



***Celebrating Adult Learners' Week 2014
March 29 - April 6***

I'm Still Learning



Literacy Nova Scotia acknowledges and thanks the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Government of Canada's Adult Learning, 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 six 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; 86 learners participated in the workshops held in Barrington, Dartmouth, Eskasoni, Guysborough, Truro, and Windsor. Workshop participants, as well as learners from English as an Additional Language, seniors and workplace/workforce programs were invited to enter the contest with a video or written submission. LNS received 50 submissions and are pleased to share them.

The 2014 contest winners are:

- ◆ Linda Larade – Community based Levels I & II
- ◆ Stephanie Paul – Adult High School, NSCC, Community based Levels III & IV
- ◆ Scott Vaughan – Workplace/Workforce
- ◆ Mamawa Kamara – Seniors' Literacy, Family Literacy, English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The four winners of the contest were honored at a reception held on April 4th at the Halifax World Trade and Convention Centre. The winners read their submissions. Lora MacEachern, Associate Deputy Minister of Labour and Advanced Education attended and was presented with copies of the writings. Ms. MacEachern congratulated the winners and all adult learners for their determination and commitment. Ms. MacEachern read the Adult Learners' Week Proclamation on behalf of Premier Stephen McNeil.

Eligible submissions received for the contest are published in this booklet. Literacy Nova Scotia thanks all who shared their stories and enthusiasm for adult learning. These writings demonstrate how learning has made a difference and will inspire others for years to come.



Nova Scotia

Proclamation

International Adult Learners' Week

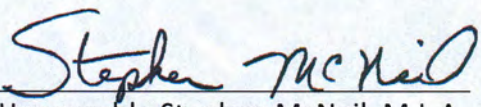
WHEREAS *Nova Scotians mark International Adult Learners' Week from March 29th to April 6th, 2014, celebrating the achievements of adult learners and the organizations that support them; and*

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

WHEREAS *lifelong learning has a significant impact on individuals, their families and communities, by helping better prepare the province's workforce to seize the economic opportunities of today and tomorrow;*

THEREFORE I, Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim the week of March 29th to April 6th, 2014 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.




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

Signed at Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Brian Fells – Nova Scotia Community College

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJLeVpyeFVI&feature=youtu.be>

Wafa Ben Nassr – Cunard Learning Centre

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Samia Eldik – Halifax Community Learning Network

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Deborah Siggers – Port Hawkesbury Literacy Program

William Fahey – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

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Melanie Bent- Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

Mary Hutchison – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

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Keith Finn – Halifax Community Learning Network

Darlene Strong – Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network

Rebecca Gower – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Karen Coulter – Colchester Adult Learning Association

Todd Kenyon – Nova Scotia Community College

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Kayla Jacobi - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Viola Baker - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

Theresa MacLeod - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

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Manavi Atiwoto – Halifax Public Libraries

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I'm Still Learning

Linda Larade - Community Learning Association North of Smokey

Ever since I went back to school, I learned a lot about life. Not just reading and writing but about things that happen every day. I had to quit school at a young age to go and work at the fish plant. This was all I knew for a long time. When I was 18 I had my daughter and ended up moving to a different place and a different fish plant. It wasn't until I went back to school 6 years ago that I realized how much I had to learn.

When I returned to school I was on welfare because the fish plant had closed and I didn't know anything else. There were many years where I turned to drinking and I was depressed. I have learned so much since I went back to school. I now know that there is so much to learn and I want to keep on learning.

Since I have gone back to school, my life is so much better. It makes me feel good about myself and I can even read in front of people now. Because I grew up in a French Acadian village I thought I would never read English. I now have a full time job with benefits and I even bought a car. I wrote my beginners test in May of 2013 and I just got my license in December. I cried because I was so happy!

Every day I learn something new. I can do things that I never thought I would do. I read recipes for cooking now and I have started to read small novels in class. I understand the labels at the grocery store now and that helps me to be a better shopper. I can even text! I learned to use a computer when I first went back to school. This has helped me in so many ways. It makes me feel like I belong like everyone else.

I am 51 years old and as you can see, I'm still learning and loving every minute of it. It has taken me a little longer than some, but I'm grateful to have had a great teacher who helped me along the way. There is still so much I want to learn and I hope that I can write my GED someday.

