



***Celebrating Adult Learners' Week
April 2 – 8, 2017***

Literacy Changes Lives



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 April 2 – 8, 2017 as Adult Learners' Week in Nova Scotia.

LNS offered a number of skill 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. Shauna Gouthro, a learner at the Halifax Community 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.



Nova Scotia

Proclamation

International Adult Learners' Week

WHEREAS *Nova Scotians are joining together at events across the province to recognize the remarkable achievements of adult learners during Adult Learners' Week April 2nd to 8th; and*

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

WHEREAS *Lifelong learning has a significant impact on individuals, their families and communities, by providing personal empowerment, admirable examples for children and others to follow, and skills for jobs and further learning;*

THEREFORE I, Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of April 2nd to April 8th, 2017, as "International Adult Learners Week**" in the Province of Nova Scotia, and urge all citizens to observe this week and to be more fully aware of the importance of a lifetime full of learning in all aspects of their lives.**



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Stephen McNeil".

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

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Returning to Learning

Darlene Coulstring

Halifax Community Learning Network – Halifax Central Library

My name is Darlene. Because I didn't thrive in regular school, I believe I deserve a second chance at learning. I want to read, write and do basic math better than I once did. I'm interested in learning how to use a computer for playing my favourite games, going online and finding information.

Since I started going to the literacy program at the library, my skills have improved. I am more confident in my abilities, thanks to those wonderful teachers who volunteer their time every week. I am getting better at reading, spelling and writing stories. I can use a computer. Learning is plenty of work.

My tutors have given me valuable life skills, such as dealing with banks, sleazy landlords and how to budget my money. I can read my bank statement better than before, doing so without having someone helping me to understand it. I can also manage my money so that my bills get paid on time. It's a wonderful feeling of accomplishment at this stage of my life.

Learning is a wonderful experience that opens doors, making me want to learn more. At the library, I get treated with respect in a safe environment where I'm not judged in a negative way. The literacy program is the best!

Returning to School

Mariana Lazau

Halifax Community Learning Network

Education is important for all individuals. These days it is very difficult to be successful without education.

Returning to school takes a lot of time, strength and effort. For a better job or a higher rank in your job you need to upgrade your skills.

School is a good option that provides knowledge, skills and value and a chance to expand your horizons. It will help you in the future and will give you satisfaction for a better you.

For example, if you want to be an entrepreneur and open a small business, school has all varieties of programs that can teach you how to set up and have a start in the business and industry.

Besides the numerous courses, continuing schooling provides many additional ways to brighten your future.

Nowadays, the job market requires more education from applicants and their requirements are pushing individuals to get not one, but two, university or college diplomas.

With a great education you can achieve more in life and acquire the most opulent job.

Education can change our lives and reshape our future for the better. It enables you to reach any heights you desire and achieve your goals.

Everyday learning gives you a better understanding of yourself and what's around you.

Continuing to educate yourself will bring you remarkable success.

Education not only changes your life, but it is your reflection to pass on and inspire the younger generation. This will give you inner satisfaction and an outstanding result.

Learning is a life long journey and there is no limits to the things you can accomplish.

The things we are taught in school are the hallmark of the hard work of our teachers. They inspire us and have the best understanding, comprehension and compassion for their students.

They enlighten us with information that make our lives easier.

In contrast, the lack of education can have a negative impact on our life. Not completing your diploma or degree may prevent you from being successful in life and acquire a great career. Furthermore, our lives will change course when we stop procrastinating and decide to use the momentum and acquire a great career. This will lead to a work place that we are satisfied and content with. "The beginning is the most important part of the work." PLATO Education can lead to a profession that will generate high status in society, self-satisfaction and respect.

School will enrich your vocabulary and you are more eloquent and coherent in your speech and it can improve your writing skills. My goal is everyone else's goal.

Throughout education you can become a better version of yourself, a new you, a person that looks back in time and realize that the hard work of continuing education has paid off.

Returning to school your social life become more active, it gives you a good vibe and feels energetic again.

Education is the El-Dorado of an outstanding value, a treasure that no one can take from you. A desire that you have completed with faculty.

Bravo to all of us who have the courage to make a change.
Keep up the good work and never give up.

Learning for Life

Shauna Gouthro

Halifax Community Learning Network

"We're all searching for happiness. We're all leading lives that are different and yet the same."

- Anne Frank

This is why I want to learn.

