

# HCLN

## Halifax Community Learning Network

*"a bridge to a brighter future"*

1994-2004



# Written Words

Adult Learners Share Their Stories



HCLN is a service provider in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) and receives funding from the Department of Education's *Community Learning Initiative*.

OUR SINCEREST THANKS TO  
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# Table of Contents

*Introduction*

p. 3

**Velo Halifax Bicycle Club, *Donald D'Entrement***

4

**Smoking, *Mary Thompson***

6

**Christmas Memory, *Carson Fraser***

7

**Improving my Education, *Patrice Fitzpatrick***

9

**My Life, *Steven***

10

**Music With Soul, *Irene-Ann Hinde***

12

**Fighting For Your Rights, *Michael Van Amburg***

13

**Doug's Day, *Dougie Jamieson***

14

**My Move to Halifax, *Wendy Hanes***

15

**Special Olympics Story, *Ronnie Holesworth***

16

**All About Me, *Kathy Dobson***

18

**Halloween, *Elizabeth Caines***

20

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## Introduction

*By Tylor McDuff, Network Coordinator*

<b>My Trip to Europe, <i>Ann Kelly</i></b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Perseverance, <i>Joanne Zhu</i></b>	<b>23</b>
<b>What Makes Canada Beautiful, <i>Agnes Aladejebi</i></b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Enjoying Winter, <i>Percy Oliver</i></b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Ancient Egyptians, <i>Sarah Holesworth</i></b>	<b>27</b>
<b>The Change of Life, <i>Bradford Ross</i></b>	<b>28</b>
<b>My Halloween Experience, <i>Rita Pottle</i></b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The Hunting Trip, <i>Doug Oakley</i></b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>36</b>

In February of 1994 - a full decade ago - a group of concerned community members came together to come up with an organization that could provide literacy programs for adults in the area. At this meeting, the Halifax Community Learning Network (HCLN) was born. That September, through partnerships with other organizations, the Network started offering programs for students struggling to develop their reading, writing and math skills.

Ten years later, HCLN is still active in the community, helping students meet their goals by giving them a chance to learn the skills they need. With the invaluable assistance of the Network's partners, the Halifax Public Libraries and Bloomfield Umbrella Group, programs are offered at five locations throughout the Halifax community.

The stories in this book represent the success of the Network over the past decade. Language is how we express ourselves to the world and without the ability to make use of that language, we cannot make ourselves heard. Our programs help ensure that everyone has the chance to express themselves and take part in their world. These stories are those of our students, completely and entirely. They are their experiences and their ideas. It is with great honor and pleasure that, to celebrate our 10th anniversary, we are able to present them so that they can be enjoyed.

## Velo Halifax Bicycle Club

### Joseph Howe Centruy Tour

*By Donald DiEntrement*

The ride started on September 20th, 2003. The departure point was at Graham's Grove, Dartmouth, N.S., at 7:00a.m. We signed up for registration, then they gave us a card to get stamped at each checkpoint.

I started cycling on Main Street to Highway 7. I cycled through Preston, Lake Echo, Porter's Lake, Musquodoboit Harbour. Then I stopped for a snack at the first checkpoint. Then I went to Highway 357 to Gibraltar, Meaghers Grant and Elderbank, then Middle Musquodoboit. We had lunch at the Provincial Park - it was good.

Then we went down Highway 277 to Dutch Settlement, Lantz, Highway 2 to Enfield, Grand Lake, Waverly, Fall River, to Highway 318 to Dartmouth.

The whole ride was very challenging. It was a 100 mile ride.



## Christmas Memory

*by Carson Fraser*

One of my Christmas memories is when I was in between thirteen and fifteen. Some of the family used to go cut trees. We would just get together and go in the woods. Sometimes our parents used to come with us and sometimes our grandparents would come with us to make sure we wouldn't get lost. The most fun we used to have in the woods was snowball fights and waiting until someone stood under a tree and then shaking it so all the snow would fall on them.