I see how far I've come and I know that I can learn more. I am a different person than I was 6 years ago because of my learning. My hope is to never stop learning.

How Learning Has Changed My Life

Stephanie Paul - Literacy Network Unama'ki

I am a 34 year old single mother of three from the Eskasoni Reserve. I have been out of school for thirteen years. Back in September 2013 I applied for the adult program at TEC. I was accepted and realized that if I could succeed at this, then my lifelong dream of getting a science degree could become a reality.

In December, I wrote the GED. I thought I might pass some, but certainly not all of the tests. I waited for the results to become available without much faith in the outcome. My teacher looked online for my results - I had passed every subject, but the math mark wasn't available - failure, I thought. My teacher called Halifax and asked why my mark wasn't showing and was told to try again. We checked later on and to my surprise I had passed. I was stunned and very proud that working so hard from September to December had paid off! I was allowed to remain in the adult program to help me for university.

Since I have returned to school and passed my GED, my family looks at me in a more positive way because I am doing something to better my life. They see a positive change in me and notice I have more self esteem than before. One thing that has always interfered with my education is my fear of crowds. I have managed to face my fear by returning to school. So far, so good - I am comfortable in my class and more determined than ever to continue with my education.

Learning has also made a difference to me as a mother - I am a more positive role model for my children. They are proud of me for returning to school, and this motivates me to work harder. When my oldest son used to get stuck with his homework, I wasn't able to help him like I can now.

I am now taking two high school courses - Environmental Science 12 and English 12 through correspondence. These credits will help me when I apply to the CBU Bachelor of Science, Environmental Studies Program.

Learning has helped me stay sober. I can refrain from using drugs when I have something to do that requires me to concentrate. I am saving money and I don't worry about what others think. Best of all, I get to enjoy quality time with my children and family. Education will help me acquire a higher paying job. In today's world, education is critical in the face of ever changing technology. There are jobs available today that did not exist in the past.

Learning lets me give something back to my community. People see that it is never too late to return to school - age doesn't matter. I have received many positive comments - being seen as a role model and in this new light has deepened my appreciation of life and all it has to offer.

I'm Still Learning

Scott Vaughan - South Shore Work Activity Program

I'm still learning every day, what can I say?
Waking up every time as I grow strong
Believe it won't take as long
Open my eyes and realize, to seek take a peek
Understand, because I know for sure I'll be a better man
When I'm learning at different jobs
Always smile, does not matter if it will take a while I'll be around for so many days
I'm still learning in different ways
At a normal pace, this is not a race
I would love to learn in a different place
Myself and everyone else has a chance to learn
Work together, we will all have a turn
Being successful in what I'm good at
Showing that I am respectful
Having pride and joy in things I love
Makes me feel like a wonderful dove
I'm still learning even when I try
Not going to lie I will stand on my own feet
Hope one day I will get a chance to meet that someone
About whom I care
Tell them what I learned and ask them if I can share
This is who I am
This is who I will always be
This is what I know and see
Seeing my reflection, and knowing I pay good attention
That's when people give me their appreciation
Learning every day, every hour I know I have the power to put this in my nation

My Story

Mamawa Kamara - Cunard Learning Centre

Prior to coming to Canada in 2009, I did not know how to read or write English. I strongly believe that there were two good reasons that contributed to my illiteracy. First, the traditional African beliefs or norms that are generally accepted in my tribes and second, the 17 year civil war that took place in my country, Liberia.

