Celebrating Adult Learners’ Week

March 29 – April 4, 2020

Literacy Nova Scotia acknowledges and thanks the Government of Nova Scotia’s Department of Labour and Advanced Education for their support.

Produced by Literacy Nova Scotia
Introduction

Adult Learners’ Week (ALW) in Nova Scotia is an annual celebration of lifelong learning. It is always a highlight for Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) when we celebrate Adult Learners’ Week with promotion and awareness initiatives, a learning opportunity and public events or presentations. Premier Stephen McNeil proclaimed March 29 – April 4, 2020, Adult Learners’ Week in Nova Scotia.

LNS offered several skills enhancing workshops for adult learners in programs funded through NSSAL. We invited learners to share their stories and entered eligible submissions into a draw for an iPad mini. Krystina Latham, a learner at the Shelburne County Learning Network, was the lucky winner.

The submissions received are featured in this e-booklet. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all who shared their stories and enthusiasm for adult learning. These writings demonstrate how learning has made a difference and will inspire others for years to come.
Proclamation

Adult Learners’ Week

WHEREAS March 29 to April 4, 2020 marks Adult Learners’ Week in Nova Scotia and is a celebration of lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS this week recognizes the accomplishments of thousands of learners across the province who are committed to improving their lives through adult learning programs; and

WHEREAS the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to supporting these programs to help Nova Scotians strengthen their skills so they can connect to the many rewarding academic and work opportunities our province has to offer;


Honourable Stephen McNeil, M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia
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My Name is Calvin Wood. I live in Windsor Nova Scotia. I’m a student of the Hants Learning Network in Windsor. Through them, they helped me find a one on one volunteer tutor to help me reach my goals. I don’t go to classes at their program, but I see my tutor once a week. Right now, my tutor helps me in my reading and social studies. I also work on my math at home in my own time. I had written my GED in the past, but I find there is a lot to it to understand it all. I do have support through the special accommodations when or if I am really ready to rewrite my GED test, but it is still a lot to take in. My tutor helps me with the things I am working on and we are taking it one subject at a time.

In my own time I make home made greeting cards and put images on mugs for people. I have some greeting cards in stores in Windsor. Right now, I am trying to raise money for a sublimation printer to create work from home. I do this to create work for myself, something I like doing.

I am a person with learning disabilities and am 57. My big goal is to write my GED and to pass before I turn 60. Having a volunteer tutor really helps me with my reading and having support from them is helping me. I did all my 3 levels at the Hants Learning Network and I really appreciate all they do for me.
I'm a single mother of 3. I have been taking care of my kids on my own for a long time. It's always been a struggle for me to keep up with paying bills, car payments, lessons, etc., that other families appear to do so easily.

I have always felt lacking because of this. I feel that I'm simply not able to provide the kind of opportunities for my children that they deserve to have. I have always been stressed about my lack of education. I was not a bad student, but nothing came easily to me. I kept trying but in time I gave up, and simply started working which surely is a path many like myself have followed.

As opportunities arose, I didn't apply. I watched better and higher paying jobs pass me by year after year. One day, my HR person came to me and told me "look, you're a hard worker and I want you to apply for this." I was very quiet. Here was somebody saying they recognized me and my value and didn't want another opportunity to pass me by. I said okay. I had 4 months. I got to work. I started researching and found the Dartmouth Learning Network. I wasn't going to let another chance at a better life pass me by.

I met everyone at the center, and I met Gail, my learning coordinator. I told her the full extent of my situation. She didn't hesitate "okay, we'll take care of it." She found me my tutor right away, Brent. Somehow, this man on top of his busy schedule, volunteered to meet me sometimes 2 or 3 times a week. Brent once told me repetition is key and I told him that I wished my brain worked that way. It would have made school so much easier. Some things I can remember right away and other things, no matter how many times I go over it, just doesn't stick. He listened to me. He was patient. He kept going over and over the things I had trouble understanding and encouraging me with the things I could get right away.

Gail and Brent would message me before every exam and tell me "you got this!" I passed every exam I had on the first go.
I aced my interviews. My new boss came to tell me I got the job just before Christmas. I have been in my new role for over a month. I can't express what it means to me or my family. I have more security; I have more pay and more importantly I can better provide for my children. I don't feel so lacking anymore. In my forties, I still had the opportunity to turn my life around and to shape my future. All of this through adult education. I feel so confident now, I want to go even further and take more classes as I often wished I had when I was younger. I got this.
My name is Carole-Anne Parsons and I returned to school in 2010 and received the Adult High School Diploma with Honors, I then went to NSCC and achieved my Community Disabilities Support certificate with Honors.

Having been told all my life that I was stupid or dumb, I had started to believe it. The things I have learned and experiences I have had at the Learning Center make me know differently. I am not stupid or dumb and never was.

I am from Peterborough, Ontario and have lived in Liverpool Nova Scotia for about 15 years. I have had trouble staying employed, so I joined an E3 pilot group in 2017. Now, I realise that I have to keep improving my skills. I plan to work on the things I am not so good at and hope to be employed. The Queens Learning Center has helped me to break away from my shyness and negativity. I have made friends, learned how to stand up to those who disrespect my beliefs, and set goals for myself that are realistic.

I have returned to school this time to keep up with new ideas and improve my English and math abilities. I am hoping to be employed and to keep a job until I decide it’s time to leave. I enjoy going to the Queens Learning Center as the instructors are very friendly and understanding, they take pride in their teaching and have time for every student.

I feel like the Learning Center has become a place where I can come to learn and be social with others. I have had a few times where I was a help to someone else and I enjoyed helping because, it makes me feel better about myself and my abilities. All in all, attending the Learning Center has been an enjoyable experience for me and I am thankful for the encouragement and help from the instructors.

