



Celebrating Adult Learners' Week 2012
March 24 – April 1

New Skills, New Confidence
Contest Submissions



Literacy Nova Scotia acknowledges and thanks the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills for their support.

Produced by Literacy Nova Scotia

Introduction

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's International Adult Learners' Week (IALW) is an annual celebration of lifelong learning. It is the highlight of Literacy Nova Scotia's year and for the past five years it has been celebrated with a contest and a reception.

The contest was a culmination of six writing workshops conducted for Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) by Jenni Blackmore; nearly 100 learners participated in the workshops held in Windsor, Barrington, Sydney, Halifax, New Glasgow, and New Harbour. The workshop participants, as well as learners from other adult learning including English as a Second Language, seniors and workplace/workforce programs were invited to enter the contest. LNS received 67 submissions and are very pleased to share them.

The 2012 contest winners are:

- ◆ Joanna Bisson – Workplace / Workforce
- ◆ Yodit Matewos – ESL, Seniors' Literacy & Family Literacy
- ◆ Naomi Walker – Community-based, Levels I & II
- ◆ Simone Beaudoin – Adult High School, NSCC, & Community-based, Levels III & IV

The four winners of the contest were honoured at a reception held on March 26th at the Westin Nova Scotian in Halifax. The winners read from their submissions; Darrell Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia and Marilyn More, Minister of Labour and Advanced Education attended and were presented with copies of the writings. Premier Dexter and Minister More congratulated the winners and all adult learners for their determination and commitment. Premier Dexter read the Adult Learners' Week Proclamation, ([LINK](#))

All of the submissions received for the contest are published in this booklet. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all who shared their stories and enthusiasm they showed for adult learning. These writings demonstrate the new skills and confidence to be gained from learning opportunities and will inspire others for years to come.



Nova Scotia

Proclamation

International Adult Learners' Week

WHEREAS *Nova Scotians are celebrating International Adult Learners' Week from March 24th to April 1st, in particular, the achievements of adult learners and the organizations that support them; and*

WHEREAS *learning is the foundation for how we continue to grow in all aspects of our lives and Adult Learners' Week raises awareness of the tremendous 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 for individuals and those around them at home and in their communities, while helping Nova Scotians be better prepared to seize the economic opportunities of today and tomorrow;*

THEREFORE *I, Darrell E. Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of March 24th - April 1st, 2012, to be "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 blue ink that reads 'Darrell E. Dexter'.

Darrell E. Dexter, Q.C., M.L.A.
Premier of Nova Scotia

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

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KNOCKING

Joanna Bisson, Adult Learning GAP Program
Antigonish County Adult Learning Association

Knocking on the doors
Pounding on the floors
I offer experience
I offer skills

I've worked before
But the doors aren't open
And the pavement is cold

I've been
Knocking
Knocking
Knocking on so many doors

But I need re-training
I need new skills
I need employment

Then ACALA opened its doors
And I got re-training
I got new skills
I'll get employment

But I won't just knock
Knock on the doors
I won't just pound
Pound on the floors

I'll walk in accomplished
I'll leave with the job
The job that promises more

And that will be
Enough of knock
Knocking on the doors

And no more pound
Pounding on the floors

Education

Yodit Matewos – Cunard Learning Centre

My name is Yodit Matewos. I came to Canada in 2004. My childhood education was not good. The education system was bad because we started to learn English in grade 6, which is bad. In Canada my English is getting better; I can write and read. I still have writing problems but it is getting better since I started at Cunard Learning Center. When I was in school back home, I was not a good student because English was hard. I am not happy when I remember my childhood education. It was a waste of time for many years.

In 2000, my country's situation was very bad and I went to Kenya. I lived in Kenya for 4 years. In Kenya I didn't get a chance to go to school. In 2004, I came to Canada. After I came to Canada I started to work in housekeeping. At that time, finding work without English was very exciting for me but after a while it was depressing. I couldn't communicate with anyone and I didn't understand what my supervisor said. It was bad and really depressing as the years passed. Another thing that was depressing for me was when I had to ask people to help me fill out a form.

In 2010, I heard about Cunard. I started right away. I really liked it because many things came very easily. Now I can fill a form and applications. I am so happy and I always say, "Thank God for Cunard." I have a lot of confidence when I am speaking now. Before I was afraid to speak because I didn't know English and wasn't confident. My teachers help my life become easy. I have a daughter in grade 1 at school. She needs help from me so I can help her now. I have a goal to get my high school diploma and take a course in nursing. I can do that and have confidence in myself. Finally, I want say thank you to the teachers at Cunard Learning Center.

Learning Starts Here

Naomi Walker – Western HRM Learning Network

As a young child, as well as an early teen, the aspiration to excel in my schooling was never there. Now as a part of the Adult Learning Program, I find myself inspired to reach my full potential. Every school morning, I find myself eager and motivated to get to school and begin my assignments for that day. This program has helped me formulate positive attitudes toward schooling for my children, as well as assisted in my own personal goal development. With encouragement from my teachers, for the first time in my life, I truly believe that with a little hard work and dedication I can soar to heights I did not think I could attain. I have finally reached a secure position in my life where it is heading in a positive direction, and I can finally be confident in myself.

Since beginning my program I have been covering a wide variety of subjects including History, Math and English. I am also looking forward to Science and Geography that are scheduled to come in the future. I really enjoy my History lessons allowing me to explore other country's culture, traditions and even their religious practices. My lessons have also enlightened me in both the past and current events of Canada. Alongside of my classroom studies I have also begun a computer skills upgrading course. In a tech-savvy society, this course has taught me valuable skills including, but not limited to: Microsoft Word, how to prepare Power Point presentations, and Excel. Computer class has also presented the opportunity to experiment with Toronto Stock Exchange, using simulation type activity and each day we determine the increased or decreased of our individual stock.

At the age of fifteen, I made the unfortunate decision to leave the public educational system, ultimately cutting my learning journey much too short. My Junior High days were filled with no ambition to attend classes and the inability to grasp the lessons my teachers were trying to teach me, when I did attend on the rare occasion. I eventually lost interest in my education completely and turned to a lifestyle that strayed far from the school doors. Now, here I stand at the age of twenty-eight, a proud mother of an eight year-old daughter and a three year-old son, with a grade nine education. Finally faced with the looming question of, "where to go from here" and "what's in the world for me?" my attention was directed to the GED support course at the Lakeside Community Center for Adult Learning. As I investigated further into the details of this particular course, I found out they offer flexible schedule accompanied with one on one assistance with an experienced teacher.

My whole life I have lived with people telling me I would never amount to anything and that my goals and desires are nothing but smothered dreams that will never come true. Today I stand as a strong, educated, and empowered female no longer bound by the limitations of no education.

My Learning Experiences

Simone Beaudoin – Chignecto Central Adult High School, Amherst

Like most good stories, I shall start mine at the beginning.

I was seventeen when I dropped out of my third year of high school. I had come to the decision that I needed to work to be able to pay rent and buy groceries, as I couldn't be dependent upon my mother forever. For the next seven years of my life that is what I did, always thinking in the back of my mind that I wanted and needed to finish my high school education if I wanted to better my life.

In April 2011, my partner and I, along with our two small children moved from British Columbia to Amherst, Nova Scotia where my partner had decided to start a construction business with his cousin, who lives here. When we moved here, I was very unhappy; having left my friends, my family and my job behind. There wasn't much here for me and I was having trouble finding a job. One day, while talking to a friend, I shared with her how badly I wanted to go back to school but I couldn't afford to put my kids in daycare. That's when she told me about the Community Resource Center (CRC), that would fund my children's daycare so I could finish high school. By September, I was attending the Chignecto Central Adult High School (CCAHS). Since then, I have learned to create PowerPoint presentations, Excel spreadsheets, graphs, business letters and many other useful computer skills; all of which are extremely valued in the business world and will help me become more employable. I've learned about the Earth, why it is important to study it and how everything is interconnected and interdependent upon each other. I have been accepted into the Co-operative Education program, which has allowed me to successfully obtain my First Aid/CPR Level C and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) certificates, improved my interview skills and secured a Co-op placement with the Amherst Daily Newspaper. This will be a great experience for me; as writing is my passion.

However, what I've enjoyed learning about the most, is myself. Like I mentioned earlier, I was deeply unhappy when I moved here and school became my saving grace. In the past seven months, I've realized that I can excel at anything I attempt, so long as I put forth the effort. As long as I do my best, keep pushing myself and keep focused, I can attain my dream of becoming a writer. I have always loved reading and enjoyed writing my own short stories. When I obtain my Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults in June of this year, I would like to attend Mount Allison University, where I will enter the Creative Writing program, which will allow me to build on my English skills. I know I can do this. I have proven to myself that I am smarter than I give myself credit for, whereas prior to returning to school, I was continuously doubting my abilities and in general being my own worst critic.

Thanks to Chignecto Central Adult High School, I now have the confidence to strive towards my goals. They *are* attainable!

A Storied SHORT Story

Gary Wright – Options Work Activity Program

As I remember, I went to adult training in the Valley, but I found that the clientele were too young and immature, and felt that I was out of place and unwelcome. I moved to the city, after being placed in the Burnside Rehab for about eight months and settled into an apartment in Dartmouth.

I have always had a great desire to restore my dignity, by supporting myself in all my endeavours. The only way possible is to have gainful employment in whatever field that might be, within the city.

Rather than being on pension and relying on government handouts, I realized that I needed job. The major problem I have is the gaping hole in my resume resulting from lack of work. So, in talking to a friend, Tom, who recognized me on the street, I was informed of this program he was attending.

He called the school Options Work Activity Program, and spoke of it very highly. He made it clear that it was not for everyone. Only those who have physical or mental barriers, resulting in chronic unemployment, can apply with the help of your social worker or other professional involved in your care. That was fine with me, and seemed like a perfect solution to getting out the rut I was in.

So my caseworker arranged a meeting with the intake coordinator, who gave me a test and said she would be in touch with me, in a few days, whether or not I was accepted. A week went by and the coordinator finally called and informed me that I was indeed accepted. That was good news, even though I was involved with an art group at the “Veith House”, I felt I needed something more concrete in the form of a steady occupation.

I started school on a Thursday with more testing, which continued until Friday, if you needed more time. The testing being completed, we were given upgrading classes in the morning, with work options, on a rotating basis throughout the following week.

Come Friday, we were to choose a work option we would like to train in, based on the previous week's tryout. I chose the Bakery Option, as it was mostly assembly line work, with a good team work aspect, as well.

Options chosen, we were now in Phase One of our training. With the academics in the morning, the actual work was in the afternoon and was very fulfilling, having something new to do every day and interesting characters to deal with. Since it was early afternoon, most of the bakery's production was complete, we were mainly assigned to clean-up, which was fine for me, as it gave me a chance to know the people and layout of the bakery.

As time went on, there seemed to be a functional team developing and work seemed easier and more productive. The work continued, with some participants dropping out or switching to other options, and slipped into second gear and Phase Two with nary a hiccup.

Little change in Phase Two, except for increased emphasis on production and changing of schedule, work option in the morning, upgrading in the afternoon. The academics remained the same with good balance between the two.

As of this writing the experience has been gratifying-
We shall see what the future holds...

What Do You Think About Cunard Learning Centre?

Sara K-Homayouni – Cunard Learning Centre

Have you ever seen when a blind person wants cross the street and he needs to have a stick? Somehow it's necessary to hear a sound and that helps him notice when it is his turn to cross the street or if someone grabs his hand, they can easily take him across the street. This illustration shows that a helper can play a role at Cunard Learning Center. It makes you have more knowledge about yourself and the world around you.

When I decided to come to Cunard, something inside of me told me that finally, after several years, I found my way and that encouraged me to come to this place. That was like the sound of thunder that happened to me. It made my mind and body more active. It helped me reach my goal; I should have started this program many years ago.

I appreciate another organization called Options; that is what led me to this place. Ever since I started this program it has made me live with hope and the trust in myself to continue on this road. Improving my writing and reading skills are important and when I can read or write better than before, it will bring a new world to me. I can have more enjoyment in life and more opportunities. That has very big benefits and adventure in my life.

When you have the skills to read and write, it is like a torch that you carry with you. You can use it in the darkest street and it's the flame that helps you make your way brighter than ever before. I would like to thank the teachers at Cunard Learning Center for helping me to reaching my goals.

Achieving Pride

Rayburne Whynot – Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I am sixty years of age and I have lived a good life. When planning for my retirement I thought I would like to further my education. So three years before I actually retired I signed up with the Adult Learning Network in Bridgewater. There, I have completed Level Two, but my grammar skills weren't up to the level they should have been; this is a weak point for me. With the help of the network I am doing better with grammar.

Last year I was invited to attend a Literacy Nova Scotia workshop to learn about the Nine Essential Tools for the workplace. Along with these two opportunities, I gained some extra skills to help me with the volunteer groups I am involved in.

I am now chairperson of the Bull Run Trail Association. With better skills, I now make up my monthly agenda for the meetings, as well as organize work committees to keep the trails in good shape for the users. Also, I rejoined the Italy Cross, Middlewood, and District Fire Department. There, the members nominated me for their project manager of the new fire department they are building this spring. Some of my responsibilities include talking with the contractors, and reporting at the month's end to the committee members to make sure everything is going smoothly. These two positions require a lot of writing, communicating with others, and working with numbers. Every day I use the nine essential skills, whether it's at the learning network or with my volunteer groups.

I feel confident that by continuing on with my learning, I can achieve and fulfill my future endeavours. This gives me a new sense of pride in my life.

New Skills, New Confidence

Karen Smith - ALP, NSCC Pictou Campus

When I was a young girl, my dream was to be a nurse, but when I left school with only my grade ten education, I knew I was turning my back on that dream. Looking back, I can now see that it was my own insecurities that caused that decision, feeling like I never fit in and feeling that I did not have enough support or encouragement. Within a few years, I knew that I had made the wrong decision, and I promised myself that I would someday get back to school and eventually realize my nursing dream. It seemed that every time I tried to get back, life got in the way. Now married, I had become the second income that most families have come to rely on, and it just never seemed to be the appropriate time. Through all the ups and downs, I never forgot the promise I made to myself.