It is important to point out that I grew up as a little girl born by Muslim parents who were poor and illiterate farmers living in the rural Liberian village were called Ganta city. They did not send me to school due to their poor economic conditions because they could not afford to pay my school fees. However, the traditional belief that is widely accepted within my tribes also seriously affected my education. There are many traditional beliefs that exist in Liberia. However, the most visible is the one where many families give responsibilities to their members based on gender and what each is physically capable of doing. For instance, boys or men are considered to be strong both physically and mentally, to withstand pressure and achieve success in economic activities. Girls and women are considered to be weak and do not have the ability required to make useful decisions for themselves or the family. For this reason, parents are not encouraged to send or sponsor their girl children to school and do not engage them into any major trade or business activities. Instead they are required to stay at home and perform home works such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning and to taking care of our young ones. This is simply because of the widely accepted traditional belief which assumed that girls are unable to repay the money their parents invested into their education and interestingly, the belief that girls and their riches belong to their husband and his family. Unfortunately for me, my parents, who grew up in such community, did practice this norm and, as a result, they did not send me to school. Secondly, as a teenager growing up, I clearly noticed that something was missing in my life, which was education, because I always used to see my age mates going to school every morning. Although I noticed this empty space in my life, I had the fate to attend school one day and become an independent woman. Once again this dream of mine did not come true as a result of the civil war that lasted for 17 years in my country. However, all of my dreams actually came true when I arrived in Canada.

Like most immigrants, when I arrived in Canada, the living condition for me as a single mother was very challenging as a result of my illiteracy. Since I did not know how to read or write, I couldn't read my mail like bank information, letters from my kid's school, and I couldn't read the prices on food in places like *Sobeys* and *Shoppers*. It was most difficult for me to find my way through the city of Halifax and understand the metro bus system. However, I can first thank God and the Cunard Learning Centre today that I can proudly read and write, read my mail and letters from kids schools, travel anywhere within the city of Halifax and even travel to other provinces without assistance. Cunard Learning Centre has enabled me to not only read and write, it has also given me the ability to tutor my kids, work and send money to my family and friends back in Africa. I also have the confidence to further my education, become independent and be a better single mother. The CLC has made me to believe that everything is possible and the sky is my limit.

She's Falling Through the Cracks

Tiffany Tufts - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

I'm still learning because I hate the gutless feeling of not knowing things. I'm not saying I want to be a philosopher; I'm saying that I never want to stop learning. And that's not hard because not a single day goes by when I have to ask myself, "What is the definition to that word?" "How is that related to the subject I'm learning?" "How do you spell that?" "What does that add up to?" or "Why is understanding that so important?" It helps when someone can answer these questions for me, but it benefits me more if I do the research and can explain it for myself. That's when I can truly say that I've learned something new. I love learning new subjects and the more I study the more questions spill out of my mouth. It never used to be that way though. Learning just didn't come that easy for me and it didn't help that at a young age I was unofficially labeled ADD and ADHD. I couldn't keep up with the fast paced curriculum in school so I'd always received special help. I was put in a small classroom with five other boys with similar learning disabilities and never got to be in the regular classroom with my friends. All of this was difficult on top of being a girl.

Being centered out like that caused me to have anxieties and the smallest of situations would trigger it, like when I would question something I didn't quite understand my peers would be little me. It took me a long time before I could ask questions again. I was uncomfortable with the thought that people were going to judge me. I see things differently now that I'm older, if you call 19 older.

A good friend of mine tutored me for four years; she wanted me to not only learn but she wanted me to experience that learning can be fun and it is. In just four years I had excelled in reading, spelling and my penmanship had gotten me many compliments. History was interesting enough to hold my attention and I'm thoroughly fascinated with geography and science. There are so many more subjects for me to explore and I plan on doing just that, which is if I live long enough.

The key is to never give up on yourself no matter how daunting the challenge of learning can be. It didn't matter how many people tried to help me, the only person who was going to help me was me. As of now, I try to meditate and pray daily for the education that I've received thus far, and not for what I could have had. I only ask for the endurance to keep learning. Falling through the cracks is not an option.

Climbing Stairs with Learning

Sarah Reid - Colchester Adult Learning Association

I have always been confident about who I am. I am a mother of three, a grandmother to a beautiful baby boy and I have been a foster mother to over eighty children. Up until this year I have always been content with this. However, I have now made the decision to turn the focus on what I can do for me. Something I have always struggled with since I left school when I was teenager, a thought that always seems to trail behind me in my life. What if I go back and fail? What if I am not smart enough? What if when I struggled in school years ago it was because I couldn't learn? So many "what ifs".