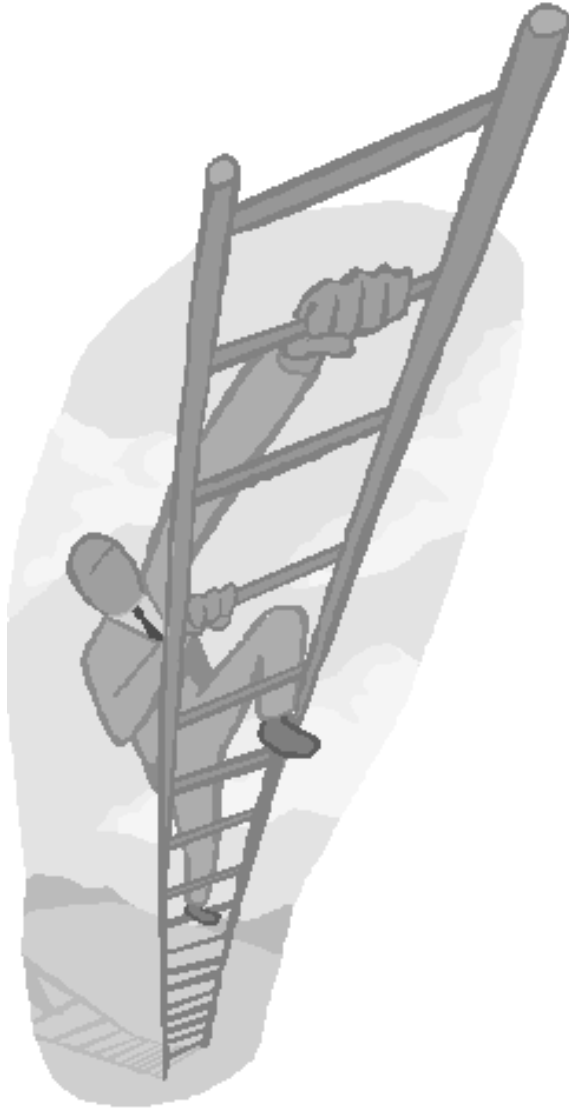


## Smoking

*By Mary Thompson*

I like the new H.R.M. smoking rules. Smoking will harm your health, whether that seems very important at this time, or not. But it also makes your clothes, hair, and breath stink. It's not a very attractive thing to do.





## Improving My Education

*By Patrice Fitzpatrick*

The Bloomfield Literacy Program gives me a chance to bring up my education for a better job. The education I have now is Grade 6 level. I want to be taught more of math, English, etc. The Bloomfield Literacy Program will teach me that so I can go on and get a better job and do something I like to do and enjoy it. It would be nice to support myself instead of relying on the government to support me.

What I used to do for a living was housecleaning, which I've done since I was 16 years old and I've done this for at least twenty years. I've had a lot of odd jobs like working as a waitress, cab driver, chambermaid and bringing up two children. I don't want to do these jobs. I would like to better myself. My one goal in life is to write a book and get my GED. It might take a while but I'll do it one day.

Education is important especially nowadays which you have to have Grade twelve and you almost have to know computers which also the program is helping me to learn that, too. I hope I will achieve my goals.

## My Life

*By Steven*

My name is Steven. I was born on September 17, 1982 in Trenton Ontario. When I was two years old I moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia and have lived here since.

I have one sister and two brothers. When I was four years old my father returned home and I did not know who he was. I had to get to know him. My relationship with my father was really bad. When I was thirteen years old I had to move out because of my behavior problems at home, in school and on the street. I went to group homes and foster homes for many years and I still had bad behavior. My Mom and Dad broke up and I was happy about that because we did not get along. My mother wanted me back but I was not allowed to return home with her. I was made to move from a group home where I was happy and I ended up going to jail.


When I was seventeen years old I moved to a special home in Dartmouth and I still live there. There is a worker there named Kevin and I have learned to love him and respect him very much. He is like a father to me because I never had a good father in my life. Kevin is always there for me no matter what I do wrong. I wish Kevin was in my life when I was younger.





I go to school every day and work hard to get my education because I did not get my grade twelve. I continue to look for a job. I have a wonderful girlfriend who helps me with my homework when I need it. I want to go into carpentry and make good money so I can support a family someday. I wish I had stayed in school and did not quit. It is much harder now for me, but I know I will make.


## Music With Soul


*By Irene-Ann Hinde*


 Music has a great influence on people in all situations of life. Happy people like to listen to light music.