I wish that I have what some people have -- their full education. I never had the chance to learn interesting, fun stuff when I was growing up. I need this to get on with my life. I want to make myself clear in speaking and writing. I'd also like to read better so I could read cookbooks, become a better cook and get a job in the cooking industry. I want to learn to draw manga or people, so I need to read books on drawing to understand more about perspective. Also, I would like to travel to different places to widen my education and experience. It would be good to learn about different cultures -- their lifestyle, their habits, their customs. For example, I love the natural tea from China, and I'd like to try food from different style restaurants. I'd like to be able to read and understand different languages. I'm interested, perhaps, in learning how to help people with health problems by reading books about health in the library. I love reading quotations (see above).

This is how I am trying to reach my goals.

I'm trying to get my reading to 100% by taking reading classes. I've read books about interesting people in Canadian history; for example, Emily Carr and Laura Secord. Also, I read about Anne Frank, about her childhood in the Netherlands during World War II. The war stopped her from having the future she wanted. But she wrote a beautiful book. So she's a good role model for young people who struggle with life experience. Maybe one day I'll write a book about my life. Another way to learn is to keep a journal. In it I have a list of new words, brainstorming webs, and made-up stories. I try to keep up with the news on Facebook and in the newspaper on-line.

I know that Literacy Changes Lives because I need to learn from my mistakes and correct my mistakes, to feel good about learning so I can go on with my education and my life.

Why I Am Back in School

Karen Isnor

Metro Works - Cunard Learning Program

I was asked to write a paper on why I am back in school. That is the big question. I am back in school because I need to get my diploma. I want to get into a school where I can learn a trade and have something I can work towards. Getting a job is important so I can have a better future for myself. A lot of jobs require you to have further education. When I was young and in school, it was very hard for me to learn things. I have some learning disabilities, and there were not many resources at the time to help me understand the work that was being taught. It is very frustrating for someone that has learning challenges to look at questions or read something and not understand them, when they look so easy. It is difficult for me at times. I find the best way for me to learn is if the questions are read out loud to me. I then seem to understand the questions and how the questions work. Even now when I am older, I find it hard to learn and understand, but I am getting lots of help in my class and at home even though at times it is frustrating, I find I am doing better, for which I am very thankful. For the past twenty three years, I have been a child care provider. And at this time I would like a different outlook in life.

Literacy Changes Lives

Wayne MacKenzie

Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton

Hello Readers,

I am writing this story to try and explain my lack of education and how that came to be and most importantly what I am doing to change it. When I grew up in the fifties and sixties, school was not a top priority. I made a real mess of school!

To start with I didn't like school, so a lot of times I didn't go. When I did go, I wouldn't pay attention. I didn't do the work at school and the only thing I took home for homework was me.

Besides at this time, you didn't need an education to get a job. There was lots of work around. You had the coal mines and the Sydney Steel plant. Back then we were told all you needed was a strong back and a weak mind. I had both.

A little later on down the road computers and technology appeared; I knew the gig was up. The world was changing and in order to live in today's world, I would need an education. You see back when I went to the store, everything was in ounces and pounds. Today it is in grams, millimeters and kilograms. When you would go for gasoline then, it was in gallons, today it is liters. Even our temperature is not Fahrenheit anymore, now it is Celsius. Who would have thought all of these changes would take place? I certainly didn't.

A friend of mine once asked me, if there was anything I regretted not doing in life. With a guilty feeling inside I replied yes, not getting an education. With that he suggested I go back to school. So I took his advice and here I am. He passed away last year.

I don't know what is going to happen with school down the road, but I do know this, I am going to give it my best shot. If I pass that is great, if I don't, life goes on. At least I tried. I only know that I am enjoying school and the path I chose this late in life. To be back in school with people who have lived all over Canada is wonderful. I am not only learning from school books that have opened my eyes to new things and places, but I am learning how people live all over the world.

By the grace of God, I am where I should be at this stage of my life and I am enjoying it very much. Life is great! How can one guy be so lucky?

How Learning Changed My Life

Karen Parkinson

Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton

As a 33 year old woman going back to school was one of the hardest things I have ever done. School for me as a child and teen was difficult. An unstable home life, constantly moving from one place to another and not knowing where the next meal was coming from made going to school awful. By the time I was in Grade 7, I had gone to 10 different schools. It was hard to make friends and I never knew what was going on from class to class. Teachers were impatient with me as I hid what was going on at home. I was told that I had learning disabilities and put into resource programs that didn't serve any purpose to me. I was always getting bullied by my peers and misunderstood by teachers. With severe depression and feeling alone in the world I knew at a young age that I didn't stand much of a chance in life. Pushed through the system knowing that I was not prepared for the world I dropped out of grade 12 with 3 months left to the school year at the age of 17. I knew I was never going to graduate with a grade 3 in reading, writing and math.