When I made the decision to go back to school, every step getting there felt like I had cement blocks on my feet. Fear does funny things to people. Step one was go inside the school and see what I need to do. So I did it. Step two was to make an appointment and see where I was academically. So I did it. Step three for me was testing day, I was sitting in the parking lot telling myself "I can't do this". Meanwhile, I could hear my heart pounding in my chest. I felt that fear again. I had to tell myself you will never know unless you go inside. So I did. I was only in the school a few minutes and Matt started my testing: good thing, because that didn't give me a chance to back out. Matt was very clear and made me feel like I could do this. Suddenly my heart doesn't sound as loud. Leaving the school, I no longer felt like there were cement blocks on my feet. I, Sarah Reid, will do this because I want this.

Going back to school gave me clear thinking, boosted my self esteem and forced me to overcome the "fear". Every day is a new day, a day for change, a day for me to say "I can do this". I don't know for sure where all this will take me but I do have a plan and there is a change in me and who I am. I can only move forward with this, so I am giving it my best shot. I hope my best is enough.

You never know, maybe I can inspire someone else to challenge themselves and go back to school. Learning is a powerful thing. It's food for the soul. In a couple of years I think I will rewrite this. All the stairs I have to climb to get where I am going will be stepped on and I will be at the top looking down the staircase saying, I did that, I Sarah Reid did this.

Anne's Story

Anne Elliott-Tomlinson – Halifax Community Learning Network

Today I feel like a new woman, born again after three years of studying English at the Spring Garden Library. What was important to me was to learn to speak English well. What a gratifying experience I had! Not only did I improve my English, but gained a desire to share my skills and writing through my renewed confidence. Thus, I now share my story with Literacy Nova Scotia.

My story telling has mainly been about the many adventures in my life, my accomplishments make me feel happy and free! One accomplishment is my many years of volunteer service as a senior in the community of Halifax. Seniors have much to say and lots to tell. My volunteer work has provided me the opportunity to share with my community, and was a wonderful experience!

It's a great time to be alive, surrounded with new technology and the skills to march forward! It's never too late – you have years to follow your dreams! When I leave my home early in the morning, I look directly across to the magnificent structure of the new library. To me on a wet and foggy day, it looks like a large seagull trying to land. With all of its pages of books and knowledge, it hopes to spread its wings into the community. My English has improved, allowing me to be cast in a lead role in the play “Working up a Lather” by Two Houses Theatre Company. Two Houses is a new Company formed last year by Spencer House and Laing House. Our aim is to entertain our community, while developing talent, and help youth and seniors fulfill their dreams. The play will take place in Halifax on March 7th at Spencer House. I'd love to see your face in the crowd!

Thank you Literacy Nova Scotia for enabling me to tell my story!

It's Never Too Late!

Wafa Ben Nassr - Cunard Learning Centre

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”
Nelson Mandela.

My name is Wafa; I'm a mother of five kids. I was 16 years old when I decided to quit school, and that was the worst decision I've ever made. I quit school because my mother was sick and she needed someone to take care of her; on top of that, I disliked school because of the way that I was being taught! For example, my teacher used to make fun of me whenever I made a mistake that made me lose my self-confidence and feel that I'm not smart enough to continue school!

I hadn't realized my mistake of quitting school until I came to Canada where most people valued education. Add to this, my kids started school and they needed my help with their homework.

I decided to go to school to learn English as a second language so that would help me communicate with people in Canada and to be able to help my kids with their homework. When I entered a language school, I didn't really have a specific goal; I just wanted to learn English. However, I changed my mind when my teacher kept asking me, “What are you going to do after you finish with this program”. That made me notice that most of my classmates had plans of what they wanted to do after school, but why not me? I felt bad when I realized that I'm living without any ambition. I thought it was impossible to continue high school. Fortunately, because of the encouragement from my teacher and my friends, I decided to face the challenge and finish high school; despite all of the obstacles I knew I was going to face.

Now I'm a level three student in Cunard Learning Center; I really enjoy my time here, and every day I learn something new. My teachers are very kind and helpful. The way they teach me inspires me to learn more. Because of their encouragement, I gained self-confidence, and I have received great marks. Now I can help my kids with their homework and I feel proud that I've been improving. Also, I don't feel a shamed to answer their questions anymore.

In my opinion, learning is so important to make you live a better life, and it's never too late to learn.