 I listen to tapes or watch musicals on T.V. My mother grew up where she had the opportunity to dance the Waltz and to listen to opera.

 When I was a teenager there were different types of jazz music on the radio and on T.V. It has changed over the years. The instruments and the sound effects are louder, and the singers have changed.

 Volksmusic has a calm, relaxing sound. It is easy to sing to. March music is the type of music which is enjoyable on a Sunday afternoon.

 In my childhood my mother sang a lot of children's songs with us. We always had a lot of music in our house when I grew up.

 In my teens I was interested in pop music. Later on my interest in music widened and I got interested in classical music.

 I sing in the choir and it makes me feel good. I believe that music helps people when they are sad.

## Fighting For Your Rights

**Do you agree with Parks and Thoreau that citizens have the right to disobey laws they think are unjust?**

*By Michael Van Amburg*

In 2000 and 2001 the ambulance drivers and nurses exercised their right to strike. The government passed legislation under Bill No. 68 to force both union parties back to work. The Government therefore is taking away your and my right to negotiate and to walk out when talks break down. When a bill like that is passed it forces unions to disobey laws. It also makes people like ambulance drivers, nurses, and other union members fight harder to keep their rights. If we couldn't sit and negotiate then we couldn't put certain rules in place to do with safety, wages, medical, pension plans, et cetera. If there weren't people like Rosa Parks and Henry David Thoreau to fight to sit and walk the streets with everybody else, then where would we be today? People and unions today are fighting to keep the workplace safe and wages up to the cost of living. If companies had it their way it would be all profit and no wages.

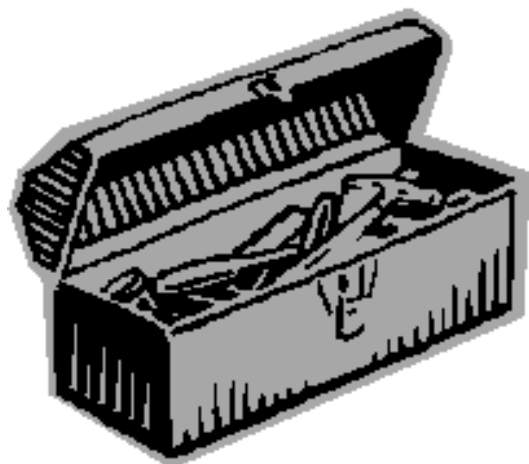
## Doug's Day

*By Dougie Jamieson*

I get up in morning for work and have a coffee before I leave the house.

Kenny and I get in the car and go to Lake City Woodworkers. Kenny starts work and I go upstairs to have a smoke if I have any. Danny gives me half of his coffee and sometimes he gives me a cigarette. We start work at 8:30am and I work hard until 3:00pm. My first crewmembers are Robert, Danny, and Gordie. My friend Jeffrey works on winebacks upstairs. We eat our lunch at 12:00 until 1:00pm and then we go back to work. Larry arrives at Lake City at 12:35pm and works until 3:00pm.

We all work hard and are tired at the end of the day.



## My Move to Halifax

*By Wendy Hanes*

My name is Wendy Hanes. I was born in Halifax, but lived most of my life in Windsor. I am 37 years old. I moved to Halifax in March of 2003 with my boyfriend. I had some really hard times in Windsor, so my boyfriend said it would be good for me to make a change in my life. I was a little scared and worried about moving to the big city. I always lived in small rural towns.

I left behind in Windsor my family and friends. I am glad that I left Windsor because my life seems to be a lot more easier. I wasn't really sure that I wanted to move here, but this move was a spur of the moment decision. This move has really made me open up my eyes and realize that this was a wise decision.



## Special Olympics Story

*By Ronnie Holesworth*

Most people only get to dream about competing in sporting events at provincial, and national levels perhaps world levels as well. However Special Olympics is giving me this opportunity. Special Olympics Nova Scotia seems to enrich the lives of Nova Scotians with mental disabilities through sports.

I first became involved with Special Olympics in 1998 when I joined the provincial hockey team. I was a rookie for the first time. Special Olympics has changed my life around. I like trying to get to meet other athletes, coaches and volunteers from across the province.

When I was a team member of the 2002 provincial hockey team we won the gold medal at the provincial games in Truro N.S.

