

HCLN

Halifax Community Learning Network

"a bridge to a brighter future"

The Halifax Community Learning Network is one of 30 community-based literacy initiatives funded through the Department of Education's Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. HCLN offers free adult literacy programs to students in their community.

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Getting Across - Fall 2005

Newsletter of the Halifax Community Learning Network

Message from the Network Coordinator

For those who work, volunteer or study in literacy programs, September is a time of new beginnings and opportunities to learn. The Halifax Community



Learning Network is one of several organizations that offer adult education programs in HRM. From September to June this year, we will provide free tutoring for adults at the following locations: the Captain William Spry, Halifax North, Keshen Goodman and Spring Garden Road branches of the Halifax Public Library as well as the Bloomfield Centre. We also hope to eventually offer a classroom program at two of these locations. These activities are the result of the hard work and generosity of many, including our community partners, the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, Halifax Public Library and Bloomfield Umbrella Group- and of course the many volunteers who help to make programs happen. We are also fortunate to have Laura Channon, Rachel Lebowitz and Linda Oakley returning to their positions as Coordinators of HCLN programs- their experience and enthusiasm are a great asset to this organization.

This newsletter contains information about upcoming literacy events and opportunities to learn that I hope you will find useful, as well as stories by and about some of those involved with HCLN.

I would like to thank everyone who is a new or returning volunteer with the Halifax Community Learning Network and wish the

best of luck to those who have chosen to continue their journey of learning with HCLN.

Denise Morley
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Focus on Programs: HCLN Coordinator Rachel Lebowitz

Rachel Lebowitz is the Coordinator of the Halifax North and Spring Garden Road Public Library literacy programs. Originally from British Columbia, Rachel lived and studied in Montreal



HCLN Coordinator Rachel Lebowitz

before deciding to make Halifax her home in 2003. With a background in teaching children and university students, she decided working in the field of adult literacy would be a new and interesting challenge. "I'm very glad I did," says Rachel, "I love working with adults. This job has allowed me to meet so many dedicated and courageous learners: people who are determined to succeed, who have experienced far larger challenges than I have and who still persevere. I admire their guts. The tutors are great as well; they put in so many hours of their free time to help others."

Rachel is proud of her students and their successes both great and small. "People in our programs don't necessarily "graduate" in the traditional sense- learners might be in this program for years and never go on to get

get a high school diploma. There are some who do, and of course, I'm very proud of them. But I'm also really proud of the learners who do things they weren't able to do even six months ago, like fill out a form, or write a short story for the first time, or read in front of a large group. I've met learners who, before they were in this program, would never have read to their children and who now have the confidence to do so."

Rachel, of course, is one of the reasons they have such confidence. An avid writer with two books about to be published, Rachel encourages her students to write poems and stories and urges them to draw upon their own life experiences when writing. The results are often funny and moving. When Rachel's students read their work at HCLN events, it is difficult not to react to the heartfelt stories of life lessons they have learned, and the challenges they have overcome. The fact that they are comfortable reading aloud and sharing their stories is an indication of both how much they have learned in Rachel's program, and how much she and the volunteer tutors who work with HCLN students have inspired them. Well done, Rachel!

Did you know?

- A total of 52% of Atlantic Canadians have problems with everyday reading and writing.
- 80% of Canadians over 65 have low literacy skills.
- 40% of Canadians aged 16-65 have low literacy skills and 15% are in the lowest literacy category.
- 20% of recent high-school graduates have literacy skills too low for entry-level jobs.
- Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed, poor, suffer from health problems and to come in conflict with the law than those with higher literacy skills

(International Adult Literacy Survey, Statistics Canada)

How can you help?

Become a volunteer tutor.

Last year at HCLN, more than 200 learners and 160 volunteers participated in our free programs and worked

together toward goals ranging from improving basic literacy to achieving a High School Diploma for Adults.

The Halifax Community Learning Network advocates an approach based on the learner's goals. Tutoring focuses on the learner's needs and interests rather than teaching a pre-set curriculum. Reading, writing, and math are taught within the context of everyday experience. A Program Coordinator will provide you with the resources you need to get started as a tutor and professional development opportunities are also available.

Tutoring is important work. An entire life may be changed through your efforts.

Adults are now waiting for tutors to help them with reading, writing and math skills.

Please call 422-7648 for more information

Satisfying Times

By Etta Hamm

Becoming a volunteer tutor with the literacy program is the best thing I've ever done! I love it so much that I'm helping two learners – on different days, of course.

My learners, both women, are so enthusiastic about learning! They triumph in mastering "the hard parts" and in understanding what they're learning. They seriously apply themselves to making progress toward their goals, and are seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

They're telling stories about themselves, applying principles learned about writing, and appreciating the value and the beauty of clear, effective communication. They're enjoying a variety of approaches to learning, discovering that learning can be fun – and they're eager for more, more, more!

This may not be every tutor's experience – maybe I was just lucky in being matched with Grace and Abeba. We have such wonderful, satisfying times working together – and we do take the time to chat and laugh! Now, why wouldn't I love it?

The Bull

By Grace McGregor

I grew up in New Ross with my six sisters and three brothers. I knew the Whites who lived on the New Ross Farm at that time. Sometimes my family was hungry so us kids, me and my sisters and brothers, we went looking for apples that fell on the ground from the trees in a field. The field belonged to Roscoe Porter. Roscoe had cows and a bull. The bull was in that field all summer.



Etta and Grace working together at the Halifax North Public Library

We had to go through a barbed wire fence to get into the field where the bull was. Sometimes we ripped our clothes on the barbs on the fence.

