YOU? LITERACY CAN ALSO HELP YOU TO EXTEND YOUR LIMITS.**



**RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR ADULT LITERACY 2009**



**Autumn Lane Rice**, Chateaugay Valley Literacy Council

Hi my name is Autumn Lane Rice. Here is my story, why I had trouble with reading and writing. From the time I was young, whole life was unbearable with psychological, physical, verbal set sexual abuse. My mother goes out every Thursday night. We have a babysitter. The babysitter, physically and sexually abuse me. I told my mother about the abuse, but all she did was to beat me. The sexual abuse went on for two years. I told my mother about it, but she did not believe me. My mother never cared for me or loved me. I was always beaten by my mother for no reason I felt she hated me.

At school, I could never show how smart I was because of repercussions with the smart girls. Smart girls made fun of me, constantly teasing me. Everywhere I went even away from school, someone always made my life even more miserable. There was no one to go tell what was happening at school, or home, I was very shy and talked very little. I rarely even lifted up my head to talk. In high school, life got even worse.

My father was an ironworker, but he had a gambling addiction. We had nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no winter boots, or winter clothes. The other kids made fun of my funny looking clothes. The other kids had nice clothes to wear. Being a teenager was even worse. I was always hungry and cold. The other teenagers make my life even more miserable at school in the community and home life. I couldn't concentrate on school work. There were no tutors.

No one even wondered what was going on with me. I was always walking around with my head down, no eye contact. I talked with my head down.

How much more abuse, could I endure in my life. I went through domestic abuse with my ex-boyfriend. When my daughter was five years old, she was taken away from us and put in foster care. I almost mentally snapped. I grasped at straws, when my daughter Lily was taken away from me. It's been nine years since I had my daughter. It has taken everything inside of me to become strong again for my daughter.

There were several people who were very supportive within the literacy council. Within my community, the elderly, friends, and family member. My father James, step mother, Shirley, cousin Mary Jane, my very good friends Peter and Bill, the healing lodge, and the healers. Last but not least, my sister Joy, who looks after Lily. My biggest inspiration is my daughter Lily.

When I won the Council of Federation award a certificate and a medallion was presented to me from Jean Charest on October 28, 2008 in Québec city. It was a real awakening. It proved that I had some potential. The "speaking up and speaking out", (of Literacy Volunteers of Quebec) was also an inspiration. The black cloud was finally lifted.

My daughter said to me mommy. Quit your job and go back to school I applied to go to Concordia University for Human Relations in the fall. The second weekend of "speaking up and speaking out" gave me more confidence, self-esteem so that I can go on with my life. When one is labeled a bad parent, has low self-esteem, no-confidence, no support, emotional problems. I now can see why I had trouble with reading and writing.

In June, I'm going to regain custody of my daughter Lily. I'm not leaving the courtroom without my daughter. Social workers have told lies about me. The legal aid lawyer assigned to me is an alcoholic. The whole system discredits me in the court. A psychologist doesn't even really know you, they say what they want. Obvious the whole system in foster care needs changes. A parent feels terrible that the child doesn't live with limit them. The parent and child are psychologically affected how much more can a parent endure. When I reach my goal that is my goal. I would like to help people who need great support, understanding to pursue their dreams. My dream is to become a counsellor, a psychologist, or maybe even a lawyer.





**Antoinetta Marcogliese**, Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council

My grade one in Italy I started having problem I needed help but there was no one to help me after school my mother was not able to help me with my homework because she never had any education.

My father had immigrated to Montreal Quebec. He didn't have an education either but when he was in they army he learn how to read and write.

June 1953 my mother, my sister, and my self we join my father in Montreal September I was enroll at the French School. I had to start my first grade because I didn't know the language, I felt lost trapped I didn't understand the Language. My teacher tried to help but it was not enough I needed help after school. My father tried to help me but made it worst, it was confusing for me. The teacher told my mother I needed help. My mother answered we can't afford to give her a tutor. The teacher told my father to stop helping me, because it was only confusing me. The teacher understood she help after school when she had the time the year was over I was going to second grade. During the summer I tried to read. September I started second grade. I didn't have the same teacher I was not happy it didn't take long the teacher saw the problem I had she didn't have the time for me I was too slow for her, she puts me in the back of the class I was not able to keep up with the rest of the class I tried very hard but it was useless, I studied but every test I failed, she told me that I was not going to pass, the end of the year came I didn't pass.