In addition to competing, traveling and making new friends, Special Olympics gave me the opportunity to meet my wife Sarah in Baddeck, Cape Breton.

Special Olympics also allowed me the opportunity to improve my floor hockey skills in joining the provincial team.

I also got to speak and help raise awareness of the organization by attending many events like the celebrity dinner and auction. I also got to meet the world champion Jennifer Robinson which was a thrill for me and my wife.

Since joining the team I have competed in the 100 meter and 200 meter speedskating competition and had the fortune to win 5 gold medals at the provincial level. I am now on the world canadian team which is going to PEI Feb 16-21st. If I make it in PEI then I will automatically make it to the world games in Nagano, Japan.

Anyone who would like to join Special Olympics Nova Scotia you can contact Louis Brill, Mary Ann Crawley (Figure Skating coach) and Stephen and Nancy Gilbert (floorhockey).



## All About Me

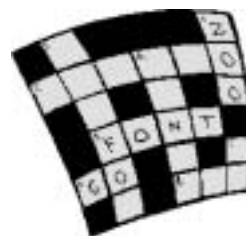
*By Kathy Dobson*

Hello! My name is Kathy Dobson. I live on Chisholm Avenue in Halifax. I have three cats. Their names are Furball, Mittens, and Snowball. They are my children. I look forward to seeing them when I get home, where they wait for me at the door. They are always glad to see me.

My hobbies are painting, doing jigsaw puzzles and wordfinders, writing, math, spelling, and babysitting. I enjoy going to the upgrading class. I enjoy writing stories. I enjoy meeting new people. I like working with other people.

This week, I learned that I am an "Aquarius". This means that I like to keep busy, am always ready for action, and like surprises. I also have other likes, such as making friends, helping people, and working for others.

My mother is someone whom I like to see. She is the greatest mom. She is kind and thoughtful. She is fun to have around. I enjoy seeing her when she comes up to see me from Digby. I really miss my mother.

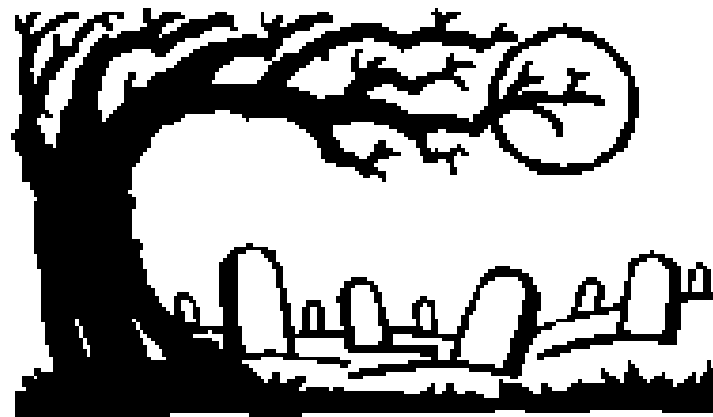


I helped my mother with the housework when I was a child. When I was younger, my mother wanted to go out, but she would stay home instead because my brother used to pick on me. So my Mom would stay home until he stopped picking on me. She is a good mother.

## Halloween

*By Elizabeth Caines*

I remember as a child my father would make things for Halloween. One year it was two days before the big night. I was about 6 years old. My father was in the basement making something. I wanted to see, but he said that I had to wait until it was finished. I knew it would be good because all the other things he had made were good. While dad was working on his project my mother and I went to visit grandma and grandpa for a few hours. On our way home we walked through our back yard where dad would put his Halloween things. Dad was sitting on the steps and he asked what we thought of his project. We noticed the yard was decorated and there was a small casket in the middle of what looked like a graveyard. Dad was playing some scary music. I was a little scared so I held my mothers hand. As we walked closer to where dad was I saw an expression on his face, like something was funny. We continued to walk over to the casket. To our surprise the casket opened and a mannequin sat up making scary noise. I was so terrified. I started to cry then I ran into the house up to my room. I could hear my mother telling my father that he should not have done that to me. I was just a little kid. I was so scared I did not go to



sleep that night. I kept having nightmares. For Halloween my mother took my bag from door to door while I stayed on the sidewalk. I was too scared to see what people had set up to frighten me.