By 2001, my aunt was in failing health and I devoted the next nine years to her and her well-being, a decision I have never regretted. When she passed away in August, 2010, I now had to decide in which direction my life would go. On February 15, 2011, I started in the ALP at NSCC, Pictou Campus. I was never more frightened than I was on that first day. I stood staring down the hallway, saying to myself, "Karen, what were you thinking coming back to school after all these years?" I took a deep breath and continued on to my first class. Each class I had that day, renewed my love of learning.

After my third day of school had ended, I received the news that my father was diagnosed with inoperable cancer. It was decision time. Do I stay in school, or do I once again put it off, in case my father needs me? When the initial shock wore off, I knew I wouldn't be helping my father by quitting; after all, he was very proud of me for having the courage to follow my dreams after all this time.

There were many times that I would get frustrated, and question myself and my abilities, but I soon started to have those Ah- Ha moments and I knew everything was starting to come together. The more knowledge I gained, the more I wanted. I was just so grateful to have this opportunity to continue my learning that I just couldn't get enough. For the first time in a very long time, I was incredibly proud of myself, and I was amazed by the high marks I was achieving. School renewed my faith in myself and gave my self-confidence a much needed boost. It taught me lessons in perseverance and determination. Most importantly, it gave me the skills and confidence I needed to write the most important piece of writing I'll ever be required to do, my father's eulogy.

My journey may not have been as successful if it wasn't for the overwhelming support I received from my faculty, and my fellow students. It made a huge difference knowing that they believed in me, and it made me believe in myself. I was truly blessed to have met all of these wonderful people and to have had this opportunity to share with them.

My Learning Journey

Laima Edelenbos – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

I started to attend the Adult Learning Association class in New Waterford, Nova Scotia in November 2011. This makes me feel better about myself. I am enjoying it very much!

I went to high school in Lithuania, and I have university. But, my English language skills are not very good and I want to improve them. That's the big reason why I am going to school, but it is not the only reason. I would also like to be an influence to others in my community. I would like to meet new friends as well. I think that learning in this school is giving me all kinds of skills and they will help me to find a job so I can support myself.

I enjoy the warm, friendly atmosphere in my class. I am working on my English readings, Grammar, Math and Social Studies. The teacher and other students help me sincerely when I need it. I have started to read the local newspaper, the Cape Breton Post and it helps me to be informed and engaged with citizens of our community. This helps to improve my English too.

I enjoy going to workshops in other communities like Sydney and Glace Bay. I have started to understand more about financial literacy, bettering my writing skills, and how to apply for a job. With all of my new skills, living in a new country doesn't seem so scary now!

Learning

Paul Ochalla – Cunard Learning Centre

I am Paul Ochalla. I am from Sudan. I came to Canada a few years ago as a landed immigrant. Now I am a Canadian citizen. I have been trying to go to school but was told so many times that I have problem with English, so I want to learn English as a second language. When I was done I tried to go to college but again I was told I can't do it because my English is not good. I have a learning disability that they did not know about it until a good citizen saw that my problem was more the English; I have a learning problem. She said that I think your problem is not only English and you need some help.

Now I am a student at Cunard Learning Centre. Yes, I like it and I am learning a lot which I was looking for, for a long time. I have attended Spell Read and am now a student at Cunard Learning Center and I have been working to improve my spelling and reading. This has helped me to see the light and to make the progress that I could not see before I started the program. It is good and I think it will give hope to many people who have had problems for many years. I can see that it has helped but I don't know about other people. Since I came to this country, I have been doing a lot of programs and a lot of school. I have learned a lot at Cunard Learning Center and I hope to learn more.

Studying at Cunard

Rahimeh Akbari – Cunard Learning Centre

Hi, I'm a student in Level Two ESL at Cunard Learning Center; I would like to write about my experience in school. I really like this program. It helps and encourages adults to improve their skills at math, science, geography, social studies, history and computer.

Many of us could not go to school, like me, when we were young. I grew up in a foreign country and at that time it did not accept immigrant's children in school. I learned basic skills of writing and reading in my language from my father at home.

I came to Canada four years ago with my husband and my three children. In Canada, I found the best opportunity to study. This is all I ever wanted. I started to study in Level One at Cunard Learning Center. I finished Level One in eight months and now I'm studying in Level Two ESL at Cunard Learning Center. I'm studying many skills and learning more about our world. Cunard Learning Center helps me to improve my English and my ability to communicate for NSCC. I think many adult learners really need this program to be successful in their lives. People can like me, and many other students who started from here, are studying at Community College and University to reach their goals. I am really appreciating this program. Thank you.

Education

Rukhsora Sangova – Cunard Learning Centre

My name is Rukhsora Sangova. My childhood education was very good. The school system was very hard but I got used to it. I started school in 1977 and finished in 1987 in my home country. When I completed grade ten, I got my high school diploma. Then, I went to the Pedagogical College to continue my education. In 1991 I finished the college and I got my diploma as a home economics teacher. Twenty-two years later, I came to Canada on August 28, 2005.

Since I came to Canada, I started an English course at ISIS. I was studying at ISIS for two years. Then, I decided to continue my education at Cunard Learning Center. In July 2011, I came to Cunard Learning Center. Now, I am in level two. At Cunard I have different subjects, such as Math, English, Science, and others. My teachers are very kind, nice, and active. They are helping me for any reasons. Unfortunately, my speaking is not good, but they are understanding with me, and are showing me an easier way. I am very happy to be one of the students at Cunard and I am very grateful for my teachers. They help me to be successful. Also, they are showing me the way to make plans for the future and to have an enjoyable life.

New Skills, New Confidence

Sedigheh Gholami – Cunard Learning Center

It all began in 2010 when I started at Cunard Learning Center. I started taking English classes so I could learn how to write, reading, geography and math. My sister and I started at Level One. This was a challenge for me because I was from another country this was a different language for me but I had a good teacher to help me; her name is Joyce. I have learned so much from Joyce.

I have also gone on to Level Two. I also have nice teachers; they help me a lot. I also need to work hard at my lessons. It is very important that I keep up with my studies. I very much want to go on and to be a nurse. This is my dream to help other people and to give back what I have accomplished in life.

I am very sure my teachers will get me through any difficulty I may have in this program. I have good teachers that care. This is a wonderful opportunity to go to school and to have the freedom to do study or even decide what I want to be. I'm very happy and so is my family because they want to see me do well. I also have good support from home. Right now, my mother and I have trouble getting around because of the bus strike so it's been a little hard on me getting around to school, and other places; hopefully it won't be too much longer so we can get back into a routine. I really enjoy learning at Cunard Learning Center.

New Skills, New Confidence

Tania Smith – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I am bilingual but my first language was French. I went to all French school until grade 6, then all English school. When I got in the bigger grades, it got harder for me and frustrating too. Especially reading and writing in English. I would get my French words mixed up with my English so I decided to leave school.

Now I am older, I decided to go back to school again. My English is getting better like reading, translation is getting easier. I am less afraid of trying new things. Now my confidence is improving more every day. I can read in front of the class room, I am not nervous like I use to be. I am more sure of myself when writing or spelling in English and less afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at.

Ready, Set, Go

Amanda Maberry – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I'm a mother of two and married, all at the age of 23.

Even though life was a little crazy at home, I found the time to go to school. It wasn't always this way.

For example, just last year I was a working mom and out of school for almost nine years. I did not feel confident or smart enough to think that I could go back to school. I finally had too much of working dead- end jobs, and said "enough is enough", and went back to school. Finally, I learned the skills that I needed; skills like having better knowledge about the world around me, and how to spell better and even how to study.

Now I give everything a 100% and I realize I can do this. Today I have the confidence I thought I never would. Also, I am so much more at ease that my kids will have a better future, all because I made the choice to better myself and my family. Now I tell all my friends and young people that the value of a good education should never be underestimated.

All it takes is three easy steps; Ready, Set, Go , which stands for: Ready, get yourself ready to start school; Set, make sure everything is set to start and then Go, take that first courageous step forward. I did, and found a new confidence in adult education.

My Learning Journey

By Anne Elliott-Tomlinson – Halifax Community Learning Network

My journey began with a terrifying encounter with editing a newsletter. I have spent many years being a volunteer at Spencer House on Morris Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This is a home away from home for many seniors. Two years ago, I decided to introduce a newsletter for Spencer House. This has brought me to share this story with you.

It was important to me to send news out to our community, encouraging healthy independent lifestyles through the promotion of health and referral services, education and social programs.

Writing the newsletter, I had many insecurities, because my education was interrupted when I was young. I asked myself, “How can I improve my skills to become a writer?” I had many stories to tell about the people at the centre, but was worried that my spelling and grammar were not good enough.

Visiting the Library, I found the Adult Literacy Program. The program gave me the opportunity to achieve basic goals in writing, reading and spelling. I study together with my tutor Jennifer for two hours a week. I am still on my learning journey at the library, and justifiably happy with my achievements.

Unfortunately, the newsletter has been put on hold at the moment. However, I think the newsletter would be well received. I am sure the seniors still miss the newsletter. It documented their journey throughout their life. It was good to write it down. They have lived incredible lives.

For example, there is a lovely lady named Joan. She is a volunteer receptionist on Tuesdays. She generates a blend of prettiness and elegance. She was an English war bride. She met and married a Canadian soldier at the age of 20, while crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary, in the dead of winter. Her new home would be a small settlement in New Brunswick. She chuckled loudly, and talked about the outhouse, with a calendar hanging on the wall. It had a picturesque scene of Daytona Beach in Florida.

Another member I have interviewed is Cecil. Cecil has always told his stories with great exuberance. He is a proud man at the age of 94. He was born the year of the Halifax Explosion. His life has been full of adventure. In his job as a waiter at the Nova Scotia Hotel in the Forties, he met royalty and celebrities. He still chuckles over a phone call he received from Mother General, who confirmed a bus trip he had organized to the monastery in Antigonish. She said, “God just spoke to me to tell the sisters to hang their rosaries on the clothesline, and the sun will shine tomorrow for your pilgrimage.” And the sun shone all day!

I am grateful for Jennifer, my tutor at the Adult Literacy Program, for helping me to express my thoughts on paper. I hope my learning journey will continue, as I have many stories to write!

Believe In Yourself

Barb Langille – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Hello, my name is Barbara Langille. I am 48 years old and married. At the age of seventeen I was married and had my first child; I now have seven children.

After my own children became teenagers a couple of them dropped out of school in grade nine. I told them you are going to find it hard to get a job without an education. Their reply was you do alright and you only have grade eight; I told them I don't do alright I just manage to struggle by. This comment made me want to succeed for myself and my family.

My mother has eight children and my oldest brother is the only one that went all the way through school and to college. Three of us went back to school as adults. I am one of the three. Six of my brothers and sisters were raised by my mother.

My oldest brother and I were taken into foster care when I was two, my brother was three. He was adopted shortly after being taken into care. I was not as fortunate as he was, and was moved around so much I never spent more than 1-2 years in the same home. I just reached the point of not caring, or being interested in school. I believe every child needs to have a solid foundation to be able to make their way through school and life and someone to always be there to care for them and about them so they have the confidence within themselves.

Why I went back to school

There are several reasons why I went back to school. First of all, I believe it would be exciting and beneficial to have my grade 12 diploma. Also it would be helpful when I am filling out job applications. I'd also have more knowledge to help my children through school.

Although I know it will take a lot of hard work and there will be challenges, it is my main goal now to finish getting my education. After I succeed at this goal, I plan to attend the NSCC to take a CCA course, that is a dream I've had for a long time because I like to work with the elderly.

Completion of one's education opens many doors of opportunities, such as being able to go to college, or taking a course of your choice, or just having the knowledge so you can help your children through school. Always be proud of yourself for accomplishing your goal; never give up on your dreams.

Going back to school as an adult is in some ways different than when you're young, because usually there are other responsibilities in your life, but if you want it bad enough and give it your very best you will succeed. However old you are when you receive a grade 12 diploma will have the same end result and be every bit as rewarding.

Where I went back to school

There is an ALP program at NSCC called CALA. It offers a variety of skills and training you may need including reading, writing, math computer and other things. CALA is a friendly atmosphere to learn in. The other students are respectful and pleasant to be around. CALA has also offered a WHMIS course this year. There is no cost to the students. I think this is terrific because most work environments want you to have this certificate when you fill out for job applications.

I have my application in for the NSCC for September 2012 and hopefully I'll get my acceptance letter soon. That would be the most exciting news I could receive right now. Hopefully, in a year and a half to two years, I can write another letter with a diploma in my hand.

I believe there are three ways to success:

- Believe in yourself
- Try your very best
- Don't be afraid of success

CALA opens the doors to success. You make success happen for yourself.

My Journey as an Ode

Carla Kostuk – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

I'm almost five, my favourite skirt
'I'll be okay mom, don't be too hurt"
I skip, pick flowers, I'm on my way
It really is going to be a great day.

She stood up front to see us all
From my desk, she looked so tall
She's call a name, we'd reply 'here'
Ready to begin a brand new year.

Mrs. Harper is my grade four
Another teacher, I know I'll adore
Sitting eager, hand in the air
Information I can't wait to share.

I loved to learn a thing or two
Gotta know because of you
Get up, get ready, on the bus I'd go
Hoping I remember what I need to know.

High school, WOW, the rooms so big
Books to the ceiling, what a great Gig
Many teachers, boys and girls
Far out clothes and hair with curls.

I left the class to find a way
Avoid the lure of going astray
Proud to be a little store owner
Nestled sweet on a four-way corner.

To the city, it seems so cool
Still learning and I'm not in school
I've got my job, lots of number here
Yeah, you're right. I'm a head cashier.

To the west, away from home
I found the most incredible tome
Not quite alone, a little scary
I still have that dictionary.