Once we got in there, we were afraid of the bull. Bulls will chase you and throw you up in the air with their horns. They are very angry, crazy animals. A bull can kill you. We were so scared but we needed those apples. The bull chased us lots of times but when you're young you can run so fast. We had to pass him to go swimming too. Boy, that bull sure made life hard for us. It was us against him. We were scared but when you're a kid you don't think about dying. When I think back now, I'd never go back in that field with that bull in there. I can't believe we lived in all that danger. But I look back now and I have to laugh. I wonder what ever happened to that bull in the end.

Literacy Nova Scotia PD Workshops

Literacy Nova Scotia is offering the following opportunities for professional development for the staff and volunteers of community literacy programs. To register, please call: 1 (800) 255-5203 or e-mail literacyns@nsc.ca

The Canadian Adult Reading Assessment

Presented by Dr. Pat Campbell

Date: October 3, 2005

Time: 1:00-3:30 PM

Place: Nova Scotia Hospital, Hugh Bell Cafeteria, 300 Pleasant St. Dartmouth

The workshop will begin with an overview of the types of assessment tools that are being used in Canada. You will be introduced to the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment, a tool that can be used for placement and instruction. Using case studies, you will learn how to administer and score the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment to determine a student's reading level. Please note that this workshop is designed for literacy instructors.

The Canadian Adult Reading Assessment

Presented by Dr. Pat Campbell

Date: October 3, 2005

Time: 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Place: Nova Scotia Hospital, Hugh Bell Cafeteria, 300 Pleasant St. Dartmouth

How often have you heard the refrain, "Nothing sinks in?" In this workshop for literacy tutors, we will discuss why adult basic education students have difficulty comprehending text. You will walk away from this workshop with comprehension strategies that can easily be implemented in your lessons.

Violence and Learning: Taking Action

Presented by Dr. Jenny Horsman

Date: October 19, 2005

Time: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Place: Halifax Military Family Resource Centre, Windsor Park, Halifax

Dr. Jenny Horsman is an educator and researcher who has spent almost three decades in the literacy field. She has written numerous articles and chapters rethinking literacy as well as two books, *Something in My Mind Besides the Everyday: Women and Literacy* and *Too Scared to Learn: Women, Violence and Education*. In this workshop, you will have an opportunity to consider the extent of violence, its impact on learning and how to break the silences about violence and learning in your program.

Functional Context Education: Making Learning Relevant in the 21st Century

Presented by Dr. Tom Sticht

Date: November 14th

Time: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Place: Harbourview Holiday Inn, 100 Wyse Road, Dartmouth

Tom Sticht is recognized internationally for his work on the education and training of under-educated youth and adults.

This workshop will help educators to develop the understanding and resources needed to design, develop, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of relevant instructional programs for youth and adults using the Functional Context Education approach.



Sarah Wemming of the Keshen Goodman Public Library congratulates HCLN student Bev at the year end party.

Captain William Spry Public Library and HCLN Working Together

Captain Spry Library is home to the Working Together: Library-Community Connections project. The library is also home to HCLN's Adult Learning Program. Naturally, we've decided to "Work Together" in Spryfield!

Four libraries in Canada belong to the Working Together project: Halifax, Toronto, Regina and Vancouver. The project has two main goals: to help the four library systems be more inclusive for those who might not feel welcome in the library, and to test whether libraries can help people find work. In Halifax, the project is working in the Spryfield area and Greystone neighbourhood.

Darla Muzzerall is the Community Development Librarian working at the Captain Spry Library. The manager and staff at the library warmly welcomed Darla and they've encouraged her to continue and expand the community outreach done by the branch library. Darla attends community meetings and meets with community groups to find out their library needs. During the summer, you may have met her on your doorstep, asking you if you need a new library card!

Last year, Darla and her staff operated a computer lab at the Spry Library, and offered classes in computer basics and Internet skills. So far 83 people from the Spryfield area have taken computer classes! They

also promoted the Adult Learning Program and the English as a Second Language Program throughout the community, and visited the programs many times to meet with the tutors and students. They introduced tutors and learners to library staff and helped everyone to feel more at home in the library.

This year Working Together wants to be even more connected with the Adult Learning Program at Captain Spry. The project will provide staff and resources for library tours, library instruction, computer classes, and other supports for the tutors and learners. Working Together staff will check in with tutors and learners to find out what you want and need from the library, and how the project and the library can best help you. Most of all, the staff want to understand what keeps people from using the library, and how the library can be more welcoming.

You can contact Darla at the Captain Spry Library at 476-9012 or by email at: muzzerd@halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

Great web-sites for literacy tutors!

Check out these resources on the internet:
www.nald.ca
www.literacy.ca
www.literacyjournal.ca
www.nald.ca/clr/demyst/chapter1.htm
www.oaklandlibrary.org/services/SecondStart/tutors_tips.html

Sharing Resources: an evening of discussion and ideas for literacy tutors

Keshen Goodman Public Library Thursday
November 3rd / 6:30 PM

Do you have questions about your job as an adult literacy tutor or tips that others would find useful? Join adult educator Avril Lewis as she leads an informal discussion of issues and resources for literacy tutors. Please feel free to bring along your favourite adult education resource to share with others. Call 422-7648 to register.

Upcoming Events

Contact 422-7648 or hcln@ns.sympatico.ca for more information

September 25th: Word on the Street

October 3rd: PD Workshop: Canadian Adult Reading Assessment

October 12th: Dartmouth Literacy Network Tutor Training begins

October 19th: PD Workshop: Jenny Horsman

November 3rd: PD Workshop: Sharing Resources

November 5th-10th: Literacy Action Week

November 14th : Word for Word: check www.dartmouthliteracy.net for details!

November 14th: PD Workshop: Tom Sticht

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