Again, this year I hope to be part of E3 program, and I am looking forward to that as it is fun and I enjoy the class. In the past, we took acting classes at the Astor and art classes from a local artist, learned about nutrition and recorded a play. I enjoyed being engaged in the theatre, learning to project my voice, to feel less self-conscious. Art classes relaxed me and cleared my mind of all of the negativity. I now know that I am
able to do anything I want to if I put the time and effort into it.

My goal for the future is to gain employment in the Liverpool area and maintain that employment. I would like to find more friends, be more positive, help others more often, and to prove to all those who thought I would not be able to do the things I have accomplished, that I am able to.

Since attending the Queens Learning Center, I have found myself to be more social, more talkative in class, and involved in more activities within class.
My Reasons for Learning
April Sherman
Halifax Community Learning Network

I had a hard time learning while growing up. It wasn’t until I got older that I had a desire to learn. So, the reason that I am returning in learning is because I want to keep my mind sharp and to broaden my ability to learn more about health and fitness. I want to have a chance to find out more of how I can work with my diabetes and manage my weight.

I enjoy learning many things that I never knew before. I am fascinated with history and how things were in the past. I have been coming here to the literacy program for many years, and I have learned many things during those times.
Over ten years ago, I couldn’t read the way that I wanted to. One day I was talking to a young lady about the history of the Citadel Hill in Halifax. She told me that I could find out more about Citadel Hill at the library. I had to tell her that I couldn’t read so she told me about the tutoring programs at the library for people like me… I had stopped school before grade ten because I wasn’t getting anything out of school, I was the only one of my friends still in school, and I was working to make money to help take care of my siblings. I knew that it would be difficult to learn to read, but I had a lot of hope for myself since my mom learned to read at age 82 by being taught by my sisters. I was really proud of her and thought I could do the same, or at least try. Coming back to school has helped me get so much better at reading than I was that day I talked to the young lady.

When I first started the tutoring, it was very hard because I didn’t know what I was doing. As time went by, it got a little better and easier for me. Big words are still difficult. Even when it is difficult, I know that I am improving. I know this improvement is from the help of my tutors. Now, I can pick up a book to read, can read the movie titles to pick the ones I want, and can read the newspaper. This program has helped me get off the phone and use my hands more often to practice my writing to see where my mistakes are. Most importantly, I have learned how to e-mail to a certain extent, and this lets me email my son who lives in Ottawa and connect to my family in Atlanta, Georgia. I can also email the other people I need to talk to and can do it with fewer and fewer mistakes each time.

My biggest goal is to write the GED. This is not an easy process for me. I am still going to try. I hope that I will get better at emailing and using my computer more often for different tasks. It makes me happy to know that I can do that. Learning is a never-ending process for me. I like to learn new things, so my goal is to stay with the program until I am no longer able to.
I went to the old Halifax City Library. I wanted to learn about tutoring programs. I was matched that night with a tutor to improve my reading and writing. That was 21 years ago.

Since 1999, I have had eight tutors. I have really enjoyed learning more about big 18-wheeler trucks. So far, I have written two stories about Peterbilt trucks. I have also written about a fishing village, animals, motorbikes and other topics.

I have written stories for the annual adult literacy yearbook. I feel good to see my stories in print. Being in the program has helped me concentrate. Erica is a good literacy coordinator. I am happy when I come to class.

My goal is to study for my GED. I would like to find a better job.
My name is Milagros. I lived in Dominican Republic. I didn’t go to school there. I used to work with my mother. That’s why I didn’t go to school. My mother used to do house cleaning for people there. She used to take me along with her. She used to be so kind and people used to like her a lot. My mother didn’t go to school when she was a child, because her mother died when she was 7 years old.

My first job when I came to Canada was cleaning blueberries in Kentville. I worked in a big factory. Then I worked in a hotel cleaning rooms, and in a restaurant washing dishes.

I could not speak English, but in working with Canadians, I learned. It took me a long time. It wasn’t easy.

When I got married, I made an X, because I couldn’t write. I learned to write my name in Canada.

I just started going to school a few years ago. I learned how to say my address. I learned how to write my name. I really enjoy going to school, because I’m learning. I know how to say my phone number now, and before I couldn’t.

I hope that someday I will be able to write a postcard or a letter. Or when I get a letter from the government, I will be able to read it. Right now, I have to depend on my friends to help me. Sometimes you can get frustrated when you have to depend on other people. There was a sign in my building, and I couldn’t read it. It was a few days before someone told me what it said. They were closing the laundromat for three days.

I am still learning to read, so that one day I can read by myself and not depend on other people.

I want to thank the province of Nova Scotia. They are doing a nice thing, to help people that can’t read and write. Without school, how can you learn?
Annmarie’s Story About Learning

I returned to learning because I would like to learn more reading, math, and writing. I want to read more books and work sheets emails. Also, I would like to read letters. I returned to learning math because I wanted to know more about finances and money. When I go for an interview, I want to be able to write my name on forms. I also would like to improve my handwriting.

Learning has changed my life in many ways. I can read better and I can do math better. I can read faster and I know more words. I am faster than I used to be with multiplication. Soon I will be working on long division.

My dreams are to get my GED and be a nurse or lawyer or doing babysitting. I want to babysit because I love working with kids. I like spending time with kids like going to the park or on the bus. I like working and helping with people.

I have a tutor named Rachel, but she got sick, so I got another tutor named Jan, but she had to leave too. So now I have another tutor named Delia and hope to have her for a long time. She is a very nice tutor.

PS: I didn’t think I was going to get another tutor but here I am once again.
Why I Returned to Literacy
Charles Corbin
Halifax Community Learning Network

I returned to literacy because I want to be a better reader and to learn about math. I can read a little bit better, but I can’t do math yet.