I'm now a mom and filled with joy
I have my beautiful blue-eyed boy
My time to teach and learn some more

Readies him to go through that door.
Examples to set, take my own advice
Wise on paper sure would be nice
Pull the plug and make the call
I guess I'll meet you in the hall.

Pencils, paper, book bag black
My favourite seat is in the back
I concentrate to do my best
Fingers crossed just like the rest.

Here I sit behind the table
Hoping that today I'm able
To do the work with pen in hand
I'm ready to answer at your command.

The lot I learned has paved the way
Plenty of knowledge in my head today
Trivia – Brilliance – Just have to know
Constant Learning is the way to go.

Back to School I Go

Caroline Hudson – Yarmouth County Learning Network

This is my second time going back to school; the first time was in 1999, when my children were young. It was hard, at first I was nervous and a little scared too, but I did alright. The first time I attended school, I was getting ready to write the GED test. Two weeks before I was to write the GED we moved away so my husband could get a better job. We moved to Calgary, Alberta, while we were there I took the GED test twice, but I didn't pass it. So I just didn't think about going back to school again until we moved back to Yarmouth.

Since moving back to Yarmouth I would say, "I think I'll go back to school" all the time, but all I would do is talk about it. I went to work and ended up working two jobs at once and it was too much so I did not want to add school in. Then I tried calling the learning centre a couple of times but I never left messages. Then one day, in the month of February, I went in person to the learning centre.

Now I work and go to school. Even though I'm going back to school I'm still a little nervous and scared because I'm afraid of change and going out of my comfort zone. I keep telling myself "You'll do well." The teachers are very understanding.

Cherry's Story

Cherry Marlene Drummond – Western HRM Learning Network

I am a single mother of three; I work and go to school. I want to tell you my story. I left school at the age of eighteen because I was pregnant with my first child.

I have not been in school for years but I started coming to GED prep in May of last year. When I started, I really had a hard time with Math. I am starting to get better at it but I also know it is going to take time, I may not get it all, but I am doing my best to learn it. One of the problems I have with Math is fractions. Fractions and I do not get along! As an example of the practical use of fractions, my teacher had me make a fruit salad for the class using fractions and measuring. I got it a little but I am still not that good at it right now.

But, I also had this odd thing at work that happened that had to do with fractions. I am a supervisor where I work and one day I asked this guy to fill up the pickles in to 3 pans. I told him to get 4 bags and put 3 full ones and $\frac{1}{2}$ in to each of them. He told me "don't you mean $\frac{3}{4}$ " and I said to him "hey hey I don't do fractions" and everyone laughed!

Another problem I have is I get nervous when I have to take a test. It is like my mind goes blank, so I know that is another thing I have to work on. I'm looking for ways to calm myself before a test.

When I first started school, my confidence was really low, but as time goes on my confidence level is going up. I have been getting 80's and 90's on the work I have been doing, making me feel better about myself.

Getting my GED is important for me so I can do better for me and my kids. I think getting my GED will change my life because I want to go farther by getting my business management course through NSCC. So I can get a good job and do more for my kids and by showing them that staying in school is very important. Cherry's story, my story isn't over. In lots of ways it's just starting. I can't wait for the next chapter.

The Value of Literacy

Christopher Donaldson – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Hi, my name is Christopher Donaldson. I am 20 years old.

Literacy has a large impact in my life as an individual. For years I have enjoyed reading novels and stories from various authors, professional and amateurs alike. In addition to that, I, too, am an avid author of several stories that have yet to see the glory of being published.

I have a speech impediment, though not as bad as most cases. Even so, as a child I had a lot of difficulties reading and writing. Sometimes I struggled just to write my own name let alone a sentence. This may seem a surprise to some, considering my standing in literacy today.

When I was about five or six, my family moved to Edmonton, Alberta. Within this time in my life, I still had trouble reading and writing and it impeded me greatly in school, I was picked on by a lot of the students because of this. One day, my sister's teacher approached my mother and offered to help me with my problem. For two hours at the end of the school day for two month, I read books and learned to write about a lot of different things. I still believe to this day that those events were the backbone to why I feel I am an author today.

When I was eleven, I wrote my first book, of the horror genre, which since then has been renamed to 'Infection'. I will admit, it wasn't the greatest piece of work, but I really enjoyed writing it. Two years later, I wrote a sequel to it, promptly named 'Infection 2'. It took me about a year to write it, and I never planned it out or anything of the like, as opposed to most writers with the careful planning. It was made up as I went. It was good, a much better improvement over the last one. Over the course of nine years I turned it into a six book series with a plot that would take too long to explain in this essay. On top of that, I have written a few short fan fictions and other genres of literature also. I read all my stories myself from time to time.

I also do poetry as well, usually more on the romantic end. I have no real preference, as I enjoy all forms of it. I also enjoy other people's poetry when I have the spare time. I read a lot as well, mostly horror, naturally. I like to read other genres such as suspense as well as mysteries. I remember I used to spend hours on the computer reading stories. It was a favourite pastime and it still is to this day.

Just recently, I attended a Writers Workshop because I was seeking new ways to improve my writing skills, and I learned a lot and really enjoyed myself, getting to see all the different people and their style of writing, it really opened me up to a lot more ideas and tips to make my stories even richer and enjoyable for my audience.

So you see, literacy plays a big part in my life, and has a profound role on me expressing myself, my literary works and social skills, and overall who I am as a person. And some day, I hope, like many others, that I will be a successful author just like those whose work I enjoy.

What it Means to Be an Adult Learner

Coleen Pynch-Crouse – Valley Community Learning Association

This will be my second year attending VCLA as an ALP II learner, which has given me more confidence. I never thought that I would amount to anything. When you were told this time after time, I started to believe it because they made me feel that I was inadequate.

Well, guess what I'm living proof that if you put your mind to it you can do it. You are never too old to start something new.

VCLA is where I am now. I enjoy coming to class every day of the week. The instructors are great. I'm learning to read out loud in class with much expression and am also learning a whole new vocabulary.

I'm learning to do compositions in writing, for example "If you could have anyone for dinner". I'm also learning history – example: Black History in Canada.

The class has given me self-esteem and daily structure. Presentation: getting up in front of the class expressing myself and when it was over it gave me a sense of accomplishment.

The long-term goal for myself is to move on to NSCC, which is Nova Scotia Community College, to complete my grade 12 and then to move on to something that I feel I want to pursue.

I'm Learning Again....

Donna Sangster – Guysborough County Adult Learning Association

After my husband of 26 years had left me, I thought my life was over. I felt as though I'd done something wrong to deserve that. But over time, I've come to realize it wasn't me, and this was a new stage in my life. I needed to find some confidence, but was struggling to attain it.

GALA was offering classes at our local community centre, and I thought that sounded like something I might enjoy. And I did. I'm learning again. Subjects that I thought I'd forgotten. Ways to improve my life and myself.

There are courses that have opened up new ideas in me and the encouragement that I have received, really boosted my confidence. I see my life isn't over. And I don't want to stop learning. It keeps me alive, both physically and mentally.

Adult Learning

Eleni Kapsalis – Halifax Community Learning Network

The adult learning program is such a great opportunity for people who are willing to help themselves prepare for the G.E.D. It is also a peaceful environment you can go and feel comfortable with your tutor and all the focus is on you. If high school could have been like this, the population of people who haven't completed high school wouldn't be so high. This opportunity provides people with the chance to learn new skills and focus on what matters.

I have been in this program for almost four months. It has been the longest time I committed to something without giving up. My goal is to study my hardest until I am ready to accomplish my G.E.D. and to move on with my life and finally have my high school diploma. With my G.E.D., I can become what I have always dreamed of which would be helping people in the medical field. I have learned a lot of skills with my tutors to help achieve my goal.

A new skill that I have recently learned is how to write an essay. I am still not the greatest but with time and lots of practice I will eventually be able to feel comfortable with that new skill. I am definitely more comfortable and motivated to write an essay independently. Thanks to my tutor's help, I actually enjoy writing one rather than being in school and being told to write an essay. I am not sure when I will need to write an essay, but maybe I will need the skill when I send a letter. All I know is when I come across it in the future I'll know just what to do.

Another important skill that I have been working on is understanding written questions. I realize in high school your teacher doesn't have the time to go over each word in a question with you. This skill was one of my weakest point and biggest struggle. But having a tutor patches up all of the things that a teacher could not help me with and I am very thankful of the adult learning program to provide a free one for me. In life I can apply this skill to job applications or when someone asks me a question that I couldn't have understood before.

Having a tutor to assist me one on one has helped me focus more on my work and understanding how to do and accomplish my problems. Being focused was one of the main reasons why I failed high school. I was always easily distracted with other things that had nothing to do with work. But now that I have chosen to better myself, I feel more confident to finish something with the help of my tutor.

The adult learning program definitely helped me more than all the different places I tried. I would definitely suggest this to people who felt like they couldn't focus and were easily distracted through high school. Thanks to the adult learning program, I have learned a lot of new skills and I can finally focus.

My Brother Jerry and Cancer – Writing about One of Life’s Important Events

Frederick DeMone – Western HRM Learning Network

Last year I received a phone call. It was my brother Jerry in Toronto. He had some bad news to tell me. “I have Multiple Myeloma, Fred, and there is no cure. All they can give me is some extended years of life with a new treatment called Stem Cell treatment.”

Multiple Myeloma is a cancer of plasma cells in which abnormal plasma cells multiply uncontrollably in the bone marrow and occasionally in other parts of the body. People often have bone pain and fractures and they may also have kidney problems, immune system compromise, weakness and confusion. Diagnosis is made by measuring the amount of different types of antibodies in blood and urine and is confirmed by a bone marrow biopsy. Chemotherapy drugs and corticosteroids are often used for treatment.

Now here is where we started going through treatment with him. Off I go to Toronto from Nova Scotia thinking I am only going for three weeks. Little did I know that the three weeks would extend into three months. Thank God for my daughter and her house in Black Stock, Ontario, because at times I needed a place away from everyone. At times I thought I would go out of my mind, so I would have to go and pray in the chapel in the hospital. This relieved many problems that I was having, and once again, I had to place our problems in God’s hands. With that in mind, we all went through many hours of pain ourselves.

I kept in touch with all the doctors and nurses when it came to getting information. Staff pointed me in the right direction, which was the library at the hospital. My love of reading came in very handy because I could get so much information from the hospital library. There were a great many books and pamphlets on this subject, which kept me well informed about Jerry’s sickness and his treatments. Most of these treatments were because Jerry is diabetic and has had open heart surgery in 2000. At that time they had to replace the aorta valve in his heart. They said that he would be in the hospital for about six days, yet in the end it took more than six weeks, because he got a virus on the operating table and this almost ended his life. Now, here comes this new problem called Multiple Myeloma.

It is really hard to explain what he went through from the beginning to end. First, every day, there was twenty miles of driving to hospitals, nurses, doctors and different treatment rooms. Just the amount of needles he had to inject into his stomach, twice a day, left him black and blue on the whole lower half of his body. Then the sickness would come after these injections and he would not want to eat to keep his strength up. Then there were pills, chemo, radiation and so many other drugs that they put into his body. It not only made him sick, but it made me sick too, just watching. God love all the medical staff that go through this every day and don’t say a word to discourage or complain. They gave me the courage to go on and feel good about all the things I had to do for my brother.

This was only the beginning, then came the stem cell treatment. First, they took all the blood out of his system, then heavy doses of chemotherapy, which takes you into another world of sickness. Right in the middle of his treatment, his family moved forty-five miles outside Toronto, to a place called Bowmansville. Now I had to drive forty-five miles each way, every day, which took about two hours. Sometimes I would be on the 401 and the Don Valley parkway for hours, after having been with Jerry from nine in the morning to nine at night. Then back to the new home and his family to tell them how he was doing.

Now, back to this disease. Often collections of cancerous plasma cells develop into tumours that lead to loss of bone, most commonly in the pelvic bone, spine, ribs and skull. Infrequently, these tumours develop in areas other than bone, particularly the lungs, liver and kidneys. In rare cases, multiple myeloma interferes with blood flow to the skin, fingers, toes, nose kidneys and brain, because the blood thickens. One can only imagine what Jerry was going through every day and night. You see, with the bone pains he could not sleep night or day. There was always the sickness as well as the pain all through his body. Jerry began to tell me that he wanted to quit. I lost it then, and said I would kill him if he quits now, after all we been through, and he laughed. God, this was really wonderful to see him laugh again after all he's been through.

By the end of his treatments, my brother weighed only one hundred and twenty pounds. He had been two hundred and forty pounds. He lost half a man. This troubled him and set him into a depression, causing his mind to shut down and not want to do anything, but just sit in a chair and rock. I had returned to my own family back in Nova Scotia, but off I went again to Toronto for the second time to get him going. Two more weeks at my daughter's and then to Jerry's; you see, we had to get him started doing the things he loved to do, like getting him to go out and meet people again and see his old friends. Here's where the weight loss came in. he was afraid that people would not recognize him and this made him very self-conscious about how he looked. I had to say to him "You need to be around people who have been through just what you have been through, and come out the other side". He went to a cancer support group and now he has what it takes to get back on the road to recovery.

My brother has a great amount of courage, fortitude and is willing to do what it takes to make his life better. After all the trials and tribulations, Jerry's stamina made me come to the Master, so we could place him in the hands of God. I placed Jerry in God's hands before I even left Nova Scotia, and Jerry is in remission and doing well today.

My Learning Journey

Heather Myatt – Halifax Community Learning Network

I am on a learning journey.

I heard about the Adult Literacy Program from a personal care worker at my home.

I was nervous to start the program.

I did not know what kind of teacher I would have.

I have had four tutors.

All have taught me different things and in different ways.

My goals were that I wanted to be able to read about animals and to be able to handle my own money.

My tutor says money is math so then I became interested!

I am learning adding and subtracting using play money.

I am reading better than I did before.

I have learned to enjoy poems.

I have even written some!

The most important thing that I have learned on my journey is that I now have the confidence to learn and try new things.