## Perseverance

*By Joanne Zhu*

We always hear "Never give up" said by our parents and teachers when we face problems. I agree that we should keep trying and never stop working for our goals because people who don't have perseverance could fail and success always depends on hard work.

Without perseverance, even if you gain success, it is temporary. Some people are naturally bright so that they can quickly obtain as much knowledge as they want. Nevertheless, those people must attempt to face new challenges. In this case, perseverance will determine whether they succeed or not. For instance, in ancient China there was a genius boy named Zhongyong Fang who could recite any poem once he saw it. Unfortunately, Zhongyong Fang gave up his studying because he relied on his gift too much and forgot to work hard and became like everyone else.

Once we believe the idea "Never give up", we will insist on studying because the idea always motivates us to learn and we believe that we must finally gain success through our efforts. For example, Thomas Edison tried thousands of experiments to find the best material for light bulbs.

According to what I have stated above, it is obvious that perseverance is the only way to gain success.

## My Trip to Europe

*By Ann Kelly*

I was lucky to have gone to Europe. I stayed with my brother and his wife at their house in London. I went on bus tours and went to two musicals Grease and Phantom of the Opera. One day I went to the Buckingham Palace. It was filled with paintings and antiques. There is a balcony for the Queen to stand on to be seen by the people. In the front of the Palace there were guards at the gates. I would like to go back to Europe.





## Enjoying Winter

*by Percy Oliver*

Above the trees there are some beautiful birds. Across the water there are some deer. They are walking and eating slowly. My three kids and I are walking through the path. We can see chipmunks. The chipmunks are eating acorns and climbing down the trees to see us. We can also see some people walking and enjoying the day like we are enjoying it, with the snow coming down slowly.

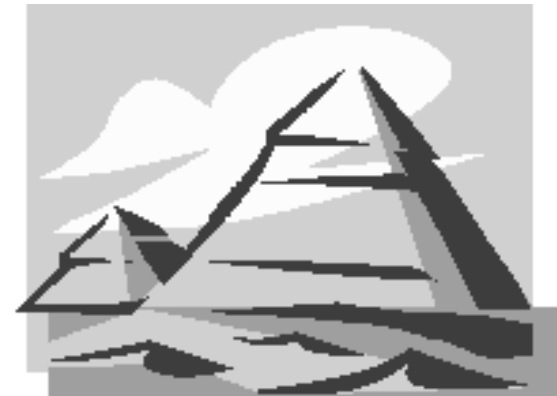
We come across a nice, good-sized lake and we go skating. Not too far from the lake there is a hill. We use Krazy Karpets and toboggans to slide down the hill. After we finish, we find a small place to make a small fire to cook some marshmallows. Walking through the park on our way back home, we talk about doing it again someday soon.



## Ancient Egyptians

*By Sarah Holesworth*

Ancient Egyptians built the pyramids. The Egyptians use two main building materials. Ordinary homes and less important temples were built with mud bricks. Important temples, tombs and pyramids were made of stone or built with rock that lay under the desert sand. They used the stone and brick to help preserve the temples and tombs. Some of the buildings and pyramids were rebuilt many times. The workers who built the buildings and pyramids worked to get clothes, food and drink. Other people painted the walls to borrow donkeys. The pyramids and tombs wouldn't have been well preserved if it wasn't for the skills of the people that built them.