Learning makes me feel good about myself.

My goals are to get a job to be a janitor or to work at a dollar store. I want to make some good money so I can get some nice stuff for my apartment. I had some hard time getting a tutor, but I have a good one now. Her name is Rebecca. I hope to have her for a long time.
I came back to school to learn how to read and write.
I got behind in school when I was little. I had an accident at home.
I burnt my arm putting wood in the stove.

My brother had to take me to the hospital in Halifax and I spent a lot of time there.
That is why I didn’t learn how to read. I really wanted to learn how though.

So, I came to the library and asked the person at the desk, “is this the place that I can learn how to read?”
In the month of May of 2018, I started a new job. I needed and wanted to focus on getting my GED. I called the Halifax Community Learning Network and was set up with a tutor quite quick.

My goal is to achieve and strive for a greater Education. Having a place in our community and to have volunteer tutors is great. They are willing to make the time to teach so I can learn what I need to accomplish my goal. I have already accomplished passing three exams and I am striving to pass two more so I can receive my diploma.

I am so appreciative for this opportunity. I would like to thank Literacy Nova Scotia for having these programs. Thank you for helping me toward my goal.
Learning Changes Lives
Macayla Mckenzie
Hants Learning Network Association

I returned to learning to become better in math, English, and to build my confidence. Learning has changed my life because my spelling, writing, and reading has improved a lot. My confidence has improved a lot too. My goal for the future is to work with seniors.

Before coming back to school, I was just sitting around at home not learning. So, after being out of school for a year, I decided to call up the Hants Learning Network to become enrolled. I decided to go back to school to better myself in math, English, build my confidence, and to work towards employment.

Learning has changed my life because in high school, we were forced to learn stuff that wasn’t necessary to our needs and our future. Now, I am learning things that I actually need in life. Since I have come back to school, I have improved a lot. My English and math skills have improved so much in the last year. My confidence has also improved. Working towards getting a job is a little bit more complicated, but I recently had a job interview. I am hoping to get the job.

I don’t have many goals for the future, but one goal is to work with seniors. I want to work with seniors because I love helping people out. I love seeing the smile on the seniors faces when I have helped them out. I would like to be an RSA which is a Resident Support Assistant.

An RSA loads the dishwashers, starts the dishwashers, washes tables, set tables, wash laundry, puts the laundry in the dryer, folds the laundry and puts it away, removes the garbage, cleans bedrooms and bathrooms, sweeps and mops the floors and keeps the house clean.

Overall, I am so glad that I returned to school.
I've always believed I was capable of great things. I have a strong sense of hard work with two great examples set by my parents and I always commit myself 110% to what I'm doing. I also have been great at proving others wrong and proving myself wrong at what I can accomplish. My own struggles with learning have dedicated me to succeed in getting my grade 12. You can always find me working on schoolwork even on the weekends.

As I look back when I was growing up, related to the little train that could no matter what life, school or the bullies put in my path. I never gave up - sure there were some tears, heartbreaks and moments I was lonely, but it still wasn't enough to make me quit. However, I do I feel the sadness and hurt for the young girl that I was. I didn't really learn much in the way of math or how to spell correctly. Somehow that young girl has managed to realize she has the right tools now and is able to work on her weaknesses. I attend school three days a week and I've expanded my knowledge in the last year-and-a-half more than I did the 13 years I was in school. Luckily this time around I've been blessed with two great teachers that have worked hard with me one-on-one, made me push through my weaknesses and always encouraged me.

One way learning has changed my life - it's made me realize just how smart I really am, that all my life I never needed the IPP to pass school and that what I really needed was a positive learning space. The second reason is because I'm doing things that I never thought I could accomplish and the third thing is making me feel like I have a purpose, reason and being able to challenge myself. It's my reason to roll out of bed and to get out of the house when I don't feel like going and it's helping me make friends with the same goals in mind. This helps me be more clear on what my goals are.

I would say my future goal would be to obtain my next 3 elective credits, so I can attend the Adult High School in New Minas. I'm a little nervous to change programs, have new teachers and meet new people. I know that part of this comes from my own insecurities, not wanting to fail and I also know that it will be okay. That, just like my current program, I'll succeed at all of my subjects and some that will give me a little trouble, I'll just remember the girl writing this essay that had never ever written one but somehow managed to succeed with essays.
My goals have given me something to push towards this year. I plan on reading as many books as I can, reading more classic books and maybe learning a new language. After I'm done at the Adult High School, I would like to apply for the Library/Information Technology Program at NSCC and once I'm finished that program, I plan on applying to Dalhousie for my undergrad in data management and to get my Masters in Library Science so that I can work in the library archives, just so I can catalogue all the books and read as many books as I want to.

In conclusion, I feel like my work ethic, drive and ability has not only helped me get this far with my journey, but it fuels my future goals and it helps me succeed with my career path. Even though some days I feel like that young girl that was so shy, timid and nervous of my teachers and why I couldn't catch on to certain things that came so naturally to my peers. Although I was too young to understand the ways of my struggling. I know somehow that I could either overcome it or give into it. I've been overcoming my struggle my entire life and I wouldn't want to be the person that just gave up, quit or walks away from a challenge. I'm not just dedicated, I am devoted to my commitment, I made my journey and learning and that's why I have perfect attendance and why I wanted to share my story because the world deserves a little bit of my motivation.
How Learning Changed My Life
Carrie Caldwell

I returned to school to try and make something of myself and build my self-esteem up as I never believed in myself. I always thought that I would never be anything or amount to anything in my life. Well, my life has changed since then.