What It Means to Me to be an Adult Learner

Helen Pike – Valley Community Learning Association

Being an adult learner was very hard for me, coming from St. Vincent where the school system was a lot different than in Canada. This has been a long journey for me going back to school as an adult.

I started this journey a few years ago. It was difficult for me, but I have not given up. It has helped me to develop my understanding and knowledge in my math, language, reading, social studies, and science.

It has given me a second chance to further my education and my career. It has also given me confidence, self-esteem, and independence.

It has proven that I can do anything I put my mind to. I was a very shy person who was afraid to try new things. I didn't like talking in public because I was scared what people might think of me.

Going back to school as an adult has been the best decision I ever made for myself. It has shown that I am not alone and there is always help when I need it.

Dreams can come true with lots of hard work and determination. It is important to always have faith and to never give up on your dreams.

Skills

Irene-Ann Hinde – Halifax Community Learning Network

I came to this program to better my skills, and to apply for my GED later. So far I still have to work more on my math. I am trying to improve my computer skills in everyday life.

This program has helped me to have more Self-Confidence. I am able now to write short stories on different occasions and have enough Self-Confidence to read out loud my story to a room full of people- my class mates.

Through this program my reading and writing skills have improved. It also helped my communication in the class and I like to talk to people and keep the conversation open. I hope to get my driver's license this spring.

Learning New Skills- Having New Confidence

Jocelyn Fahey – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

I am entering this writing contest because I would like to share with you how adult learning has changed my life as a person. But, has also given me the courage to learn new skills, and gain new confidence while participating in my adult learning class.

I have learned that it's never too late to learn, or go back to school. I have learned that you should never take your education for granted because the only person you are taking away from is yourself and the opportunities that will help achieve your goals and future. Going back as an adult is harder on you mentally. So I tell my children, their friends, and any younger people to stay in school. I tell them that it's very important to get your education so that you can help yourself to accomplish something good and better for your life.

It's good to learn something new every day. If you put your mind to it, I think you, or anyone can do it. Just hold your head up high, even look at yourself in the mirror and just think positive. Have confidence in yourself, what you are doing and how it's done.

I think having a good teacher also helps you to have a positive outlook on what you are trying to achieve. My goal is to finish in the Adult Learning Association program that I am attending in June of this year. Then hopefully start in September on my Levels 3 and 4 and eventually receive my high school diploma. From there I would like to be given the chance to pursue my career as a Licensed Practical Nurse.

The best thing I love about coming to class is that you can work at your own pace without any pressure on you. Meeting new students and making new friends is also something that I like. When you have a problem or you just don't understand something right away the teacher doesn't hesitate to show you how it's done without making you feel bad. But, I especially like when you can go to class and then leave at the end of the day smiling and patting yourself on the back knowing that it was a good day and you have learned something new in a positive way. That's a terrific feeling! I can go to my class knowing that no one is judging me. I can go and learn new skills, earn certificates, and participate in workshops. Leaving class every day and knowing that I have learned something new to the best of my abilities. And that what I have learned will have a positive outlook towards my future is a great feeling.

When I attend different workshops, I get to meet students from different classes. The workshop facilitators help us to learn something new or something that we didn't know before we came to the workshop.

I hope I have helped to share with you that my return to school has been a positive experience, a learning journey that will continue and bring with it more new skills and more confidence.

My New Skills & Confidence

John Malcolm – Western HRM Learning Network

School was a struggle for me every year. I failed most subjects except for Phys. Ed. I felt I was a failure at everything. My mom would try to help me and explain things as basic as she could but I still wasn't grasping the concept of anything. It wasn't until grade 4 that the school decided I needed to be tested for learning disabilities. It was discovered that I was ADHD. So I was put on meds in hope that it would help me be able to focus better. I still struggled.

When I reached Junior High my "failures" led me down the wrong path. I started acting out in bad behavior getting suspended using foul language, skipping class, lying to my mom. The school had me placed in a program where I could do work at my own pace but still be in the same classroom as my classmates. That still was no good for me because the teacher couldn't spend all their time helping me. I needed more help than the other kids did and I became even more frustrated than before. They decided to give me a few hours a day in a resource one on one which was good for awhile. I concentrated so much better my skills were improving but very slowly.

My mother was not happy she couldn't understand how come I was being pushed through the grades even though my learning skills were at an elementary level of grade 4. It didn't seem right that the education system could push a kid through school when I clearly wasn't ready to move forward. Somehow I made it to grade 10 without failing a single grade along the way. High school was a joke to me I had become so mad at not being able to learn that school became a place to hang out not a place to learn. Once again I was getting in trouble; deeper trouble than before. I gave up on my education and quit school.

I'm now 19 years old with no education no job and felt like I had no purpose in this life until I found out about this G.E.D program. It has improved my feeling towards learning. If I need help the help is there and explained to me so that I understand perfectly this program has made me feel so much better about myself. I plan to finish this course. I know I can do it. My skills in everything have improved greatly. I don't run for help every time I get stuck on something I have been given the skills to figure things out without getting frustrated to the point where my anger gets the best of me. I feel more confident in being able to get a job and have already been actively looking for work.

I know it's still going to be a bumpy road for me but now I'm not afraid to move forward and to take pride in what I know I can and will accomplish along the way.

How Far I Travelled to Get My GED

Kathy Dean – Western HRM Learning Network

When I was growing up life wasn't good at all. My father did a lot of things to me when I was there. My mother blamed me for everything that happened. She was not supportive at all.

I left home when I was sixteen years old when my mother sent me to my Aunt Carol's in Truro. She looked after me for awhile and I went to school. When my Uncle Floyd got sick, she sent me to live with a woman who lived close to Stanfields L.T.D. While I was there I got a job at Stanfields working on T-shirts. I enjoyed working and stayed for fourteen years. I got along with the girls I worked with; and I miss them very much. When work slowed down, we had to take three weeks off and three weeks on, but that made it hard to pay my bills, forcing me to leave.

I moved to Halifax, lived with my sister-in-law and got a job working at Benoit's sewing shop. Then I got an apartment. I met James Dean. We went together for about a year, and got married. Almost a year later our son Patrick was born and soon after, daughter Carrie. We got an apartment in Lakeside and lived there for five years. We were on welfare at the time so things were very tough.

We moved back to Truro and my husband got a job as a cook. The kids went to school. Soon things got out of control; my husband was abusive to me and my kids. A friend in Stewiacke saw what happened and took me to her place and called the police. They came and took me to get the kids. We went to the transition house in Bible Hill for awhile; till we got an apartment. Then we moved back to Lakeside.

When my husband and I separated, I got sole custody of my kids. Now that we are free, I've been doing great. My income assistance worker got me into some programs, including educational upgrading. So I joined the GED class last year. There I met Neil Hudson, the GED teacher, and he was great. He started me off with Math, then English, Science and Language Arts. After a while, I tried the test, but only passed my essay. I went back in September, 2011 to try my best with the rest of the subjects. But then Neil passed away in October, so we had to have another teacher. I really miss Neil. He was a brilliant teacher; he made us laugh and learn. He is missed.

We had to get used to having our new teacher, Rick. He is wonderful and helped us pick up where we left off. So far, I've made progress. I hope I pass the GED test in September. It will prepare me for a better job.

I've come a long way to get here.

Keep on Learning

Keith Finn – Halifax Community Learning Network

It has been about two years studying with my tutor and the more I learn the more I keep learning. I am so happy to learn how to use the computer. I have learned how to do email, how to write stories on the computer and how to use the key board. By learning email it really helps me to keep in touch with friends.

I learned how to do fractions, multiplication and division. By learning these skills will really helps me to get ready for my GED.

I read two novels and wrote book reports on them. My reports were published on the library web site. The more I learn it builds up my self confidence and self esteem to prepare for my GED.

About My Family

Kenneth McDow – Halifax Community Learning Network

When I was growing up I lived in the North End. I had three brothers and two sisters. My two sisters moved to Ontario. They lived there for thirty years. About ten years after they moved to Ontario my mother and three brothers all moved to Toronto. My brother Gerald went to Ontario first and drove tractor trailers for twenty years. Billy went later because he didn't like his job here. When he got to Ontario he drove trucks. My mother Pearl took Douglas to Toronto when he was about 14. Pearl worked in a hospital for about twenty years. She didn't drive so she took the subway to work.

When I turned twenty one, in 1959, I married and lived in the South End with my wife Bonnie and son David . During that time Bonnie and I raised four children. David was born in 1963. Tony and Terry were twins born in 1965 and Anna was the youngest born in 1974.

I was working for a fish plant company to help my family. After four years I changed my job to working at the hospital maintenance shop. I worked on the grounds at the hospital for 20 years. Then I changed my job to working on the trucks, delivering and picking up parts and working in the maintenance shop. I was doing repairs on floor and ceiling tiles and I inspected the fire extinguishers after taking a course on how to fill and maintain them. In winter I plowed snow at night and on weekends.

Now my children are all grown up and living on their own. David lives in Winnipeg with his wife and two children. Tony lives in Halifax with his wife and he has two children. Anna is living and working in Vancouver.

I worked at the VG.Hospital for thirty two years. I am now retired for twenty years, and I'm going to the Keshen Goodman Library to learn more reading and writing. I don't think I will ever stop going.

Trudging Through the Madness

Kim Hawley – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

For every day I open my eyes, and get out of this bed I am fighting.
For every pill I swallow and every milk I drink, I am trying.

And for every effort I make to stay well, on so many levels, I continue to fight.
For a sense of normalcy, for more time, for a chance to become somebody.

I fight for piece of mind, for a day to come that steals me away from worry and constant wondering.

I fight to stay healthy, while knowing the uncertainty of it lasting forever.
I hold on to my good days, and try to let go of the bad ones.

My life has been an example of how bad things can get, and how good things can be. My experiences have been a consistent reminder of how to appreciate the tinier things that you miss the most when they sometimes disappear.

I have been broken by illnesses since the day I was born, but have also been repeatedly repaired. Twenty-two years ago on the 7th of November, I took my first breath, and despite all of the pain and the scars I have had to endure in order to get here I continue breathing. Support, kindness, humour, love, consideration, patience and understanding. It is those simple things that gave me the strength and the knowledge to realize it was all worth the battle.

My name is Kimberley Hawley and I am a kidney and heart transplant recipient. I managed to graduate from high school while doing dialysis in my grad year, but due to being out of school so much during that time I missed many important things in school. I am currently well enough to upgrade my skills with the help of the Adult Learning Association program, and I am planning to attend college very soon.

Since returning to school I've learned many things: math skills, financial skills, and social skills to name a few. I am much more confident in myself now that I'm applying myself to my school work more and doing well. I have more drive and motivation to achieve my goals in life now that I have a better understanding as to what I'm capable of accomplishing when I focus on something.

Along with my class work, I have attended several workshops this year, and in my opinion I think they helped me to learn a lot about myself as well as other things. Going to these workshops really brought me out of my shyness, and made me feel more confident in myself because of the things I got to learn and experience. My learning journey will continue and so will my confidence and new skills.

Journey to Learning

Kimberlea Dawn Marie Lucas Cruikshank – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I'd like to begin by telling my learning journey as it began one rainy December night in 2009 when I was homeless and hopeless. Something that night changed my life forever. I found thirteen butterflies in a very large old picture frame. It seemed to me they were someone's collection that was not wanted. How could anyone, especially a lepidopterist, throw such a beautiful collection away? I was not sure at the time if they were real, but they were so beautiful it didn't matter. I took them to a friend's house and soon found out they were indeed real. We went to the library to get books to find out more about these colorful treasures. I soon found out just how valuable they were. One had been extinct since 1923... wow! It was believed to be worth \$1,100. What would I do with them?

At the time, I had no home myself. I decided to give them to the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, at least 10 of them anyway. They were grateful to have them. I felt very happy and relieved that I had found a home for most of the butterflies. On the other hand, I myself was still without a home. The remaining three I kept safe with me at all times at various shelters I was staying at. It seemed everyone I met wanted one for one reason or another. I gave the most incredible iridescent colored one to a little girl at a church to put in a collection plate. The other one I gave to a lady who lived in a shelter with me. I lived with her for only 11 hours because the place we moved into was infested with bed bugs. I had over 200 bites and was not surprised to find out that the landlord had known about the problem but let us rent the place in spite of it. So I became homeless again with one butterfly left.

Finally, a nun I met while I was homeless sent me to a nearby town. When I arrived I met a homeless woman who asked me if I would like a bible. Three days later she gave me one. To my surprise I had actually signed it 20 years earlier. In that moment, I knew I should give the last butterfly to her. However, she didn't want it so we left it outside of the town police station. I commented to myself that butterflies are for heroes.

I am now attending classes at CALA (Colchester Adult Learning Association), a student ambassador, and a volunteer at a shelter in the town I came to as a homeless, toothless, and nameless person. Today I am very grateful to have a home, teeth, and a name. I no longer have the butterflies, but a meaningful life experience to share! I have only been in school for five months and I have come a long way. My future plans are to get my grade twelve, write a book about my life, and pursue a career where I can help people in need.

Going Back to School

Linda Larade – Community Learning Association North of Smokey

I am 48 years old and have been attending classes with CLANS for the past 5 years. Before this, my reading and writing skills were very poor but now I am at a higher level in both areas. Since I returned to school I have more confidence which has led me to getting a better job and I have made a lot of new friends. I never used to like going out much before but now things are so different. I am learning to enjoy my life more. My teacher makes me feel really comfortable and she supports me in so many ways.

It would be impossible for me right now to travel to Sydney in order to get my schooling, so I feel “blessed” to have this program in my community. I want everyone to know how important it is to me that I get a second chance at learning and that places like CLANS make it all happen. Thank you to all the people that help make these literacy organizations work. It means so much to so many, but for me it has given me hope.