The following year I was enroll at the English school, I had to start first grade again because I didn't know the language.

From first grade to fourth grade I pass with low marks I manage only God him self knows how much I tried hours that I spend with my head in the books. The fifth grade I didn't pass I was fourteen years old and fifth grade. I cried so much I didn't understand why I was having so many problems.



There was a nun she told me to go back to the French school and that she was going to help me.

I answered her how you are going to help me; my friends are in eighth grade I lost three years.

I told my father I wanted to go to work during the day and go to school at night.

I knew that he could not afford to pay for my education; he said no you are not going to school at night, so I went to work.

He said if you were a boy you would need an education but you re going to get married and you don't need an education to change diapers you know a lot more then what you mother and my self knows.

My father was very old fashioned, He ruled the family what he said goes I hat to respect his decision but I cried over it. My mother tried to make him change his mind but he said no.

Not being able to continue my education and knowing I had a writing problem I was very disappointed and thought that my future was going to be hard.

At the age of nineteen I got married, and by the age of twenty-six I had my three sons and my daughter. I had no time for my self and I felt embarrassed of the situation not knowing how to write.

Not having an education you struggle through life you can't have a good job. Working in a department store or fabric store as a sales personnel is not a good salary. I worked at a fabric store for thirteen years and I trained a lot of students who were there just temporary. I was happy to see them leave because they were doing something good for them self.

Now I'm sixty-two years old, at my age I don't want a new career, But I want to improve my reading and writing for my self. It is nice not to depend on my family. April 2007 I started having tutoring with the Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council I don't feel embarrassed as I used to. I think in life we have to work very hard to get what we want. I feel good about learning how to write an essay, book report, and being able to e-mail my family. I used to struggle even to write a note, or do any paper work now I enjoy it. The first time I wrote an essay I made a list like a shopping list then I learned how to organize my thought s and write better. This winter I visited the Titanic exhibition and afterwards I wrote an essay about it. I saw some things that reminded me of my journey from Italy when I was a child which brought back lots of memories for me and made me want to write them down. After I wrote I felt very good.

A lot of time instead of calling long distance I e-mail my family so that I could practice writing. Now I feel more sure

of my self. I often use a dictionary for spelling and meaning of words. Sometimes When I go in the dictionary for spelling I find that the word is right. This makes me happy and confident in my self. There are some times when I'm writing I can't think of put my thoughts together so I just leave it and go back later. Then other times I find I can write for hours and I do enjoy it. I'm very happy.

I used to start to read but never finished any books because I did not enjoy it. I thought reading would help me improve my writing but I couldn't remember the words when I needed to write a note. Nut now with my tutor I have improved because I practice both reading and writing. Now I like to read to learn new things for example I read an exciting true story about someone being lost in the rainforest of Mexico and afterwards we thought about it and write our own adventure. It makes me want to read more adventure stories. We are also reading about the people and industries of Quebec. It's good to learn about the history and culture because I have more knowledge. I still have a lot of work to do I will not stop here, I do enjoy doing it, I can't say anything for tomorrow how far I will go, If I had had help when I was in school it would have been easier.

Diana is a good tutor I do appreciate what she does working with me. It has helped me a lot. It's never too late to learn to read or write, or improving our reading and writing.



**Donna Woodard**, Yamaska Literacy Council

### I LIKE MY NEW LIFE

I am a happier person since I learned to read. In 1995, when I finished school, my reading skill was very low. I was afraid to step out the door, afraid to talk to people, afraid of being laughed at, afraid that people would find out I couldn't read. In 2002, I began learning to read.