It was September 7, 2010 when I returned to school, and boy wasn’t I scared as I didn’t think that I could do it at all. Well, on the first day I came they put me into the ALP classroom and I went there until 2011 when I decided that it was too fast paced for me and I asked one of the teachers what I could do. Well Jayar told me that I should try to get my GED through VCLA. Jayar said that it was a slower pace so he told me that I had to go see Linda who taught it, but I would have to talk to Joan Ross. Well when I told her what I thought of doing, she said that I would never get into the GED class, Joan said that it would take about a year. When I left Joan’s office, I went into Linda’s and I know Linda from church. So, I told her what I wanted to do, and Linda said I could start the following week. I thanked Linda and she said that she would see me on Monday.

When I started, I had low self-esteem but now I can tell you I feel so proud of myself for coming back and trying to improve myself. It makes me feel like I am worth something. I am still in the GED class and I have been working hard to get my GED. Now I’m doing things like working towards going into ALP at NSCC to get my high school diploma. I also help in the classroom now and I do love helping others. My self-confidence is up, and I think that coming back to school was the best thing that I ever did. The VCLA staff are like family and I love them all. I have a wonderful teacher, Penny, and she is such a beautiful person. I am working hard so that I can get my GED and I know that I will. I do homework every night for an hour. I love going to school and helping out is so rewarding. I just want to thank everyone at VCLA for everything that they did for me and everything they’re doing for me now.

I am so very glad that I came to VCLA to get my GED. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.
My Future
Dakota Rousseau

Valley Community Learning Association

I returned to learning to potentially better myself and further my knowledge on many things.

Learning has changed my life socially. I would not know a lot of the people who I communicate with had it not been for the learning I was able to partake in beyond high school.

My goals for the future - my goals for the future would consist of successfully completing the Social Services Program at NSCC so I have the credentials needed to become an Educational Assistant in the public school system in which I graduated from because when no one else would give me a chance my last outreach was a thirty minute drive from my home.

They were welcoming with open arms after my all terrain vehicle accident. They also supported me in every way imaginable, my assigned team from the children’s hospital in Halifax (IWK) even went to explain my frontal lobe brain injury to the teachers and students in the end when no one would allow me an opportunity to graduate they did and it meant the world to me.
Why Learning Changed My Life
Kirk Grady

Well let’s see, it all started when I was bullied in school by four boys in my class at Lawrencetown Consolidated School (now known as Lawrencetown Education Centre). We were in the late Ms. Proude’s class and they would call me names and push me into my classmate Tanya's desk. They would also beat me up or jump me from behind. Because of this, I ended up at the IWK Children’s Hospital and also being involved in the first IWK Telethon.

I was about nine back then with blonde hair and had to get one side of my head shaved and stapled which happened to be my fourth shunt operation. The bullying continued in grade five in Mrs. Trask’s class. That's when both Tanya and Brenda finally told the jerks in our class to leave me alone. Then it was off to Annapolis East Elementary. It escalated from there with other boys. It continued into high school, so I dropped out at seventeen.

If anyone who is in my position tries going back to school - do it - I sure did and it's going on eleven years now. My plans after graduation are to take the two-year journalism course at the NSCC Ivany Campus in Dartmouth. If you ever need advice from your campus counselor do it wisely best of luck. They can be very helpful!

In closing whatever your decision whether it’s going back to school I’d say break a leg. I’m sure glad that I did.
Learning changes lives, and I would like to tell you about my experiences.

I returned to learning about two years ago. I started going to the learning network to help me remember things I learned in high school and then to learn new things.

Learning has changed my life in many ways. I am able to focus on my future now. I have more confidence and I am better communicating. I am able to read more challenging books now, and I read to learn how to do new things and make new things.

Some people think that learning is bad or not fun, or I say, “Give it a chance!” You might be excited by the things you find out!

I have goals for my future now. I will continue to learn at my own speed with help from the learning network, and I will work toward getting a good job. With education I will make my life better. I am researching different careers, everything from massage therapy to building houses! Now that I know how to do the schoolwork and get the help I need. My future looks brighter.
I never got my grade 12, so I returned to learning so that I can work toward it. I know it will make a big difference in my life.

I already have more confidence now that I am learning again. I am happy and more positive, and I am glad to interact with people.

My goal for the future is to keep learning and to get a job and to get a job. I would like to work with children, elderly people or people with disabilities. By continuing to learn I know that I can go far.
I returned to school because now I have a chance to learn. I come from Ethiopia but lived in a Kenyan refugee camp for 21 years before coming to Canada on 29 September 2019. I didn't have a chance to go to school back then because I had to work and help my family. My parents didn't have a job, and I was the first born, so I had to work in order to provide my family and I with food. Life was not easy. I was just 12 years old when I started working, and I didn't even make enough money for anything else but food. For the past 29 years, I always wanted to go to school and now I am happy I have the opportunity.

Learning has changed my life. I can write, read, and fill out forms. Since I started studying for my GED, my English has improved. Now I can write better than before and understand the rules of English. Before I was not confident enough to read in front of people, but now I can, and I have learned so many words I didn't know before. Canada is different than where I came from. Here everything has to do with filling forms which I didn't do back home. Now I can fill forms by myself.

My goals for the future are going to NSCC to do Long Term Care and become a nurse. I love taking care of old people. Before my dad past, he became blind and very sick for four years. I always took care of him, and I want to help the elderly people because I know how it feels when you don't have anyone to help you. In the refugee camp, getting help from nurses is not easy because there weren't many available, and I saw many people die everyday. I want to be able to help people one day.
Everyone would love a fresh start. But it’s not always that easy. Some can get back up after failure, and some don’t do well with failure. I learned from my life lessons that we have no choice but to get back up and move on.