You see, I quit school when I was 15 because I had to go to work at the fish plant. Both of my parents were sick at the time so my sisters and brothers had to help out. By the time I was 18, I was pregnant with my daughter Rachel. There was no time for school. I moved to a different place but the fish plant was the only place I could work. It was long days and hard work. I didn't know any other way of life. For many years, I was depressed and turned to alcohol. When the fish plants closed I turned to social assistance. Things never seemed to get better until finally, I stopped drinking and knew things had to change.

I began to attend classes with CLANS to help me learn to read and write like others. After 5 years of schooling, I see a brighter future. I no longer need social assistance because I work full time as a cleaner at Cabot High School. I just bought a car and am working on getting my driver's license. I eat healthy and walk 10km almost every day. It feels good! I know there are a lot of people out there like me who are living a hard life. All I want to say is “Go back to school. You are never too old! Look at me!”

Moments of Change

Linda Rae Logan – Colchester Adult Learning Association

I was born Linda Rae Logan. I will be seventy on March 26th 1942. I am from Truro Nova Scotia. My life began as I was shifted from one home to another very unsettled life style to another.

My first six years of schooling life from age five right through to age eleven gave me some experiences with teachers that were horrifyingly and realistically bad. The abuse was awful, but having dreams of completing high school, well, ended at age fourteen years of age.

Being told there was no funding to go further in schooling with no funding available for clothing, school supplies, or other things, meant my life was crushed so I ended up in a low income bracket working laundry, babysitting, some factory working, and dishwashing to only name a few. Finally, this resulted in welfare.

I am now a senior aged 70 at the end of this month, still struggling to get an education to undo those issues that I once had worked hard to overcome.

I am now starting to get back to some of my dreams by going back to night school in 1986, then further on to 2005. At this present time frame of 2012, I am feeling better about life, also its challenging moments. I am developing my world to a betterment of myself by succeeding in what I am doing now in school.

TRANSFORMATION

Lynn Donnelly-Burns – Colchester Adult Learning Association

The day you will transform is when you are

Readng a book or a poem for the first time in

Amazement at the understanding of the written word

Nervous feeling, but willing to better yourself for

Self-worth is what you feel

Finding yourself is in the learning

Ownership of all the hard work paid off

Readng becomes more fun and enjoyable

Methods of learning are hard sometimes, practice makes perfect

Amount of enlightened spirit and pride

Transformation can reward you in so many ways

In the human spirit self worth and confidence

On to a better path

Now education, experience, and memories are your transformation
to better learning

My Learning Journey

Mary Hutchison – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

My learning journey started in 2007 when I decided to return to school. At the age of 50 and after being out of school for 32 years, this was a big step for me. Deciding to go back and actually doing it were two different things. With courage and will power I made up my mind to return and it was difficult. Getting things ready, talking to my family members which some said I couldn't do it and was basically wasting my time, while others said to go for it and go for it I did.

The first day wasn't so bad; I was getting to know my teachers and my classmates, and then came the books. I must admit after so many years of being out of school it was scary to say the least. At the end of that first day, one of my teachers said she would be giving a quiz the next day. I thought what will I do now? I felt sick! I didn't want a quiz the second day of school. Sure enough the next day came and we had the quiz. I took one look at it and all I knew was my name. That test seemed to last for hours. The next day we received them back. It wasn't good, I failed. I realized that I would have to hit the books from now on and hit the books I did. Every day I learned something new, remembered things I had forgotten all those years ago. On and on it went with more work and more books. A few times I wanted to give up, return the books and go home. But I stayed for two years and did better. Eventually I became ill and had no choice but to leave school.

It is now 2012 and I am back at school to try again. I am doing my best because someday I would like to have the opportunity to continue my education and work with children that could use help. I wish to thank all the teachers I've had for the great job that they do. Without the support of my past and current teachers, I would not be where I am today.

This year I am learning more than ever. I am attending workshops that will help give me all of the skills I need. I am working hard in class and feeling better and better about my learning journey each and every day.

Michelle's Story

Michelle Dunphy – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

I've seen my share of commercials on television with people advising me to do something with my life. Asking me questions like, "what am I doing all day anyway?" They sympathize with the fact that people have families at home and other things going on in their lives. Then they usually end with an inspiring "If I can do it, so can you." One day, after watching one of these commercials, I thought to myself "what have I been doing all day?" Well that was not a long thought. I know exactly what I have been doing: it's called procrastinating. I would say to myself I'll do it after my daughter is old enough to start daycare. When that time came I told myself that I should wait until she starts elementary school.

Well now my daughter is 12 years old and I have two other children. That's when I realized that I shouldn't wait for the future but rather, start now. I want my education so that my three beautiful children and me can have a better life. Meanwhile life is what's happening around me as I sit back and wait for an opportunity that I'm not sure will ever pop up.

It's not that I had difficulty in school. I actually found myself at my grade level and maybe even exceeded some of the expectations in certain areas. My trouble was that I was a social butterfly and thought that, if most of what was expected had come so easily to me, that I would only go to class some of the time and with the rest of my time I would just hang out with friends. To my surprise, this really showed on my report cards. I ended up with good marks but had most of them deducted for not showing up. This was a shock to me and became very discouraging so I ended up dropping out, almost not realizing the impact this would have on my future.

Now that I'm finally enrolled in BSLN taking Math and Communications, I feel a lot more confident helping my children with their schoolwork. I also read out loud to my youngest and have an overall feeling of certainty that I can do this work. The BSLN staff works with us at our pace to insure we are comfortable with the levels of learning before we move on to the next lesson. This is a very good way of teaching, as we tend to take in and retain more information this way.

Now, thanks to BSLN, I feel I'm able to think about possibilities for the future. I can set goals and work towards accomplishing them. I have made a good start by taking classes and I'm encouraged by the progress I have made.

How CALA Changed My Life

Normajean MacAloney - Colchester Adult Learning Association

It's been over 20 years since I've been in school. I only have a grade 8-9 education. These days you need a grade 12 education to get anywhere or to have a great paying job. I've been working all my life at minimum wage; jobs that never got me anywhere in life. I felt not having an education didn't get me anywhere in life. I felt dumb; there were relationships that I was in where the other person put me down. I also had one person say 'I wasn't intelligent enough', so I always thought I was dumb.

Since then, years went by and I'm now in my mid 40's and I have no job. I lost my job in October of 2011 because the company went bankrupt. This experience of unemployment has me feeling depressed and wondering what I did wrong with my life.

One day last fall I woke up and said to myself, "get your act together, Normajean, stop feeling so bad and do something about it.....make something out of yourself and make your dreams come true".

The man in my life now has never made me feel dumb or less intelligent .He does the opposite. He makes me think I can do anything if I put my mind to it. He wants me to stick to whatever I do and finish it to the end. So I decided that I would go back to school and get my grade 12. I heard about CALA (Colchester Adult learning Association) from a friend of mine. I figured if other people are going back to school "WHY CAN'T I?"

On November 22, 2011 I came to CALA to begin working toward a grade 12. I was nervous but I'm doing really well since I went back to school. I feel really good about myself and if I put all my energy into upgrading my skills, I can do it. So now I see a light at the end of the tunnel and I will make something out of my life.

My dream is to get my grade 12 and work at our hospital with patients that need the 24 hour care that nurses can't give them. Also, if nursing isn't possible, I would consider being a security guard. I know with my grade 12 I will get a better paying job and a name for myself. I'll be very proud of myself, and other people (my family and friends) will also be proud of me.

If anyone out there thinks they're not smart enough to get a good education or to get a good paying job, you're wrong. You are smart and you can do anything you set your mind to. Also, remember 'there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow'.

Finding My Way

Ron Hubley – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

I am a floor installer by trade and I used to love my job. I worked hard to become the best installer I could be. I told myself I would quit when I don't care about doing the best possible job. I will stop doing flooring. I'm at that point in my life.

I have been doing flooring for about 17 years. It's starting to take a physical toll on my body. I have been running a business now for the last two years. I worked really hard and long hours to make the business work. I have worked for almost every flooring store in the business. They were able to dictate to me because I was new to the business. There was no sales person or flooring store that would give me a break; I felt used and they told me these are the only jobs we have for you. I stay busy, but not busy making money. I lost my family and my home from working the long hours included in this job. I was not making enough money to pay my bills.

I have now decided that I would like to get my education so I can change my career and my life. I have two children who I don't think realize how important school is. I'm 40 years old; maybe, if they see me trying to change my life, they may see how important their education really is.

My mom passed away at the age of 55 from cancer and my dad died at the age of 43 so I need to get my education before it's too late for me. We only have so much time on this planet. I would like to make a difference in my life. I don't like my job anymore because no one in the flooring business is out to help me. It appears to be everyone for himself. I'm tired of the politics in my job. My trade is not even a real trade. There are no regulations about who does what job. It's all a fly by night trade. Something needs to change. I will never see the changes in my lifetime so I have to try to get my education. I want to improve my education before it's too late for me. If we all could be the best we can be at our jobs the planet would be a better place.

I have been consistently attending classes at Bedford Sackville Learning Network. My goal is to eventually pass my GED exams. I am now improving my reading, comprehension and grammar skills. I bought a book to read for the first time in many years. I feel I am on the right track and am thankful that adult evening classes are available to me. It is my goal to take a specific training course when I complete my GED exams.

Literacy

Sandra Trapp – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

My name is Sandra Trapp. I am forty nine years old and have been attending the Adult Learning Program for three years now. School was the last place ever that I thought I would ever go back to. I decided to return to school because I've always wanted to graduate from school. It was one of the things on my to do list that I wanted to accomplish. I did not think I was a very good student in school. I couldn't keep up with the rest of the class, so that made it very difficult for me. I was teased and made fun of most of the time. If I were in regular school at this time would be called bullying. Bullying did not help much so that was one of the main reasons I did not like school and quit. Finally I felt I was forced to drop out of school.

As I became older I decided that maybe I could go back and try to get my education. It was not an easy thing to go back to school and learn after being out of school for so long. I did take the chance! It was better than I thought because it was totally different this time. Everyone helps each other. You are able to work and learn at your own pace which is what I like best. Also you are not put down, teased or bullied. If I were to give a new student advice on going back to school I would say, it's never too late to learn! Literacy is very important to everyone because it's a way for everyone to communicate within the world. No matter what age, everyone has the right to learn!

My Recent Life

Susan MacPhail – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

A number of years ago, I was so depressed I would spend most of my days in bed. I knew this was not healthy for me, but most important, I was not being a good role model for my daughter Melissa.

I heard about PiCCoLA from friends. I decided to try it. I felt that not only would it give me something to do, I would get an education and become a better role model for Melissa.

I am glad I took the step to do this. I enjoy going to PiCCoLA. We have a wonderful teacher named Diane. Not only is she a great teacher, she's also a friend. She doesn't judge us; she makes you feel proud of what you can achieve. Not only am I getting an education but it has built my self-esteem. I enjoy being at school, being with my peers. The social part is just as important to me as the educational part.

I have been a student at PiCCoLA since September 2007. There have been many outside activities from which I have benefitted. A very enjoyable eight weeks session was at the Superstore where we learned about the importance of healthy eating, the benefits of exercises, and how to shop on a restricted budget.

Each year Melissa and I participate in Bowling for Kids. This is an enjoyable time spent together. After bowling, PiCCoLA families get together for a pizza party.

We attended several Family Literacy Nights. We saw a magician, did crafts together and both read and listened to books.

Students enjoyed a bus tour around Pictou and learned about the historical part of our town. We were treated to a musical morning - again learning about the history of Pictou County through the songs of 'Spyder' Macdonald. This was a pleasant change from the classroom.

Once, Melissa came to school to help me make a ginger-bread house which we enjoyed doing together. Then we got to take it home.

We went to Café Europe where we learned about Austrian customs and did some Christmas baking also to take home and share with our family.

We have attended many workshops. One workshop entitled 'SMAC' taught us how to interact with people of all abilities. We have participated in Mental Health First aid, Self Esteem and even painting workshops with a local Pictou County artist.

I was privileged to attend the Provincial Learner Celebration in Wolfville. We stayed overnight at Whitman House at Acadia University.

As a PiCCoLA student, I have also been able to enjoy some live theatre productions including: 'The Wizard of Oz', 'Shakespeare on Trial', 'A Christmas Carol', and a play on Viola Desmond.

Also by being a student at PiCCoLA, I have been able to receive certificates for such things as first aid, CPR, WHMIS, food handling, Mental Health first aid.

As you can see, we don't spend all the time just in our classroom. We get to do a variety of other educational things which make it so enjoyable being a student at PiCCoLA.

One thing I really want to succeed in doing is getting a diploma stating that I passed my GEDs. I feel like a failure each time I fail them. I get so disappointed in myself. I feel like I am letting myself, my family, and my friends down. Then my confidence weakens.

I'm living proof – that you don't give up –you keep trying. This will be my fifth year trying!

I am a single mother trying to be a better role model for my daughter, Melissa, and trying to get an education. Hopefully, I'll be able to find a job and get off the welfare system. But, it's going to be rough go and hard to accomplish because I 'm a fifty-one year old obese woman with no job experience.

Get an education while you are young. It will be easier to find a job. Don't be foolish and quit school like I did so many years ago.

I want to thank the PiCCoLA staff and express my appreciation for the learning and new experiences I have received. Thank you for all your support.

Theresa MacLeod – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

- I like go to school all the time.
- I now know how to use the computers.
- I learned how to spell.
- I can read and understand what I read.
- The school makes me feel good.
- I made new friends.
- I like to do math all the time.
- I go to work shops.

I feel tired when...

Vernon Sawler – Halifax Community Learning Network

I feel tired when I don't sleep from working long hours or I just can't sleep.

I feel tired and I have no energy when I am sick.

I feel tired when I eat too much.

I feel tired when I stay up all night.

I feel angry when...

I feel angry when I work and don't get paid for doing the work.

I feel angry when somebody blames me for something I didn't do.

I feel angry when I try to sleep and somebody wakes me up.

I feel angry when my computer or something else breaks.

I'd like to be...

I'd like to be a bank owner, because then I wouldn't have to worry about not having money.