Fast forward to March of 2016, I was now a mom of two young boys faced with going back to school or getting a minimum wage job so that I could keep my children in day care. The thoughts that went through my head at that time were many. But the one thought that kept playing over and over in my mind was how would I ever tell my boys how important education is and how you can do anything you want in life if I wasn't willing to do it for myself?

In March of 2016, I met with someone from the Adult Learning Association who gave me a good idea about where I was at with my reading, writing, and math skills and I decided I would start attending class with the Association. The person that I met with became my teacher and she understood where I was coming from and what I was feeling, she made me feel at ease.

One year later, I feel that I can do anything I want to in life. My self-confidence has never been higher and I proudly tell my kids that mommy is going to school. They look at me with such pride. My future has never looked so bright. Going to back to school gave me the courage to work towards getting my driver's license, which I hope to have next month. It also has given me the courage to read to my boys before bed, to write knowing its worth reading. Pride is what I feel all the time now. I thank myself for taking the steps to be successful. But I thank my teacher too for giving me confidence and helping me that belief in myself. I don't think I would be here if she wasn't the person she is. She is kind and caring and she pushes me to do the best I can do and to be the best I can be. I now own my future and will never look to my past.

The Reason I am Here at School

Melissa Scott

Shelburne County Learning Network

I returned to school because even though I have Grade 12, I.P.P. I have been struggling with reading and writing all my life. In school I got behind. My mom kept asking for help but, they just passed me through. It was hard for me to do the work. Someone would go in the class to help me with my work but they did my work for me. Kids made fun of me because I had to have help and treated me differently.

In high school I still could not read or write so I couldn't understand. I thought about quitting, but I how could I get a job?

My mom would go to the school for meetings and would hear promises of help but programs never got started. Once I was asked to read aloud in front of the class. I stood at the front and struggled to read. My classmates tried to help by yelling words at me. I was completely humiliated.

I graduated but had no idea how to live my life. I had no one to turn to. My parents were not strong readers either. I kept thinking, "What am I going to do?" I was depressed and had anxiety around other people.

For the next few years I had jobs that paid very little and had a hard time. At 25 I had my daughter and I am raising her on my own. When my daughter started school I realized that I needed to learn to read and write too. I couldn't understand her work to help her. I needed to go back to school for us! It was hard for me to go back to school because of how I feel about myself. I wondered if I would be judged. My teachers are helping so much here and I am learning to read and write. I am learning to get through my fears and anxiety by meeting new people.

School has helped me to look after my mental health and get the support I need. I am working with an Integrative Health Coach to help with mental, physical and spiritual health. Krista helps me feel better about myself by setting goals with me that help me to stay on track. She gives me ways to cope and help myself. Even though I hope I never run into any old classmates because of my embarrassing past, I hope with coming to the Learning Center I will get past that as I keep working on myself. I know that I can tell the teachers when I have problems and they will help.

Going back to school means, I can accomplish my goals; like being able to read and write, understand notes from my daughter's school and reading to her. I plan to upgrade my grade 12, get my driver's license, and go to NSCC to become a CCA. I believe I can do this with all of the support I have.

My Journey

Marsha Bent Roberts

Dartmouth Learning Network

As a teenager I dropped out of school to work my parents couldn't afford to send me to school it was hard because I wanted to finish high school and to transition in nursing school to become midwife. I became a mother of my first child years passed and still didn't get the chance to go back to school got married became a full-time housewife working taking care of children. When I decided to come to Canada I know this was my chance because everything was different you have to had an education to get a good job which I didn't have so I learn about Dartmouth Learning Network and the GED and I decide to go back to school it as good feeling my hopes were high I couldn't wait to get started I was excited that I was finally going to get the education I have always wanted I was not nervous. Making up for lost times the path from high school to college isn't always a straight line many times and that route we detoured by working family commitments making the decision to return to school can be life changing experience am motivated everyday it's an awesome experience coming to Dartmouth learning Network I think for me it was mostly about challenging myself and furthering my education it's nice to make more money to me it was never about money but education I think that now is the for me when all my children are grown up I'm going to school to finish what I have started leaving things undone is the worst kind of regret I have put off school for too long. Myself in five years I see myself in as register nurse I want to excellent in my position I have high expectation to me success means to have a goal plan the steps to achieve the goals implement the plan and finally achieve the goals success mean to achieve goals I have set for myself.