I have a criminal record and every time I applied for a job, they always wanted a record check. Few doors opened for me and didn’t know what to do or who to ask for help. The only jobs available to me were hard labour jobs. And even then, I was only permitted to use a wheelbarrow and shovel. I asked my boss if I could be an electrician apprentice; he told me no because he wanted me as a labourer. So, there was no moving up in this job. I tried everything to get him to change his mind; worked harder, even started doing more overtime. Things didn’t change. Here I was at a dead-end job. I couldn’t quit because I had no other way to pay my bills. I needed to decide to quit this job and go back to school or stay here and dig holes. I knew I was smarter than this; I wasn’t just muscle. I had a brain and I needed to use it.

In making my decision I thought about what was important to me, and where those values came from. My mother is still the biggest influence in my life because of what she did and what she taught me. She taught me to never refuse food to a person, no matter what walk of life they come from. Anyone who walked by the house; she would call them in to sit at the table and eat. She taught me never to hold a grudge, which didn’t always work, but I tried. She never ever complained.

There were eight of us and I was the youngest. What that meant was I got all my brothers’ hand me downs. And on my birthday, she always made my cake, even though everyone else got one from Smith’s Bakery on Agricola Street. Years later when I asked her why, she said “Well Darren, September always was a hard month for me. I never had the money for back-to-school, and of the eight of you guys, you were always the one that I thought would appreciate the home-made cake.” I get it now that she did everything in her power to make my special day special. I love her for that.

They say you can never stop learning. I wake up every day wanting to go to class, because I don’t know everything and there’s always something to learn in the program. It’s opened my eyes. I know now I can reach my goals. To be an electrician is
still on the table, but now I know I can reach higher with an education. Maybe I’ll be a counsellor for youth to share my story and show them they’re not alone.
I returned to learning because I want to inspire my family and my friends in the future that a person can return to learning at any age. In the country I came from, I didn't get a chance to reach or succeed in my goals because of the situations like paying school fees and other stuff. I remember when my parents had to go back to my original country (Congo), I was 10 years old and I decided to stay in Uganda, because my origin country has been at war since 1994. I was in Uganda as a refugee for 14 years which was not easy to live in the a country without parents or anyone who knows you. By then I started living with a Ugandan lady taking care of her baby so that she can pay me my school fees, food, shelter and clothes.

Even though my vision was to become a doctor I didn't succeed because of that tough situation. I didn't have any support.

When I reached Canada, as a country that cares about refugees, women, men and children, I decided to go back to school and learn so that I can succeed to my goal of becoming a doctor or nurse. Right now, I am learning and improving my English skills then I will apply to NSCC as well. By the way public places like libraries also care about improvement, learning and helping you achieve your goals. Thank you for that.

Learning has changed my life by knowing that something impossible can be possible. In the past I didn't have a dream that I could learn again or that I could return to school. But now I can see my vision, my dreams are coming true. It has improved my confidence and my life.
Both of my parents are deaf. My mom is deaf from birth, while my dad lost his hearing at 2 from an ear infection. At different points in your life you realize that there are ups and downs to growing up a “CODA” – “Child of Deaf Adult”.

A perk of learning sign language early on is how it improves your reading and writing skills. Signing with my parents everyday required me to spell words when learning what the signs were. If the TV was on and I wasn’t signing with a parent, I was reading the closed captioning on the screen.

As a CODA you grow up in a different community. My parents only had my sister and I and their deaf friends in Nova Scotia, so we spent lots of time going to deaf events where we could hear but didn’t need to speak the whole time. Your conversations are blunter and there is less small talk. It made it a little difficult to adjust socially to gatherings where people can hear.

Overall, it’s great to know a second language. It’s nice to be able to sign to help a deaf person while I’m out, or just have a conversation and pleasantly surprise them.

This year I decided to take a layoff from work to try and make a change from my current position. Coming back to classes to learn will help me earn my GED and can open so many doors for new opportunities in work.

Education wasn’t that important to me when I was younger, I only finished junior high and was fine with leaving it at that. I didn’t realize that without a high school diploma there would be jobs and opportunities I would miss out on. I had and am still at a decent paying job with benefits and haven’t strived for anything else. I have a daughter entering school this year and see now how much having my GED is essential to moving forward.

Before I came to class, I couldn’t even look at the GED book without getting overwhelmed at every subject. I thought I couldn’t learn. It has been 2 months since I have been coming to the GED prep classes a couple times a week, and with the help of the instructor so far, I have passed 4 tests out of 5.
Passing this last test for my GED certificate will change my life. Just being proud of myself for earning it is important and will allow me to seek new opportunities. Once I earn my GED, I know I want to go to NSCC next. There are so many courses I want to learn more about to see what I want to have as a career. Once I decide I’m going to jump on that course to keep my future on track.
“You never stop learning until you’re dead” and “Do it before you can’t.” That’s what I have been telling my children for years now.

At the age of fifty-one I was a very active woman. Not only was I a wife and mother, but I had been the independent business owner of Welsh’s Travel Services for twenty-two years. I played softball with twenty-year-olds and was one of the team’s strongest players.

One May morning in 2014 I woke up with an excruciating headache. My husband, Mark, took me to our local hospital. It was there that I was diagnosed with Temporal Arteritis. The pain was 24/7 but only on the right side of my body, from the tip of my head down to my foot. The pain was so severe that I couldn’t let my tongue touch my teeth. I had great difficulty speaking, walking, talking and getting dressed. This condition took over my life. I know what I wanted to say but I couldn’t form a sentence, not even an incomplete one. I could no longer dress myself, do my hair and walk properly. I had to close my business because I couldn’t work anymore.

Everything was moving fast, except for me. Within a week I had a medical team educating me on how to function with my new life. I was put on a lot of medications which, unfortunately, came with many side-effects. Mark was always by my side and we made a great new team. He became my full-time nurse, teacher, and most importantly, my advocate. I was seeing many doctors and the side-effects of this disease caused, more problems, more medications, more treatments and surgeries.