I'd like to be the richest person in the world then I could buy a new house, car and a four wheeler.

I'd like to have my own company someday.

I'd like to have all kinds of employees and contracts if I start my own company.

I'm Glad I'm Not...

I'm glad I'm not the owner of a bank.

I'm glad I'm not a metro transit bus driver.

I'm glad I'm not a robber.

I'm glad I'm not a doctor.

Who I Am

Viola Baker – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Who I Am

My name is Viola Natalie Baker.

I am 40 years old.

I have 3 sisters and 2 brothers.

I am a mother and a grandma.

I am a student at the Adult Learning Association.

My Goals in Life

I have set some goals for myself.

The goals I set for myself are to get my education and to make my family and friends proud of me. I want these goals so I can get a really good job so I can better myself.

I have a plan to achieve my goals.

My Strengths and Weaknesses

I am a very responsible person.

I take responsibilities for my own actions.

I get along with people and

I am a very organized person, very tidy.

I am able to express myself to others.

I am a good listener.

I always think of other people first instead of myself.

Things That Are Important To Me

The areas that is important to me are definitely my health and caring for my family and friends. My feelings they are the things that really matter to me the most.

My Family and Friends

I love spending time with my friends.

On the weekends I love spending time with my beautiful grandson who I love the most.

When I first moved here to Glace Bay, I never stopped looking for a school because I wanted to get my grade 11 and 12. One of my friends told me about a school up on McKeen Street. I was very proud when they told me about it. When I went to see the person up there, she told that I wasn't qualified for that school. So I started to get down

in the dumps again. Then I got called to go to the day class where I started to learn work that I had never seen before in my life. It made me really proud of myself.

My instructor really helped me a lot in school. Then I went to the night class. I was out of school since 1991 and didn't want to go back to school because I was teased and bullied. Well that's all I have to say.

I am very proud of myself for going back to school. I have learned a lot of work that I had never learned before in my life, like math, social studies, and computer skills.

My Life Journey with Learning & How it all Began

Colin McGill – ALP, NSCC Kingstec

Hello my name is Colin McGill; I'm a 24 year old with a bright future ahead of me. But I did not always think I would have a future. Here's my story of how I got my life together and how my learning in school has changed me.

I will begin by telling you I'm not perfect or an honor student. I have struggled throughout life and school, ever since I can remember. I have had a hard life and been down the wrong path and back again, been in trouble with the law, and abused drugs. There was one thing that changed my life and got me back on the right path to school and my future. I'm here to explain how this happened. It all began in elementary school when I was 5. My first day was so overwhelming. I was in shock and really scared. I didn't know what to expect. I was a very shy child and kept to myself and never liked meeting new people had no interest in it.

I went throughout school unnoticed at first, and when I reached Grade 1, my teacher started noticing my reading skills were not where they should be, and I was finding it really hard to take in what she was teaching. However still I was pushed to higher grades. I didn't understand why but I was young and what did I know, I was a child.

So I stayed under the radar and went unnoticed and still kept to myself. I was finding it harder and harder to learn in school and was getting really frustrated with life itself. By the time I started high school I knew I was different from most kids my age but I kept it to myself. I never had friends in high school either, and with trying to keep up with school work and with working on my family's farm every day before and after school (kept me busy anyway) I felt no need for them.

By the time anyone noticed my problems with school I had already failed Grade 8 and it seemed I had lost all interest in life. I was a walking zombie and depressed all the time and just didn't care anymore. My family started getting worried about me and scared because I started showing signs of drug abuse. My family didn't know what to do, until one day they sat down and had a meeting with my teachers and counselor to see what could be done about it. They all knew I needed help by then, and so it was decided that I should see a doctor about this. I bounced from doctor to doctor to find out why I was lashing out at myself. But they had no answers either. So when I reached Grade 11, I had finally had enough. I quit school and stopped going to doctors. I resented my family for making me go through it and stopped talking to them for about 8 months. I was going down a down spiral which I could not stop with drugs and liquor and started getting in trouble with the law. By the age of 20 I was like a ghost to everyone and felt like I was alone in the world. But then something changed my life forever and my world got changed back around.

My younger sister found out she was going to have a baby girl, and she wanted me in her baby's life. Right then and there I knew I had to change. I started going back to my doctor, and asked what I could do. We talked about everything that happened with me

from school, to my family life, and by the time I was done telling him my story I was in tears. He knew I wanted to change; he looked at me and said Colin I think I know someone that could help you. So he got in touch with his fellow doctor and explained everything to him and set up a meeting for me. After meeting with this new doctor and going through some testing, he diagnosed me with having ADHD and depression. He asked me how long I have felt this way and I was not going to lie, so I told him my whole life story. He explained that ADHD can sometimes cause depression and that person can have a lot of trouble in school. He asked me if I could keep seeing him and working with him on my ADHD. I said yes because I knew I had to change my life around and try to go back to school.

So we started having meetings and I started taking meds for my disorders and what a difference it made! I still had a real problem with drugs but started getting tattooed to get it all off my mind, and to my surprise it worked. I have been clean and sober for a year now, and enrolled in ALP at NSCC. To my surprise I started feeling better about myself and got back in touch with my family and started having a life again.

I have now been in school since September and have finished 2 credits, and I am hoping to have honors when I'm finished ALP. My next step will be to take Culinary Arts at NSCC to become a Chef and open my own Irish style pub, and start my life over with great people and friends and family. All it really took was my niece being born to open my eyes and show me there's more to live for, and I can do anything if I have something in my life to work towards and my niece is it, my star in my life.

It Will Happen if You Try

Doug Montrose – ALP, NSCC Cumberland Campus

The time I felt extremely discouraged is when I was trying to enroll into school. One of the main obstacles I encountered was my lack of education. After talking to CREDA, a sponsor of unemployment, I made the decision to give school a shot.

Growing up in Newfoundland was hard for young males in our community. Education was the last thing that was needed or valued in Newfoundland. Money was first, helping feed the family was second. Growing up in a large family, food was scarce and work was plentiful. At a young age I was taken out of school and forced to join the family fishing vessel. I was told you will never need education.

Life happened and years went by and I was working at a dead end job. I was walking to get a coffee at my local coffee shop when I ran into an old friend I haven't seen in years. As our conversation led towards education he informed me he was attending college at N.S.C.C. Then it hit me like a freight train. I will try to enroll to collage at N.S.C.C.

That day was the day that will change my life for the better. I took the steps I needed to take to receive a meeting with Darlene Porter. At that meeting I presented my story to her. Then the journey of waiting began, I waited for almost a week with no response. Deep in my mind I gave up on the idea of returning back to school. Then out of the blue the phone rang and it was Darlene. My heart stood still, then the answer was revealed to me. I was going to be a student of the college at N.S.C.C.

Today education comes first not last. I am almost a graduate of the college for grade twelve and plan to carry on with a trade in the field of Geothermal. "Wow I did it". My teachers are my mentors. Not only do they guide me to succeed, they also care about me. In conclusion no matter how things happen in your life they will happen either for the good or the bad. For me this time it was for the good. One thing I need to remember is when one door closes another will open. When you are ready to become the student: The teacher will appear.

Thank you NSCC.

Learning Journey

Ganga Dhar Humagain – ALP, NSCC Institute of Technology

“There is great meaning in life for those who are willing to journey.” *Jim England*

With the same passion as Mr. England has mentioned, I, my family members, and some of my friends with their respective families made a journey to a new life. We travelled from a Bhutanese Refugee Camp, located in the eastern part of Nepal to the much unknown place of this world, where half the year it snows, a peaceful country called Canada.

Being a refugee itself is very painful, but I have 19 years of experience with this agonizing fact. In 1990, the government of Bhutan ordered us to leave the country and gave different types of physical and mental harassments to the people. The government of Bhutan declared southern Bhutanese as Bhutanese Non- Nationals. Prisoners were either pushed over cliffs or thrown into the rivers, after being stuffed in cowhide sacks with their hands and legs tied. People were tortured, treated inhumanely and punished degradingly using mind control devices and other psychological tactics. The government imposed “One Nation One People Policy” in Bhutan. Thus, people like my family left the country and settled in the eastern part of Nepal in seven different refugees’ camps. Being refugees, we faced many problems like problem of food, clothes, shelter, fire incidents and flood inside the camp several times.

Due to the fire, our property, ornaments, educational documents, pictures, money etc. turned into ash. The image of fire incidents and flood and other incidents still comes in my eye and makes me cry. In addition, children cried for sweets and warm clothes but their parents didn’t have anything to give them and many had to die before their time came. The United Nation High Commissioners for Refugees who was helping Bhutanese refugee since we settled in Nepal and Nepal Government along with International Organization for Migration finally in early 2007 decided to resettle us in seven different countries: USA, Canada, Denmark, Netherland, New Zealand, Norway, and Australia. Innovatively, with the motive to make a difference, in 2008 my family decided to resettle in Canada. By the end of year 2010, we got our flight date for Canada. I was more delighted than any one, traveling in a plane and thinking about molding our lives to betterment than it was in camps in going- to- be new country. Alas! Leaving all our friends, neighbours, and relatives behind

Now we are in Halifax with lots of hopes and innovative notions to make the difference, to upgrade our living standard and education and with the big vision of helping the people who are in need. I know Canada is a turning point of my life. If I were in Nepal I couldn’t fulfill my dream. To fulfill my dream, Nova Scotia Community College plays a vital role because I have got a chance to further my study. I stayed nineteen years being a refugee without any hope, but when I came to Canada the title refugee was removed from my life forever. Finally, I want to give thanks to the government of Canada because they resettled more than three thousand Bhutanese refugees in different parts of Canada.

New Skills-New Confidence

Joy Crowell – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I started my journey in September 2005, at the Barrington Community Learning Center. I remember the day I first went. I was very nervous. I was thinking, “Why am I here?” I wanted to do this, but I had no self confidence, and very low self-esteem.

As a child, going to school, I was a very nervous person. I hated to be around people; I did not fit in, I was overweight, shy, and I was being picked on, which didn’t help the situation.

By the time I went into grade four, I was kind of getting used to being around people and was less shy. When I went into high school, at Barrington Municipal High, things changed back to where they were when I was younger. I was overwhelmed with shyness, and was really nervous, I felt out of place again. Girls my age were pretty, and slim, and boys were hanging around them, while they only made fun of me.

I only had a few friends, and I was mostly alone. One girl I had as a friend, we were basically stuck together, like sisters. If she stayed home, I would too; or if I was at school and she wasn’t, I would go home.

I struggled to get into grade eight. I had pretty well quit during the second year of the eighth grade. I could not keep pushing myself to go to school; I was on medication and sick. I could no longer push myself to go.

At age fifteen, I got a job as a babysitter and worked at this until I turned sixteen. Then, I got a job at a local fish plant, working on fish. I got married at the age of twenty and became mom to a wonderful son at the age of twenty-three and settled into life. At that time I was still a bit shy, overweight, and had still had low self-esteem.

As I got older, I knew I was lacking something in my life, but I did not know how I was going to get there. I knew I should not have quit school. I was saying to myself, “Why did you do that? You should have pushed yourself through!”

When my son, Jordan, started school, I knew I was going to make sure he had his education. I wanted his life to mean something, I wanted him to go places, and I wanted his dreams to come true. That was something I wanted for myself but since I had quit school, how was I going to get there?

When I turned thirty-six in 2005, I decided to enroll in Adult Learning Program, in Barrington. Hearing about this from a friend I decided to act on it, not knowing what I was in for. I was thinking to myself that I had to make that first step, by making a telephone call for an appointment with the teachers. This is where I would meet two of the women who would change my life around.

For the first year, it was a great learning experience. I was still shy, but yet feeling somewhat comfortable. In June of that year, I wrote my G.E.D test in Yarmouth and passed Science. I was thinking one down and a few more to go.

As the years went on, I passed one subject at a time. I was getting upset because I was thinking of reasons why I should keep going through with this. I thought, "At this rate I will be too old to go to school anymore and still will never have made anything of myself or my life!"

One teacher and I became great friends. She was there for me and encouraged me to keep going on with the schooling. She gave me a new outlook on life; she taught me how to build my self-confidence. Through being taught by her, the low self-esteem and shyness left, and I also felt like I could do this.

I took a few years off from classes but kept thinking "I can't quit. I have to go back and finish my schooling." I'm happy to say that it is now 2012, and I am back into the adult learning program with only my math to accomplish.

Doors have opened up to different opportunities. I am still going to the night classes of the adult learning center, with the thoughts of finishing my high school. I am enrolling at the Shelburne Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College, with thoughts of the CCA of Office Administration programs. Also, I am allowing the Lord to lead me wherever he may want me to go.

I have prayed for years to have this dream of mine be accomplished, but I did not know how to do it. But now I have seen that God was preparing me for this, years ago. It took what seemed like a long time for me to get here, but I thank God and the people in my life that have encouraged me to keep going and to not give up. Life is a journey, it may not be easy, it may have struggles, but I have dreams that I hope to accomplish so I don't quit, I keep pushing on! Where God will take me, I do not know, but I know it will be great.

My Journey Towards Courage

Kim Barry – Digby Adult Learning Association

What does a journey towards courage really mean in someone's life? To me it means overcoming a fear of the unknown. For me the fear was returning to school and being afraid to fail again. The risk of failure is like standing on the end of a cliff in the dark with someone telling you to take a step forward. I just want to run to my safety zone where I know what to expect.

Past failures hold your thoughts and emotions captive. They convince you there is no way you can succeed. You are not smart enough. You are too old to learn anything new. There are a lot of good teachers out there, but there are also teachers who just don't care. There are those who just don't realize that words spoken to a student, positive or negative, have an impact for the rest of a person's life. For example, when I attended school, I had a teacher that if I failed a test would make me sit in front of the class wearing a hat with big letters saying "I AM STUPID". If I had the wrong answers on my homework I would be hit with a yardstick or told I would be a gravedigger the rest of my life. At my school there was a teacher who would throw students against the blackboard when he became angry. I have even had a pencil lead broken off in my head. I still carry the scar today. There was no peace at school and home was no different. I had no place where I felt safe or at peace. As a child I felt overwhelmed.