I'm Still Learning

Wafa Al-Mansob – Cunard Learning Centre

Learning made a difference in my life. It changed it in many different ways, in my personality, my family and my everyday life.

My name is Wafa, I moved here in 2003. Since I have been in Canada, I do not have the time to go to school or do anything out of home. I have been married for 12 years and I am a mother of three amazing kids. I have dedicated all my time to my family and never thought about myself. My husband works during the day, and my kids are in school. So I stay home alone. I feel bored and time passes so slowly. Before I had kids, I finished my education and always had the energy to do more in life. Now I would like to go back and learn something new. But the lack of English and difference in the education system had put me back from doing what I like to do. My kids have always inspired me to go back to school and finish my dream to learn new skills. Going back to school has changed my personality. It has made me more energetic and knowledgeable. I feel that my working memory is sharp which makes my life easy. I am comfortable to speak with others and use more words and sentences through my conversation with them. This makes me more socialized and evolved in the neighborhood. It makes me happy and confident.

My life with my family has changed too. I am more active with them and we share ideas and activities more often. We read together and do homework together. They are happy to see me study like them. Our life became more organized; we try to do things on time and try not to waste it.

My life in Canada is easier now after going to school. I can do things independently. I fill my forms and applications by myself. I understand most of the things I read now. When I listen to the Radio or any conversation, I understand most of it. I feel more confident knowing what is happening around me.

Learning is fun and important in my life. I am happy to take this opportunity to go back to school. It made my family proud of me and I feel proud of myself too. My family is the best gift of my life and we will do this together to enhance our life. I would like to continue learning to have a role in the society. We are in this world to make it better not to sit back and watch.

A New Life in Canada: Opportunities to Learn

Samia Eldik - Halifax Community Learning Network

In October, 2003, I arrived in Halifax with my family. We were escaping war in the country where I was born. We came to Canada to find a new home where we would be safe and have new opportunities to learn.

Within three months, my husband and I had jobs as cleaners. We also attended ESL classes and I had the responsibility for looking after our children aged, 12, 9, 4 and 1.

On Nov. 21, 2005, our fifth child, a son was born. We were a happy family, happy to be living in a free country without fear of war. Then without warning, tragedy struck. My husband was killed in a car accident. Suddenly I was left alone with five children to care for, and one of them was only three weeks old. Without my husband beside me, I had to be strong and take charge for the sake of my children. I knew I had to go school, first to learn English, and second to learn, so that I could improve my knowledge and understanding of people and the world around me.

I had never been to school as a child because I had no opportunity. My family lived on a farm and I began looking after my siblings when I was nine years old. My parents were busy looking after the farm. I had three sisters and six brothers and only the two youngest went to school. There was no time for school; everyone had a job to do and mine was caring for my two youngest brothers.

Although I knew what I had to do-attend school- I had to be patient and wait for two years until my baby turned two and was able to attend daycare. During those two years, I was lucky to have a lady from my church come and help me learn English.

When I began to attend school, my busy life became even busier. My days began very early in the morning and ended late at night. I was often very tired, but I could not give up. I had to keep on going to school. I have now been going for five years. I am in Level II at the Cunard Learning Centre. My goal is to get my GED so that I can continue my studies in Community College. I want to study Homecare and become a certified homecare worker.

Without literacy classes, which help me learn and understand I would have no hope of achieving my goal. I am so happy to have the opportunity to go to school, something that I would never have been able to do if I had not come to Canada. I thank Canada for giving me the chance to learn and develop and become a stronger person and a strong mother. I have discovered how much I enjoy learning new things. The more I learn, the more I want to learn. I know that I will continue learning long after I have finished going to school.

Literacy classes have helped me to realize that learning is a very important part of my life.

This is My Story

Crystal Boutilier – Nova Scotia Community College, Lunenburg Campus

As a child I dreamed of being a nurse. I played nurse with my dolls and any human friend, neighbor and family member I could find. My grandparents raised me growing up so living with seniors is different. You learn a lot about the aging process at a much younger age. I lost my grandfather at the age 13. So I quickly took on a new roll helping around the house more. By 14 I was doing most of the cooking and cleaning because my grandmother had heart disease. She took on a boarder to help with income which was another senior. My role changed again. I am now helping with the care for two seniors in the household. He passed away when I was 17. When I was 17 I got a weekend job looking after an elderly lady with dementia. Now I loved my job but not understanding what dementia was I just thought old people were a little crazy and thought is my grandmother going to act like this too? I had a baby that year and never finished my grade 12 and I moved out with the father of my baby.