My Learning Story

Bryan MacKenzie

Dartmouth Learning Network

My name is Bryan MacKenzie and this is my story I started back to classes to brighten up my future and also to gain some knowledge, I've been out of classes for many years now so I'd like to relearn what I've forgot over the years and to get a better understanding of what life throws my way.

I also started back to get a higher level of education and prepare for my GED so hopefully in the future a job with a retirement plan won't be so hard to get. I also didn't have much of a schedule while away from school so now I feel like I got in touch with all that and have a set personal schedule.

How did coming back to learning change my life? That's quite a question and a loaded question with many possible answers but I'd say now I am working towards a GED to better myself towards the future, I've been information and gaining much needed knowledge to achieve one of my goals of gaining my GED. I'd like to continue gaining information so I can upgrade my education to a higher level and to gain much needed structure in my life that will help me out a lot in the future with whatever I plan on doing with my future endeavors.

I always planned to have a healthy and bright future and coming back has started that journey for me that's another reason I feel like many things have changed and its definitely changing my future towards the success that I was aiming for to have.

Another reason I feel this journey of coming back to regular classes is it gave me my passion back to learn what has been forgotten and get back the knowledge I once had that went away after years of not being in class.

What are my goals in the future? I am a man with many goals in life and coming back to classes for learning and trying to accomplish getting my GED and higher level of education which I could say I needed to do and was much needed to happen.

Some of my goals would be to gain that higher level of education and move on to bigger and better thing in my future like a job with a retirement plan for when I get older and maybe can't do the work that I do as a younger man with a lot of drive.

More goals would be to accomplish gaining my GED and gain that career I've wanted all my life also to have a better understanding of life. I always want a brighter future with a good job, loads of knowledge and better understanding so I can carry a better intelligent conversation with other people I may encounter on my way to success from coming back to classes for better learning.

I am Bryan MacKenzie and this is my learning story, hope you enjoyed reading!!

Returning to Learning

John Noseworthy

Dartmouth Literacy Network

I returned to learning because I have spent most of my life learning all the wrong ways; cheating and lying to gain knowledge I did not retain. Most of my school years I passed only because I used to sit by the smart kids and cheat. When I tried to do it myself I usually failed, so I guess I told myself that it was the only way.

I never really tried to ask for help, whether from a teacher, other students or my peers. I guess I was just too embarrassed and didn't want people to think I was stupid, so I went on through high school cheating on tests and exams.

I am now 42 years old and went back to school for my Pipefitting/Steam Fitting which changed the way I think about things and learning. I paid attention and listened to what I was told by my teachers and did what I supposed to do. After all them years wasted in school, now I listened, asked questions and reached out for help when I needed - it to the teacher, classmates and loved ones. I was not stupid after all. I was not only learning things about my trade, but I was retaining everything I was taught. It was awesome! I was smart and I could do it after all. I am now employed at the Irving Shipyards in a two-year pipefitting/steam fitting job which is awesome. I love my job and am learning new things every day. I am also attending some adult upgrading two days a week which is awesome. I am now learning all the things I missed in my school years when I was cheating and lying to get by. I am going to get my third and fourth year Red-Seal Pipefitting/Steam Fitting papers. I am hoping in my future to be a supervisor, maybe a superintendent or manager even.

My Learning Story

Paul Whynacht

Halifax Community Learning Network – Halifax Central Library

I wanted to learn to read and write just to feel better about myself. I was 18 years old doing electrical work. I quit my job because I couldn't move forward. In order to get a certificate, I would have to read and write to do tests. I only had grade 8, and you needed grade 10 or 11 to go to Community College. So I took jobs that I wouldn't have to read and write.

I can build a house, and do the electrical work and plumbing. I can also do stone work (walk ways and walls). Besides that, I can do mechanical work (brakes, motors, transmission, etc.), and I could almost say that I am a forestry technician. I have also tried a fishing career (sword fishing, longline, went North to fish drag) on many different boats (scallop fishing in Digby Neck also went off shore on Grand Banks). One of my favourite jobs was when I started doing cement work. It was at the Old Bridge Water Hospital. When I started, I got x-amount of money, and then I got a raise three weeks in a row. And then I got to be second-in-command. I was Supervisor over 16 men and enjoyed every day. We tore all the plumbing out and the electrical wires. We repaired all the floors and roof. Besides that, we filled the elevator shaft. Our job was pretty well almost done, my boss went back to Toronto. I didn't apply for another job like that. Because I didn't have the education, most people wouldn't hire me. And that's why I started my own business doing my own stone work. And these jobs you didn't have to know how to read and write.