These things impacted me deeply and finally I had had enough and quit school. Years later I decided I wanted and needed to continue my education. I had to somehow deal with all the years of fear if I stood any chance of success. There were so many issues to consider. First and most importantly there were my 2 grandchildren who I am raising. For the past 7 years I have had the children because their mother has issues she has to deal with. My 11 year old granddaughter has type 1 diabetes, anger management issues, and a learning disability. My 8 year old grandson has a blood disorder. I had to think about their health, after school activities, and childcare. On top of all these things I was new to this area. I moved to Digby so the children could spend time with their mother. At this time my daughter was making a lot of changes in her life. She wanted to become a better person. My grandchildren were bringing home homework and I was having a hard time understanding it. I became very concerned their education would suffer if there were no one at home to support them. My daughter had decided to return to school to get her grade twelve and that got me thinking if she could do it why couldn't I.

Eventually I made the call that changed everything. I spoke to someone who pointed me in the direction I needed to go. After a short time I received a call from the Digby Community Education Centre (DCEC). They wanted me to come in for an assessment. While writing the assessment I kept thinking, what are you doing here? You couldn't do this when you were younger, so what makes you think you can do this at 50? All I wanted to do was to get up and run away. Finally the testing was finished and boy was I glad. I made it this far and was very happy I had stayed. When I received the next call, from DCEC, I was shocked to find out I had been accepted. I was going to get another

chance at school and I planned to take full advantage this time around. I never dreamed I would return to school or that there were agencies out there that would help financially.

My first day of class, 2011, was when I met Joy, who was my instructor. She was so encouraging and friendly to me that I couldn't wait to return the next day. There were times when I found myself struggling but she would always be there saying, you can do this, just take your time, relax, or you will be fine. I don't think I would have stayed if I hadn't had her constant support encouraging me to have confidence in myself. Joy was the first teacher to tell me I could accomplish anything and that I would get whatever I happen to be working on. She does these things because she wants to, not because she has to. I know I must face my fears if I ever plan to succeed at anything in my life. School is not an easy challenge for most people at any age. I know this now because I have met people of all ages returning to the classroom. At the end of my first year I (Kim Barry) received a Personal Achievement Award from the Adult Learning Program. I was shocked because I had never received an award for anything ever in my life. Now I have the confidence to move to Level 3. This year (2012) I am with Mona who is very understanding. Whenever things seem to get to me and I start second guessing my decision to continue in school she tells me, you can do it. Sometimes those few words are all one needs to get back on track. Now I can teach my grandchildren just how important an education is in their lives by setting a good example.

I am thankful for having the opportunity to attend the Digby Community Education Centre. The teachers and principal are always there to encourage, motivate, or just listen if that is what is needed.

If you have made the decision to return to school, I would encourage you to face your fears and follow your dreams. The first step to success is to tell yourself I want this, I can do this. Don't let fear be the reason not to reach your goal. There are no guarantees in life and if you want the chance, you are the only one that can make it happen.

My Learning Journey

Kimberly Withrow – Sydney Adult High School

As I was sitting at home the day after my grandmother was buried at the age of 94, I thought, after taking care of her what lies ahead for me now? Should I attend night school, look for another job or try and go get my grade 12. After much consideration, I went and talked to my father. I explained that I wanted to get my Business Administration Degree and he suggested that I go to Adult high school. So off I went and what a time.

Being over the age of forty and out of school over 20 years, I had a lot to learn. My first day was the hardest trying to figure out what courses I needed and how many I needed to take. After the first day, reality hits me right in the face. The school board could not find my transcripts from high school in 1986. So, I was in a terrible state because no one knew what I am to take, so we ended up winging it. My courses would consist of Biology, English, Global History and Business Technology. I am using my brain in these courses. I have noticed that people in their late teens and early twenties do not have the understanding nor the capacity to figure out that getting your education is a learning experience. You do not just show up and the teacher passes you a perfect grade.

Just like life you have to work at it and it takes hard work and determination in order to achieve this. I am now doing plenty of homework and cannot wait to get to class each day, if only I knew now what I could have accomplished the first time I would have stuck to it. If anyone was to ask me if they should go back to school at any age I would tell them to hang on, sit back and enjoy getting your education, it's worth the journey in the long run.

I have applied to go to the NSCC in Sydney for September to take the Business Administration course as a mature student, a decision that was not made lightly but needed to be. .No Matter what life seems to throw at me, I will always succeed and now with my journey coming to an end at Sydney Adult High and a whole new one awaiting me in September, I cannot wait to see my learning journey take me across the stage at the NSCC in the year of 2014 when all my dreams will become reality.

New Skills, New Confidence

Kristy Swinimer – Barrington Community Learning Centre

When Ali was ten years old, she took her dog Skip for a walk to the playground just around the corner from her house. When she was walking with Skip she noticed a strange man coming out of the store, and hopped in his truck and started driving really fast down the lane. Skip got loose from his leash and ran in the middle of the road. "Smack, Bang, Boom!" Ali heard the horrible bang sound, she started running to Skip screaming, crying and yelling for her mother who was outside planting flowers. When she heard Ali yelling, she ran to her daughter to see what was going on. Ali's mother took Skip to the Vet, who said, Skip might not make through the night. The next day, Ali called the Vet to see how Skip made out. The doctor said, "Sorry to tell you that Skip passed away". Ali cried and told her mother that she wanted to become a Veterinarian to help animals.

When Ali was sixteen, she decided didn't need school so she dropped out of school to work in a fish plant. Ali didn't realize that if she dropped out of high school she couldn't become a Veterinarian. Ali worked hard in a fish plant for five years.

Ali was at her friend's house complaining about work, as she always does. All of a sudden Alycia said, "Why don't you go back to school so you could become a Veterinarian?" A couple of weeks went by and Ali called the Adult Learning Centre, to see about getting her grade 12. They told her to come in for an assessment next week.

Ali went to class every day for two years. When Ali was done with level 3, she went to Nova Scotia Community College for level 4. When she finished the course and she had her diploma then she could apply to Veterinarian school.

Two years later, after getting her grade 12, Ali was off to Veterinarian school. She was happy that she made the right choice of going back to school. Now she has all the confidence in the world.

New Skills New Confidence

Lisa Helin – Barrington Community Learning Centre

I find that since I started back to school again as an adult I have more skills and confidence in myself at everything I do. The first skill that I have would be writing better essays in English as I have matured more and have less anxiety then I did twenty years ago.

The second skill I have would be to understand math as the teacher sits down with me to go over things I don't understand even if it takes more than one day to help me. The more I'm trying in the math subject the better I'm getting and starting to believe in myself.

The third skill that I have would be more responsibility in contacting any one of my teachers to let them know if I couldn't make it that night, as school is important to me. I would like to get my grade 12 education and continue on to NSCC to take a course in Office Administration.

My fourth new skill would be that I'm not afraid to ask questions if I don't understand anything. As an adult I was also afraid to ask for help thinking people would think I'm stupid because of my age ,now I know that it doesn't matter how old you are if there is something you're stuck on and don't understand then just ask someone.

The fifth skill that I have is getting to school early and not being late as it's very important to be prompt and on time so you don't lose out on anything in that subject. I love going to school every night to learn new things. I have better confidence in myself now than ever before.

When I was younger and in grade 9 at the age of 16 I never cared about school as I became pregnant and never cared about school until I became an adult. I just wished that back then someone would have made me go back to school. If I had of known back then what I know now, I never would have quit. I'm just thankful that they now have adult learning centers for people like me no matter what your age is, you can always learn new things and get your education. I want my kids to know that you can do anything you put your mind to do and never give up on your dreams. I'm very thankful for teachers that have patience and can help me be a strong and independent person.

New Skills-New Confidence

Pamela Thornhill – Barrington Community Learning Centre

My name is Pamela Thornhill. I am 37 years old. I left school when I was sixteen to be a mom and a house wife. I never had much of any dreams for myself, because for the fact I hated school, because of being bullied a lot, so I never really took the time to think about where I wanted my life to go.

When I was 22 and my mom died, I turned to my grandmother and used my extra time looking after her and doing stuff for her that she couldn't do for herself. When I turned 30, I knew that I would love to be able to go and take care of the elderly, doing for them what they cannot do for themselves.

It took me 7 years to finally get my nerve up and pursue this dream of mine. I am so grateful that I did. I have learned stuff that I didn't think I would ever know. I have been able to get up in front of people and speak, which I would never have done before. I can now sit down with my children and help them with homework that I never understood before. I still have a long way to go to reach my dream, but it is closer now than it was a year ago. I will not stop until I have achieved what I have been wanting for so long.

It is all due to my family and my instructors for the great support I have been given throughout this time.

From Payzant Street I Am

Rachel Guest – Queens Adult High School

I dropped out of school when I was 15 because I didn't feel confident enough to think I could finish. I have gone through such a hard life. I became pregnant at the age of 15, which is another reason why I left school in the first place. Growing up with very little, would cause anyone to have a hard life. Then one day something changed! I just decided it was time to do something with my life. I lost 100 lbs in 8 months. I had taken the first step. This gave me the confidence to walk across the road from my house and through the doors of the Queens Adult High School in September of 2011. Here I am today about to graduate, earning top marks, excelling in everything I am given and feeling a great sense of accomplishment. This is something I thought I would never do....This is one of the best things I have ever done for myself!

The poem you are about to read tells a story. It is the story of my life. There is a lot of pain and suffering in it, but please know that it ends with hope!

From Payzant Street I am

*I am from a lonely little street
I am from a tiny little town
I am from a street that is crawling with kids
I am from a house that is no good
I am from a yard that is too small
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a mom that tries her best
I am from a father who could care no less
I am from a family that has no money
I am from a world where nothing is fair
I am from a place where nobody cares
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from tiny old Liverpool
I am from a small family
I am from an angry family
I am from a poor family
I am from a broken family
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a life of misery
I am from a life of grief
I am from a life of loss*

*I am from a life of complications
I am from a life of struggles
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a small half a house
I am from an extremely damaged house
I am from a noisy house
I am from a run down house
I am from a low income house
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from 1/8 of an acre of a yard
I am from a yard I share with all the neighbors
I am from a rock filled yard
I am from a no grass yard
I am from a muddy yard
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a mom who does what she can
I am from a mom who loves me all she can
I am from a mom who has struggled for years
I am from a mom who has watched me cry everyday
I am from a mom who tried to help me heal my pain
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a dad who runs from his problems
I am from a dad who loves me no more
I am from a dad who hates me more everyday
I am from a dad who denies me
I am from a dad who acts like I don't live on this earth
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a school where I am a name not a number
I am from a school of help and support
I am from a school that will help me make something out of myself
I am from a school that gives me hope
I am from a school that has and will continue to change me
From Payzant Street I am*

*I am from a different person now
I am from a world where I will make a difference*

*I am from a better me
I am from a brighter person
I am from Rachel, I am from me
From Payzant Street I was*

My Learning Journey

Rachel Murphy – ALP, NSCC Truro Campus

Learning is hard until you find a place in your life where you find the support and the resources to turn it from hard to something fun and important. I always found learning hard and it kept me back from so many things. I went to school until grade 9 when I had to drop out. My family life was very difficult and my home was full of drug and alcohol abuse and violence. That kind of a life affects everything. I struggled with surviving and in 2003; I decided to give learning another try by attending classes with CALA. It was there that I knew that I was not stupid and that I could learn and that I could have a future.

I took a few years off to care for my growing family of three children, all who have had their own struggles with learning differences.

In 2008, I entered level 3 at the Nova Scotia Community College and found out that not only could I learn but also that learning was fun and interesting and that it was changing who I was.

I decided right away that I was going to work as hard as I could and be involved with as much as possible. I joined the student Ambassador Program and the first year received the silver award for volunteer involvement and my second year I got a gold award for my work. This is my third year as an Ambassador and this year I am the Assistant Coordinator for the whole program. I have also been involved with the Student Association since I first came to campus and received an award from them for significant volunteer contributions. The NSCC has also asked me to be a part of many committees like the Ma'wiami and the Student Success night banquet.

I was assessed for learning differences while I was here and now have the resources to help me be successful. I still struggle in a lot of areas but with the help of assistive technology and tutors I have found the tools to help me learn and use my learning. I am proud to say that I am now also a tutor for Career Skills and help students find their tools to help them learn.

It is hard sometimes to juggle three children, a home life and my volunteer and school work but I try my best and know that my children are watching me set a good example. I have started talking to them about college now which is something my family had not done for me. I will graduate this year with my grade 12 and my pride. I have been accepted into Human Services for the fall of 2012 and want to go for a career in Social Work.

Everyone can learn and be successful, even me.

Raymond's Story

Raymond Hogue – Sydney Adult High School

When a student is young at heart, full of energy and dreams, the prospect of going to school for the first time, must seem like it is going to cramp his style. You know what I mean. He'd rather be playing street hockey and getting on with his dreams of being in the NHL playoffs. So at that time in his life, an education is probably the last thing on his mind. They do not realize the importance of a true education for adult life. I didn't, but now I do. So now that I am fifty-four years of age, it's easy to look back and see what I missed out on since I was unable to finish high school when I was younger. I needed to work to support my family.

However, the only sure thing in life is change. That certainly holds true for me. After working most of my life in the furniture industry, I faced an unexpected challenge. For the last fifteen years I was a successful businessman in Sydney. I operated a furniture refinishing business then unforeseen events caused my world to turn upside down. This happened when I broke my ankle and had my foot twist around at about 180 degrees in an industrial accident. After eight operations and four years later, I had to accept the fact that I would never work a labourer's job again.

Finding myself looking for a new hope for my future, I was not ready to give up. Just then I realized that even though I had a setback, there was a lot I could still offer in a more academic nature. So my search has begun for a higher education. I enjoy coming to school and never miss time and I am always eager to learn. Although my accident set me back in my life, I have also learned that it is opening new doors and new opportunities for my new future.