Today I am not afraid, I feel more confident in myself, I enjoy talking to people, no one is laughing at me – my family and friends are proud of me that I am doing well. I am very grateful to my Dad and Mom who supported me and told me never to give up. Now I walk out the door looking forward to life.

I can do so many things now that I could not do before.

Shopping is much easier. I can read the labels. Last year I went out and bought myself a new bike. I can make shopping lists without copying from the paper.

I can read and follow recipes, and enjoy cooking. I can follow instructions to make other things. I enjoy doing woodworking.

I am learning to drive.

Now I can fill out forms and do my own banking.

I enjoy sitting and talking to people.

I can use a computer and go to the internet to research things like Nascar, find songs, and can e-mail my tutor, play games and make birthday cards.

I am reading longer books, just for fun – when I start a book, I can't wait to finish it to see how it turns out. I don't watch much TV anymore.

I have a bigger vocabulary.

I can write notes to my family and friends and they can write notes to me.

Reading makes things so easy, I can do most things by myself.

I am still learning – I am on Book 7 of the series and have one more book left. I still enjoy my reading lessons, and I will keep learning new things. It has not been easy, it has taken a lot of courage, but I am never going to stop learning now that I have got started. I am glad that I took this big challenge. I like my new life.



**James K. Forde**, Literacy Unlimited

I want to shout the good news your way. I found a solution from remaining illiterate. I know you, the read, are feeling that you're in the same boat too, but I have found a way out. I will tell you that I went back to school. It was right for me. I was 48 years old but believed that school would teach me the basics. I felt that I could slowly grow and learn to read and write. I'm staying in school and having a good time because I have a good teacher. He uses his red pen a lot, but makes me do better. It's hard seeing all of the corrections because of the use of his red pen. I hope one day I will throw away the red pen, and all my words will be correct. That will be a great day for me, and I will jump for joy because I spelled all the words correctly by myself.



**Jay Montour**, *Nova Career Centre*

Hello my name is KARONTASE and I have been attending Nova Career Center to help improve my self so I can get ahead in life. I believe this is the right way to be, because if you don't go to school you will not get a good job. Nova Career Center had help me improve my reading and writing skills. If it was not for this excellent Adult education Center and its wonderful teachers and STAFF I would not be heading down this road of life, walking towards a better future at one step at a time. Thank you so very much Nova Career Center for you're help.

NIA WEN KOWA TA NON - ONEN.



**Norman Latour**, *South Shore Reading Council*

My name is Norman Latour. I am 30 years old. I live on the South Shore in Greenfield Park with my mother. One day I was doing my homework and I got mad and frustrated when the words got difficult so I threw the book across the room.

My girlfriend was there. She and other friends helped me find the SSRC. It took me about a year to go because I was afraid it would cost money and I was afraid that people would laugh at me.

My mother encouraged me to follow through with the reading program.

People used to call me dumb and stupid because I could not read.

They did not know my capacity.

I learned to ignore them because – Why put yourself down.

Now I can read well and I enjoy many more things.

I enjoy working on the computer.

I can download songs, chat on MSN.

I read the book to know how the VCR works.

I am diabetic, Now I can read my medicine.

I also like taking pictures, listening to music, mingling with people and I love gadgets.

I don't work but I keep busy.

I used to volunteer at a school but I now help at the SSRC and most days I read my e-mails.

I go to the library.

I visit my friend at my house or the mall.

I am happy about a lot of things.



The reading program. Life in general.

My friends, We play soccer.

We talk and we watch TV and many other things.

My favourite places to go are to the movies, to Scotty's bar, to the store, bowling, and to visit friends.

I help in the SSRC with a lot of projects.

I made a pamphlet with my tutor for the SSRC to encourage people to come.

I have been a student for four years.

I won the Student of the Year Award in 2006. I feel good.

I am not shy about going to the SSRC.

When people ask me I tell them that I am learning to read better.

And I have my photo on the pamphlet that I made.

I am willing to talk about my journey.

I would like to share my experience to help others to take advantage of the reading program.

I want people not to be afraid to admit that they have a problem with reading.

I feel really good.



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