I returned to learning because I couldn't read and write the simplest things, for example reading a kid's story book, cook book and reading the simplest instructions to putting something together. Also, highway signs that say people, places, and things. If you would have to do a test for anything to ask someone to read for you is very degrading and embarrassing. Recently, I have taken on a few jobs outside the city. I got directions on how to get to and from the jobs. So I got on the bus, I gave my directions to the first bus driver, who was inconsiderate and rude. When I got on the other two buses, the bus drivers were very understanding and helpful. Because of this I made it to my other jobs, and when I finished at the end of the day, I made it home.

My Story So Far

Abubakar Adam Ismail

Halifax Community Learning Network – Halifax Central Library

My name is Abubakar. I'm from Sudan western region Darfur. I was born in small village Kharaiya. I attended school there while there was conflict in the region. The Sudanese army attacked civilian villages, therefore, we were forced to leave our village. Then we were moved to town, and establish there from 2003 to 2010 in the interior displacement camp. I attended Khalid school there, but I did not complete high school. Because the government army was kidnapping young people, it was difficult to go to school. Then I decided to leave my country when I was 23 years old, and I traveled to Chad. There was also not safe, and I decided to travel again on to find a safe country. I crossed many countries looking for peace. Nigeria, Benin, Togo, at finally I went to Ghana in July, 2010, and there I also faced many difficult conditions. I did not speak Ghanaian languages. It was not easy to communicate with native people, but I was speaking little English, and I registered in international organization office, looking for help. They sent me to a refugee camp 600 km from the capital city. There were few job opportunities, and even organizations did not provide any assistance. It was a bad situation, sometimes I went to the ocean for fishing, and sometimes to the forest for cutting trees. I also wrote many letters to European embassies and organizations for looking assistance. I spent 4.5 years, and I got approval from the Canadian government on February 2015. I came to Canada on April, 2015 to Halifax. When I came here everything became new for me, and I started building a new life. I went to the ISANS office and took a life skills course and a Halifax transportation course. One month later I did a language assessment at the Quinpool road office. I went to the Dartmouth community centre to study English for two weeks while I studied level four English. I decided to join The Cunard Learning Centre. My goal is to finish ALP level three, the get my high school diploma at community college. And then I can explore my career choices at NSCC. It's been long journey. I am determined to get my education and find a rewarding career.

Thanking God for Life

Josephine Smith

Halifax Community Learning Network – Halifax Central Library

It's almost mid-day and my eyes are just opening to see the bright sun coming through my window. The first thing that comes to my mind is to thank the Lord for the new day of life given to me, and for caring for me through the night. I used to take life for granted but as I look around me I have so much to thank the Lord for every day. Even though I didn't realize before, all the little things in life are important. I didn't really know that until I didn't have the opportunity to do or have some of those little things any more.

I get out of bed and stretch a little bit. My back is hurting as usual, so I sit in the living room until my back doesn't hurt any more. After that I go to the dining room and start praying and reading my scriptures for the day. Praying is one of the most important things in my life. It helps me to stay strong and keep smiling even though I am sick and can't go out too much.

Sometimes I complain about my situation, but then I realize that I am blessed and I need to be thankful for that, because there are a lot of other people that are in worse situations and they are still smiling and going through life with the help of God.

I miss going to church and listening to the helpful messages that the reverend or pastors have for the church each Sunday. Singing hymns with all the people that I meet there gives me a great feeling. Sharing those feelings, shaking hands and smiles with all the people in church even though I don't know what they are going through in life, is even better. Faith is to believe in something even though you can't see it, but you know that it's true. I have faith that my Lord is going to help me heal my body and allow me to do all the things that I used to do before getting sick, like go out with the good friends that God gave me the opportunity to meet in my life. God also gave me the opportunity to go to the learning center program so I could keep learning how to write, read, spell and many other abilities that I didn't realize I had the capability to do. I feel that I would have never achieved alone all the things that I have done without God's blessings and guardians, because I consider myself a shy person and God has been a great support in my life.

Life is an uncertain thing, and nobody knows what tomorrow is going to bring, only God knows all the things. He knows all the things we are going to do even though we haven't done them yet. He knows what is best for each one of us, and he takes care of us all the time because he never sleeps.