Six years have passed, and I still have daily challenges. I do know that I am cognitively better, and the excruciating pain is now down to a controllable level. The doctors told me that I will have these challenges for the rest of my life, so I look for opportunities to use my strengths. Mark is my greatest blessing and I am extremely grateful for him. Last December I saw an advertisement in the Chebucto News stating, “Free GED Classes in Spryfield”. I called the director, Denise, and we had a wonderful phone conversation. I met with Betty, the instructor, and we connected on many levels.

Classes started in January and my first day was awesome! I wasn’t nervous because everyone was so welcoming and supportive, the environment was calm and relaxing,
and my fellow students are mature, focused adults like me. When I got home, I started to cry happy tears for all my blessings. Being able to cognitively and physically function at this new level are two of my most precious gifts of all.

I haven’t written a test yet, but as of right now I feel I have already succeeded. Once I receive my GED certificate I will continue to learn and study to become a Death Doula...now that’s another story ... stay tuned!
My name is Krystina Latham. I am 26 years old and I am a mom of six kids. I returned back to school to get my grade 12 so I could better my life for myself and my family. I want to show my kids to never give up on their dreams and that you’re never too old to go to school. “I believe that you can always do it if you put your mind to it”. I have learned that you can always do it as long as you try. Everything I do is for my kids.

Learning has changed my life in so many ways. I went from writing a paragraph to writing an ESSAY! I can now help my kids with their homework and teach my fiancé what I learn every day. I can do anything as long as I work hard and keep showing myself, I CAN do this. I love to learn new things every day; and it feels so great to learn. I have learned how to communicate better with people and jobs that I apply for.

My goals for when I’m done at The Barrington Learning Centre is that I plan to go to the NSCC to get my ALP, then after that I plan to take a course for business so I can open up my reptile business within 5 years.

My future plans are to get my van for my kids so we can go places and do things as a family. I plan on saving money to buy a house and with taking my grade 12. I have learned how to budget and save money. I feel so much better knowing that I will have my grade 12, I will have my business, and I will be a homeowner. Things are starting to come together, and I know I can do this.

My soon to be husband is also getting his grade 12 too and I couldn’t be any more proud of him. We both plan to have our grade 12 within 2 years. I plan to keep learning and work hard because if you want anything you have to work hard.
Overcoming Challenges to Learn

Darlene Lutz

I am a 57-year-old woman from Windsor, NS. I have overcome a lot of medical issues to come back to get my education.

When I was born, the doctor told my parents that I had meningitis on the brain. The doctor also told my parents that I was “retarded.” That is the language they used back then. I couldn’t walk or talk until I was 4 years old.

When I went to school, I was in the “adjusted” class because of my learning disabilities. I was in Mr. Johnson’s class. I didn’t do much work. It was mostly things that helped us in living. I didn’t go to high school because I stayed home and helped my dad raise my younger sisters and my little brother.

Then I had my daughter Amanda and realized I needed to get my education. I had a teacher who came to my house to help me learn how to read and write to help me get my education. Mrs. Helliwell had the patience to stick by my side to start me on my journey to learn how to read and write.

In 1999 I was back to work and started to go to Hants Learning Network. I would go to work but go to classes when possible. I had Sandra Milbury and Miss Caldwell helping me along the way. I worked at the Exhibition and at Avon Valley Greenhouse until 2006.

I went to the Yarmouth hospital emergency department and they thought I was going to die. It was later on they found out I had Crohns disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and I was also diagnosed with pyoderma gangrenosum which is a rare skin disease. I found out all these health issues are because of me having meningitis as a baby.

As of today, I give credit to all the teachers that have helped me along my journey. Cathy Caldwell has been with me on this journey since the year 2000, and she never gave up on me. I learn something new everyday when I go to class. I feel that her not giving up on me has helped me a lot more than she will ever know. She means more to
me than just a teacher because she has guided me through things other than just schoolwork.

Today I am impressed with myself. I can help my grandkids with their reading and years ago I could not do that and that has been my goal to help them read. I now have books and everyday I sit and read with the kids. I never thought the day would come that I could do that. That is the biggest reason why I did this.

I have struggled for so many years with my learning disability and I have worked very hard to learn. Now I can help my grandchildren read books, which was my goal was all about. Thanks to Cathy for not giving up on me.
A Good Decision
Dale D. Kaizer
Western Halifax Community Learning Network

There have been many positive changes in my life, since my decision to further my education by attending the GED class. It has changed how I feel and think about everything. It has made a new man of me, with a new purpose, and a renewed zest for life.

My initial decision was motivated by my family, and my hope was that a GED diploma would help to get me back into the work force. But it has done much more for me, than this. Not all at once, but with each class my self-confidence increased, until my now believing, that all is possible. I had to overcome many challenges to make these changes in my life, like dealing with my financial limitations, and then excepting my physical limitations. On a personal note, I believe my greatest achievement is the respect I have earned from others, especially my family. But more importantly is the respect that I have regained for myself.

While taking the GED reading and writing course, I instantly recognized a love for writing, and realized with 100% certainty, that I wanted to be a writer. Also, my GED teacher and employment councillor have been a great help to me with my writing aspirations. So, I would like to conclude this article, with these words that I have written; “You can, teach an old dog new tricks, because this old dog is learning new tricks daily. A smart old dog never stops learning.”
Hello, Wonder Woman Here!
Anna Maria Slaunwhite

Hi! It's me. Is anyone out there? Hey, I am here to let you know that the work all of the tutors are doing for you, and for us, is amazing. We all learn at our own pace, and it may take some of us more time, but we will get to the goals that we all want. Right now, I am so excited about all there is for me to learn and explore, I cannot wait.