I am presently finishing my grade twelve and have been accepted into the Business Administration at NSCC, Marconi Campus. I should be starting in September 2012.

The Climb

Robin Murphy – ALP, NSCC Truro Campus

High school for me was hard. It wasn't that I wasn't able to do the work. There was always something better I wanted to be doing. I figured that I would always be able to make up the time. I had a job so I didn't think I needed a diploma.

Flash forward to the year two thousand and nine. My life was a mess. I had just left my abusive husband, had only my children, no education, no money, no future. A counselor asked me what I wanted out of life. My answer was simple; I wanted a good life for my family. I wanted a good job that made me good money and a home of my own. She told me to take small steps; eventually I would find a way to make my dream come true.

My first step was I needed a safe place for my family, easy enough. The next step was to get a diploma. That was going to be a lot harder than I thought. I was ashamed for not graduating high school. I thought that I was a loser. That soon changed. I met so many people like me. People who found life got in the way of their education too.

My first semester of ALP flew by. That summer I decided to focus on my personal life. I hung out with my new friends and even found myself a new man to love.

Right before school started back up I found my world crumbling. This time because of the wonderful people at the school and my new sense of direction I managed to have a soft place to land.

I threw myself into my school and family. I joined the ambassador program at the NSCC; I went on a chick retreat created for women at the NSCC to build confidence and friendship; I entered the Campus Idol contest. I used my new confidence and my new friendship to pull me through the darkness of my pain and I managed to come out the other side stronger.

I have found the skills that I developed over the last year are actually beneficial to my everyday life. The group work and presentations have built up my self-confidence and people skills. Other assignments have taught me how to handle conflict resolutions between my children.

I have learned so much attending the ALP program. I know now that I am a person who can overcome obstacles. I realized I am that in no way am I a loser, I never was. I was just afraid to rock the boat. Instead I let the boat float wherever it was going. Now not only do I rock the boat, I jump into the water knowing I have the strength to swim against the current. The shore is never too far away. If I can't make it on my own I have friends and a support system that'll be there when I flounder.

Knowhow and Knowledge

Robyn Ritchot – Hants Learning Network

Returning to school as an adult can have many benefits. Being an adult learner, I have learned how to build up my confidence and to help myself get new skills. The Adult Learning Program has made a difference in my personal life.

I can remember starting out back in 2010/11 not knowing how to write a proper essay and I used to get stressed over it, but now thanks to my teacher's help I can write a proper essay and don't get as stressed. I have noticed a big difference in writing an essay this time around. I am starting to enjoy writing essays on different topics.

Also, I have learned a lot of new English that has helped me to improve things such as spelling, vocabulary, sentence structure, and has allowed me to help other people out.

Another difference I have noticed is that my math has really improved since I started level 3 back in 2010. I have learned more about different math I didn't know how to do before such as integers, geometry, and so on.

I am starting to notice a change in myself thanks to going back to school. It is helping me build up my self-confidence more and to get new skills that I didn't have before.

New Skills, New Confidence

Ryan Cunningham – Barrington Community Learning Centre

This is the story of Ryan the fisherman and how he compares himself now to ten years ago. Ryan was an alcoholic and a heavy smoker. Nobody or nothing was any good. I didn't respect anything. All I wanted was a drink in my hand and a cigarette in my mouth. I never had a care in the world.

Then, one day, I met this girl Bethany. Bethany had kidney failure and required dialysis treatment three times a week at the Yarmouth hospital, which was a 45 minute drive away. I went back and forth so much it seemed more like six times a week instead of three.

On one of these routine trips to the hospital, I don't know if you could say it dawned on me, or it was like a voice spoke to me that said, "Ryan, if you keep leading this kind of life it is just going to take you to a dark abyss." But that is what it took to get my priorities straight, watching a young girl hooked up to a dialysis machine, pretty much at death's door and nothing I could do about it. So many of us don't know how precious our health is.

So here it is, ten years later, I still haven't had a drink or a cigarette. I am currently enrolled at the Barrington Learning Centre where I am trying to get my GED. Then, from there get enrolled at NSCC in Shelburne where I will apply for a course in electrical, plumping or pipefitting. I also just recently passed First Aid A and B and got my WHMIS certificate through the Learning Centre.

I feel more self-motivated and have a lot more respect towards others. I would also like to express thanks and gratitude to those for letting me participate in the program.

And, just one more thing, I would like to say I don't expect to win reward for writing this little story but maybe if somebody reads this and gets influenced or inspired and it helps them in anyway then that's prize or reward enough for me.

Ryan the fisherman, then and now.

Sacha's Story

Sacha Court – ALP, NSCC Institute of Technology

I grew up in Charlottetown P.E.I. I am a small town Island girl where everything is so reserved and laid back. Everyone knows everyone. A spot where all you did is think of something more and dream of bigger and better. I went to Sherwood Elementary, from grades 1 through 6. Then I went to Stonepark Junior High from grades 7 to 9. I enjoyed junior high. I started broadening my mind to learn new ideas and opened up to all new possibilities. I made friends and experienced life to the fullest. I graduated junior high and had the time of my life that summer. I then went to Charlottetown Rural High School; it was more of a social scene.

My learning track was starting to drift into a different journey altogether. Then I got into a car accident and it threw me all off track. Some issues arose about attendance at school, so I was asked to leave. I took a course called the L.E.A.P program. It was a course that was to help define who you are. It was preparing you for the world. It provided you with social skills, and employment skills to help you to succeed in life. I completed the program then I took advantage of the help they offered. I then enrolled myself into GED classes. You would work from the book and have one teacher. That was all they offered for upgrading. I attempted to succeed in my studies but just couldn't get there. I then proceeded to work. I cleaned for 5 years, and then I lost my father. I just decided enough was enough. The same faces every day, same job, every day. I needed something beyond this. I gave my 2 weeks' notice, packed my whole life in a U hall, left and never looked back.

I have been living in Halifax for almost 3 years; a fresh start in a new place where no one knows me. I looked around to see what there was to offer, and I came across FLEX. I started taking classes but found it to be very clicky and it felt like I was right back in high school. Classes were over loaded and it wasn't fitting my needs. While in FLEX, I heard about the ALP Adult Learning Program. It took me a year to finally work up the courage to enroll myself back in school. Starting off was rough, but then I got the hang of it. I overcame fears and what it was that actually kept me away for so long.

I have been taking ALP since October 2011. I had the drive to push myself along. I feel as if I am doing it and this is the place I need to be. The classes are a good size and you work at your own pace. They will fix your schedule if it does not suit you or your needs. It's like having everything handed to you, so why pass it up. I am living in this city of Halifax, and I am working at a local pizza shop on weekends. I attend school throughout the week. It's never too late to fix your life the way you want it. Even the bus strike hasn't stopped me. It takes around 40 minutes to get to and from school. I am blessed to live close by. I can finally say I found a program that suits me and walking is not going to stop me from pursuing my chance for a better life.

The Pink Flip-Flop

Sandi Maxwell – ALP, NSCC Marconi Campus

Aug 26, 2011

About a week or so ago, I was down on the beach. High tide was just starting to come in. I decide to walk up the shore and let the sand squish through my toes. I kicked off my pink flip-flops; put them up the bank a couple of feet and la, la, la went on my merry way.

Twenty minutes later I head back down the beach to grab my shoes and start for home. The flip-flops are not hard to see-- they're bright neon pink, a "beacon on the rocks" so to speak. I head up the bank. The closer I get the more I realize there is only one shoe! I begin looking around. As my brain starts to compute what has obviously happened, I glance toward the water; my pink flip-flop is floating ever so gently away from the shore. Rats! In after it I go. With every labored step I take, the shoe floats three feet away. Rats again! I stand there in waist deep sea water watching helplessly as my shoe floats further from my grasp. Stupid pink flip-flop.

Aug 30, 2011

I have stood on the top of the bank, at the edge of the grass several times since the pink flip-flop went sailing away. What is it about this silly shoe that keeps me so intrigued? Is it the loss of a five dollar investment? I think it's the fact that my flip-flop is off on some wonderful voyage, meeting new and exciting people, enjoying new cultures, new ideas, sights and sounds, all of this without me! Stupid pink flip-flop.

Sept 8, 2011

The day is beautiful. I wander outside across the yard to my salt beaten patio chair, plunk my butt down and gaze across the ocean. My mind begins to fill with the day's events. I've gone back to school after thirty one years. Everything seems new and exciting, scary and challenging, all at the same time.

Once again the pink flip-flop floats into my mind. Why is it gnawing at me so much? Then slowly it hits me. (Like the math I'm about to learn!) Maybe I am the pink flip-flop, sailing off to new adventures, new people, cultures and wonderful things to discover. Maybe the flip-flop was showing me to let go of the comfortable shore I'd become accustomed to and head off for new land! Then again, maybe I'm just a dreamer. Either way I'll always remember that stupid pink flip-flop!

A Day. A Week. A Year... LIFE

Stephanie Benoit – ALP, NSCC Institute of Technology

Days. Weeks. Years. Life has never been easy for me. Just me even trying to figure out simple tasks that one person finds so natural I find imposable. I have never really understood why I wasn't like everyone else or why I had to be so different. I looked the same I talked the same but I am not the same as everyone else.

I was seven years old the first time I was tested for a learning disability and the results of that test would change my life forever. I was diagnosed with a severe learning disability that affected my ability to learn the same as others my age. I don't really know what they would call my disability. My reading and writing comprehension at that time was in the second percentile. My ability to even remember what I was learning didn't exist. All I know is at that time I was a seven year old child, a child that had just started school, a child that liked to have fun, play, learn new things and just be a kid. I have never really understood how at the age of seven they could determine my educational outcome but they do and they did.

I remember starting my second year of elementary and the teacher giving everyone in the class books to read but me. At that time I didn't know what to think I was hurt I felt so different and out of place. My whole school experience made me feel like I was a lesser person than everyone else. I felt as if I couldn't be anything or do anything with my life. My class mates in elementary school all looked at me differently because I would sit in class and do nothing. I was never part of any class activities unless it was gym class then I was part of the class. Teachers would claim that I was a distraction in their classes and that I had an anger problem. But when no one will listen to what you have to say you get frustrated and you do get angry. I can say with all honesty I never learned a dam thing in elementary school. If anything they pushed me through as fast as they could.

When I got to high school, the elementary school told my parents that all the proper supports would be in place so I could learn the material the teachers had planned for the year. But as I have learned, you cannot trust what anyone tells you. The first day of high school, I got my class schedule. I had one class and it was in the special needs class. I don't want to be rude, but when I think of special needs, I think of people with autism or severe mental retardation and that was what my class consisted of. I do have special needs but not to the extent that some of the other teens had. So I never went to class. I was embarrassed to go. I felt so little and once again I felt like I was worthless. Finally I was expelled from my school and sent all over the map to try and find a school that would take me. I tried to go back to school when I got older but it never really worked out for me. Every school I tried, I would lie about my disability and not claim that I even had one, just so I could be like everyone else. I was so tired of being different and people thinking just because I had a learning disability I was different (a dummy).

When I was eighteen, I was tested again and the results were the same as the last four tests they had given me throughout the years. In the last report, they labeled me as

having a permanent handicap. Instead of me trying to go back to school I tried to work. Every job I would try I found so hard to understand. Even the basic operation of a cash register was confusing. So I would get fired or I would quit because I would get frustrated with myself. It was like I was fighting with myself all the time. I would never ever tell an employer that I had a disability just in fear of losing or not even getting a fair chance in an interview.

So every day on my own I would try to read. It didn't matter what it was just as long as I tried. After a few years, I got better with my reading and my writing improved a little too. I did find a job that I worked at for a few years and really enjoyed it.

Years have gone by now and I have a wonderful daughter. As I look at her I think I want her to have a good life. So my challenge once again is to educate myself so I can better my life and my daughter's life. I moved to Halifax N.S. from Victoria B.C in the summer of 2011. I didn't have much luck finding work. I was asked if I would like to go back to school by a lady at Motor Works. I said yes but I told her that I find it challenging in school. But anyway, I enrolled in the NSCC ALP program. I didn't know what to think when I started; I was scared to fail again, like I had done so many times before. So I'm am seven months into the program and loving it. I have never felt so successful. The supports I get from my teachers are great. It's like they know just the right things to tell you when you need to hear them. The school's learning disability supports are great. I have books I can listens to and many other devices that help so much with my learning I feel normal for now. I still have my challenges with my everyday life, but it is working out for the most part.

New Skills, New Confidence

Wanita Shay – ALP, NSCC Cumberland Campus

I have wanted to earn my high school diploma for twenty-seven years, but the timing was never right. I have always regretted and felt guilty for not graduating. I feel I could have been a better provider for my family, if only I had stayed in school.

I found the entire educational environment difficult when I returned to school. I came to school with grade nine and no credits. I was 43 years old and worried about whether I could actually do the work. The individual schedules, trying to study and read with distractions were all challenges for me. Financially, it has been tough as well. The most difficult for me was, and continues to be, studying at home. I am a single parent, with four children who are used to me being very accessible when I am home from work. After working hard for three months, I had earned three credits and finished four courses before the summer break. Completing these courses gave me confidence and showed me that I could do it.

I love going to school. I love the feeling that I am working toward something I have always wanted. I work hard and it is nice to get a test back with a corresponding mark. But the best part of going back to school for me is working with the staff and faculty. It is very encouraging to work with people who believe in you so much. I have gained so many skills in the ALP program. Manipulating Microsoft Word, Power Point, Prezi and designing a newsletter are all skills that I can carry forward to a career.

I have one, quite large, personal goal. My children and I have never had a home of our own. When I am finished school, I hope to buy our first home.

I plan to graduate from the Adult Learning Program in June, 2012. I have been accepted for the Office Administration course in the fall of 2012 and I plan to continue with the Office Administration: Software Information Management program in the fall of 2013. I am committed to these goals and I know I am in the right place to achieve them.