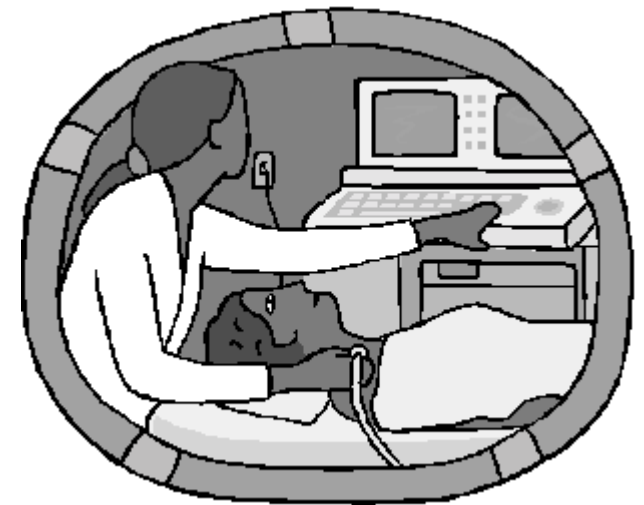
# The Change of Life

*By Bradford Ross*

The morning of July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1996 was just like any other morning for me. I finished the graveyard shift at work and headed for home. When I arrived at my apartment I didn't feel like sleeping so I had a quick shower, got dressed, jumped on my bicycle, and began to drive. I drove through the trails at Point Pleasant Park, sat and relaxed at Dingle Park, and went for a swim in Chocolate Lake. After a while, I became tired and decided to head home for some sleep. The morning was calm and beautiful.

When I awoke at 7:00 pm that evening, I took another shower, grabbed a bite to eat, and then went to visit my neighbours. We all agreed that we would go downtown that evening, and I was eager to get our plans started. At about 8:30pm I was ready to leave so I decided to head downtown. I told my neighbours I would meet them there. Once again, I jumped on my bike and began to drive.

I was cruising pretty fast on my bike and was hitting one green light after another. As I approached Argyle Street I saw two pedestrians begin to walk across the crosswalk. At the same time, I saw a van pull out onto my street heading straight for me. I tried to jump out of the way but within seconds, the van and my bike collided. After that, I remember seeing a man walking towards me but I cannot remember what he said. I also remember the ambulance driver putting something in my mouth. But again, I cannot



remember what. After this happened I closed my eyes and they stayed closed for 2 weeks.

When I finally opened my eyes I could tell that everything in my life had changed. I could hear, but I could not speak. I could see, but I did not recognize anyone. My neighbours and friends came to visit me but I didn't know who they were. My family also came to the hospital, but they weren't familiar either.

It took me a long time before I could identify people and remember my past. I would often get very angry, and would lose control of myself because of what happened to me. Many doctors and therapists have helped me put my life back together, and I know I have improved a lot over the years. However, I also know that things will never be the same for me. My life has taken such a turn that sometimes I think that I will never be able to get it completely back in order.



## My Halloween Experience

*By Rita Pottle*

In 1979 when I lived in Labrador, I went out trick and treating for my daughter. She was sick with the flu. My sister and friends decided to go out treating. We went from door to door. It was a very cold night with lots of snow. We decided to go around the harbour trick or treating. You should have seen the ugly masks we had on. It was really dark that night. I didn't have a flashlight with me. We never saw the two German Shepherds until we got up close enough to the trailer. The dogs began to growl. We started to scream. The masks weren't long coming off. I got such a scare that my legs were trembling. We weren't long getting out of there and heading for home. That was the most frightening experience I ever had on Halloween.



## The Hunting Trip

*by Doug Oakley*

I was out hunting a long time ago and it was the last time I was carrying a rifle. I don't think I have it in me to kill an animal. Only if I need something to eat or if it was attacking me. I might try to kill it then.

I was sitting in a tree all day long. It was cold and raining. I was there about six or seven hours then it was getting dark, so I jumped from the tree. My bones were stiff and sore, it took me some time to get going. As I was walking out of the woods I thought I saw a deer jump across the path.

My heart was in my mouth. I stopped and the rifle went off.

For some reason the rifle was cocked and it was in the wrong arm. It should have been in my left side not my right, because I can't see out of my right eye too good.

The bullet hit a rock in front of me and ricocheted back almost hitting me in the head. If you ever heard a gun go off it's not the same as it goes by your head. It's a sound that I never heard before and I don't ever want to hear it again.



I took off running through the woods like a scared rat huffing and puffing and sweating almost passing out.

I finally got to my truck and sat down to think just what happened. I could've shot myself or someone else. Thank god I didn't hurt anyone.

Today I don't even think about going hunting. I go in the woods for walks and to sit down and just look around. I see a whole lot more now than I ever saw back then.

## Acknowledgements

The stories in this book were written by students in the Halifax Community Learning Network's adult upgrading programs. These programs are:

- Bloomfield Literacy Program
- Captain William Spry Adult Upgrading Program
- Halifax North Branch Library Upgrading Program
- Keshen Goodman Public Library Adult Upgrading Program
- Spring Garden Road Public Library Adult Upgrading Program

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