The reason I returned to learning is, I know that there is much more for me to learn about, and to get a better education. I want to learn as much as there is to learn about everything and anything that the tutors are willing to help teach me. What I am learning right now is so much to process but I know that I can do it, it just takes me more time to do so. Right now I am getting ready to write my first GED test and I am so nervous about it, because I am afraid that I will fail it, and that it will discourage me from going on with the rest of my learning. I so want to finish all of the testing, and then the world is my oyster.

I have so much that I wish I could do, and so much that I want to do. I wish to someday get a great job at one of the hospitals; the field that I would like is in the health department. Someday I would like to help as many people as I can, who are in need of help, like mental health and other issues. I would also like to work in a cancer research department to help as much as possible to come up with a cure for all kinds of cancer.

So someday I would like to get that break to do some good with the education that I am getting right now. I recently found out that I have ADHD, and my whole family had no clue, not even myself. When I was growing up, I always wanted to be a nurse or a doctor, a pediatrician to be exact. I love kids and want them to be healthy and grow up to be great people and do the same for others. We need more people out there that are more concerned about our planet and the health of others.
I’m a talker, not a writer but I know my story needs to be told.

I was a good, quiet student all through school, so I got ignored a lot. I struggled my whole academic life, never feeling I was good enough or smart enough. I got low marks because I couldn’t finish anything without a little more attention from my teachers. I have anxiety and that prevented me from handing in my work unless it was perfect.

I tried so hard to finish high school because I know I was supposed to. But that wasn’t the right environment for me. I started the GED class in 2016 to make a better life for my baby boy. I’ve had lots of ups and downs and another child, but I always keep coming back because I know I will achieve my goal. I don’t want to just pass the tests; I want to do as well as I know I can do.

Math is the last subject. I won’t book my test until I can get at least a 90% score. Then I’m going to find my Grade 9 math teacher and prove to her I didn’t deserve to be put in the lowest standard math class in high school.

I have been attending the GED class for around 4 years and I have studied under 3 teachers. Each one of them has taught me new and valuable skills.
My Learning Story
Jean Bukuru

My name is Jean Bukuru. I am from Burundi. I came to Canada in 2015. When I came to Canada, I didn't know English. I took English classes to learn the language. I learned how to write, how to read and making conversation. It wasn't easy to understand other people when they were speaking. While they were speaking, I got understanding.

I started this program in September 2019 at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library. I spend time borrowing books from the library. I like the dictionary because there are new words for me to learn. The tutors help me with writing paragraphs and reading comprehension even though it is challenging for me. I will need to get G.E.D. because I can apply NSCC I will need to have Diploma. I would like to learn how to be mechanic. Reading books it helps me to get my G.E.D. When I will get my G.E.D. I will be very proud. It will help me to get good job and to be educated.

To be literate is important for adults. Learning for adults is important because I can be self-sufficient, and I can enjoy reading stories. I spend thirty minutes reading three times a week when I am at home or at the library. I like reading about history and finding new words in the books. You can not be bored when you have a book.
I returned to learning because I need to learn math that is related to my apprenticeship. I am a fourth-year apprentice bricklayer. I need to study math for this trade. I have been studying for an exam. I wrote it last Saturday at NSCC Leeds Street in Halifax. This exam is for an interprovincial Red Seal certificate.

Paul, my tutor who was teaching me math, used to meet me at the North End library, every Wednesday at 6:15pm for two hours. Paul would teach me math that was in my Canadian Masonry Second Edition textbook.

Paul showed me some things and ways I didn’t know. All this knowledge did help me when I wrote the exam. The more I learned from Paul, the easier time I had studying my textbook.

Erica Butler at the library literacy program arranged for Paul to tutor me from September 2019 until last Wednesday. I had to and wanted to work all this time. Some days I would be very tired. I would have to make time to study. I still had housework such as laundry, usually on the weekends. I would buy groceries, work clothes, tools, etc., and prepare for the next work week.

I wanted enough time to study math formulas and to memorize math formulas. When I was writing the exam, I remembered what I was taught. This is the second time I wrote the exam. The exam was easier this time. The exam content was not the same as the first exam. I didn’t have a tutor when I wrote the first exam. I finished the exam before the allotted time.

Learning has an effect on everything I do. It is easier to get along with people, co-workers and neighbours.

My goal for the future is that I want to return to work in my trade. During the winter months there are a lot of layoffs. Cold weather is an additional cost for builders. They need to supply equipment, material and gear so that we can work through this time. Some of the Red Seal journeymen bricklayers work through winter, though not as much hours per week as they would work in spring, summer or fall.
I went to a safety meeting two months ago. The boss of the company Reddick Brothers said in spring we would be working full-out. This company has much work coming to them and me if they decide to hire me.

I could work for myself. I need to do research into business procedures. It could be simpler to go to Dalhousie University and take courses or stay with NSCC. They could have courses that have to do with business. One costs more than the other. I would talk to both when I have enough money, to know what they have to offer.
Journey to Learning
Mustafa Izzeldin
Halifax Community Learning Network

I am from Western Darfur State, Jenena Town. I lived east of Jenena Town. I was born in a small village; it is called Kasring. I moved to my Dad’s village, which is called Markuba, when I was two years old. I grew up in Markuba. I had good friends there. We played outdoor games. We had no toys and no indoor play areas. Sometimes we would go to my dad’s orchard. We would eat mangoes, guavas and oranges from the trees. We went home after we left the orchard. Often, we would go to a friend’s house. My friend’s mom was like a mother to me. They were beautiful and wonderful days.

I went to school until I was 14 years old. I was very happy then. I was thinking one day when I completed my education, I would return to help my village’s people get resources for a better life. But what happened in 2003? The war started in 2003 and I left school because the school was destroyed. Markuba was destroyed in 2003 by the war. Then we moved to Karinik and life was difficult. We lived in displacement camps. There were no houses and we built huts out of grass. There was very little food and no clean water. It was so cold, and we had no blankets. We were very scared because of the gunfire all around us. After six months, UNICEF came to Karinik. UNICEF helped us to get clean water, food, proper housing and medical help. In 2010, the government kicked out UNICEF. I lived two more years in Karinik. Then I moved to Israel. I stayed seven years in Israel. I worked in construction, hotels and the food industry. In 2019 I moved to Canada.

I never wanted to leave school and when I came to Canada, I had the opportunity to go back to school. Schooling is the single most significant aspect in the advancement of a nation. The uneducated person is living in darkness but doesn’t know. That encouraged me to attend classes to learn. I can get a good life, a good job, and also, I can easily communicate with others. It will be easier to use safety tools and study for WHMIS.

In the last five months I have been learning to read and write English. I attend classes at ISANS. I completed courses in WHMIS, first aid and fire safety. I did practice job interviews. I work part-time at Admiral Insurance. Now I attend English classes at ISANS. I go full time, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 3:00 pm, except Thursday
afternoons. That is when I do one-on-one tutoring at the library. I plan to continue my education. I want to get my grade 12 at the Adult Learning Program and then go to university. My dream will come true because of the learning opportunities at ISANS and the Halifax Community Learning Network. In my future goals, I want to become an international development expert and help people in underdeveloped countries.
Why did I return to learning?

This is a huge question, but I will try to write some reasons. First, knowledge is very important for me. Any kind of knowledge. Anyone should be full after eating a large or rich meal. But if you get some information you feel okay or you need more. I am from those people who like more knowledge. By the way, one of the reasons is my kids. I want to help my kids. My kids started learning a new language with a different strategy too.

How has learning changed my life?

What is the difference between driving your vehicle without lights, brakes, good tires in bad shape on a new highway? This is my feeling now. Life without education, and enough knowledge, is like driving a bad car on the highway. I came from a different community and I have a new life with a different style of life. Learning has changed my life as I now need to support my kids and give them good advice. I want to know how to build my kids’ knowledge too.

What are my goals for the future?

There are three clear goals right now. First, I want to improve my English. Second, I want to understand and know how to improve other skills which will help me to get a good job. Third, I may study high school when I find my understanding becomes better than now. Now I need to read a short message two or three times to get 50% from any message.

Tutoring is a good way for adults to learn. I think if I meet my tutor two or three times, it is more helpful than being in class part-time.

Thank you for supporting me.
Since I started class at the North End Public Library in September, I learned a whole lot of things. Such as, how to fix things, or put things together. Before, I was having trouble; now that I’m catching on, I’m finding better ways to do things.

Now, I can concentrate better. I have improved my writing and my spelling. I am proud of myself. Things are getting better for me. It gives me a better self image and image to everyone around. I’m impressed with myself. I’m seeing more clearly than before.

Things will be the way you want. It takes time and patience; and you have to work on it. Before you get better, you have to pay a lot of attention. Attention to yourself, to your work and your teacher, so you can pick up on it.

Your reading and writing and spelling are better. You are making an impact in your life. You are so much stronger than you think you are.

It is hard to learn things that you did not know before. So, don’t look at it like you can’t; you can. Look how far you’ve come. You’ve come a long way from where you were. Now that you’re doing a lot better and you are fine.

What makes you happy is when you do something that you couldn’t before. Look at you right now. What are you doing now that you couldn’t do before? It is impressive.

Live on and do good now. No matter what, you know that you can do it now. You can get around it. It is best to slow down, look, listen and understand. Think positive, not negative. We are all in the same boat. Don’t feel bad, be strong.

Learning is good, it helps put things together. I would like to improve my reading and writing, as well as learn more about carpentry and framing. I would like to be able to understand for myself when I’m writing and reading. I want to understand the meaning of more words, as well as become more familiar with numbers and fractions.
I want to benefit in life and respect for others. I want to be happy and to be able to get a job or go into some trade or course. To be able to drive a car, or some day have my own home. Learning is a dream that you can count on.

There are things we can learn about, such as different jobs. I’d like to work in cooking in a restaurant or working in a store, or on a bike.

Whatever you want, learning will help you with ideas. No more madness, all happy and success. Live your life to your knowledge and help your fellow men, women and children. We don’t know when we are going to have hard times. Just because we are doing good now doesn’t mean that things can’t go wrong, if you don’t pay attention to life.
Learning Can Really Change People’s Lives
Cody Moore

I have returned to school because I didn’t get my grade 12. I’ve learned now that without a grade 12 or some kind of education you can’t get a good job, which means you probably won’t get to far in life or at least not without a great struggle.

I left school when I shouldn’t have. I think I have paid the price. I for sure learned my lesson. Now I’m back to better myself and make me and my loved ones proud. I would say that my learning process compared from then to now is amazing. Back in high school, I couldn’t focus on anything. No one could teach me anything; maybe it was because I didn’t care, or they were trying to teach me in a way I didn’t understand.

All I know is that now I love being in school part time. I feel like my learning abilities have improved so much since I’ve been here, and I’ve learned so much in the little time I’ve been here. I’m really surprised! This is just a great place to be if you really want to learn - great teacher and awesome people. I’m happy I chose this school to come back to so I can get my education.

My goals for the future are that I do my best to get through school, get my GED, and then after that hopefully get out and find a good job that I will enjoy doing. I want to save my money, get a house, and be able to provide a good life for me and as well as for my beautiful little girl.