I still worked and looked after my grandmother almost daily plus being a mom too at 17. That was a huge role to take on at my age but I did it. My grandmother past away and my husband and I divorced. Dealing with a very hard loss I got a job interview doing home care that year. I got the job. I enjoyed home care meeting new people and even making friends on the way. I finally knew what I wanted to do in life. Finally my life had meaning. After being there for a few years I heard about Ryan Hall being built. So I applied. I didn't know you had to be a CCA to work there. So I didn't get the job. But now I have a new goal. I went to NSCC to apply to go back to collage but there was one problem I wasn't a graduate. I only had my Grade 11. So I continued doing home care for awhile but not giving up. I went the adult learning and took my GED and wrote the test. I failed my math and science. Not giving up I wrote it again, past science but failed the math. Starting to feel defeated, I got an email saying they're going to start a CCA link program which means I get both of my courses that I wanted so badly. I had to apply and I got accepted. The day I got the call I cried. In January 2013 I was finally a college student. Today I'm in clinical and I've never been happier. Yes being in school has its ups and downs but I would never change my mind. Going through all that I did made me stronger today and now thanks to the NSCC program CCA link I will have a happy fulfilling career ahead.

Thrown To the Wolves

Brittany Hollingsworth - Colchester Adult Learning Association

I'm still learning the basics of life, how to live on my own and how to cope with my life and my anxiety. I myself struggle every day to wake up and breath. I'm learning the basics all over again. It was like I was thrown to the wolves when I was 9 years old forcing me to grow up faster then I wanted to. I'm still learning new things in school. Yes that's right school. I have my grade 12 but I went back. Not for anyone but myself let me make that very clear. I'm learning so much. I'm learning math skills. Something I absolutely hated when I was in high school I failed it twice you know. I'm learning new skills on life, how to live on my own and how to fend for myself.

I am 22 and will be 23 in August and just moved out of my mother's house that is a big step for me. At 19 I had a nervous breakdown. I just gave up on life. I didn't think I was going anywhere so I said screw this might as well take the easy way out. Well I was in the hospital I learned that you can't let your past effect your future and that's exactly what I was doing. I was letting all the bad things that happened to me effect me.

Now I'm still learning. CALA has helped me more than I let on. I was a victim of the system just pushed through all the way through school with administrative passes. I felt like they just wanted me out. I learned that I was labeled a at risk youth because of my past. But I learned that just because someone puts a label on you it shouldn't stop you from doing the things you desire in life. I myself don't think my little spiel on how I'm still learning will make a difference in some one's life but I hope that it will.

I'm Still Learning

Deborah Siggers - Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council

I grew up in many places including some outside of Nova Scotia. I've been to over ten different schools. I blame my mother for half of it. When I was young, she slept. I didn't know then that she was going through severe depression. My older sister tried to do her best. She would get me ready in the morning but couldn't take me to the bus stop because her bus was before mine. Most days she would come home to find me still in my snow suit.

I did not value education. My mom would say go to school, but I was never forced to go. All I had to do was say I was sick or I'm not going. When I did go to school, I suffered from severe anxiety. I didn't want to go to math or participate in gym. I was very good at faking my notes and sometimes I even did it for my friends. I eventually got caught because of my notes, and because my friends and I would skip to my house every day. The school sent the police to collect the skippers and I was expelled.

After I was expelled, I agreed to visit my sister in Cape Breton. I liked it so much I decided to stay. I was enrolled at SAERC in my grade nine year. I was sixteen, the oldest in the class. I still had no value for education, I didn't pass grade 8 and I was lost in grade 9, so I skipped with my boyfriend almost every day. In my mind, I didn't need school.

In the summer of 2007, I found out I was pregnant with my son. My mom left me and moved to Sydney. I still had my boyfriend and my sister. My son was born in February 2008 and by then I was completely out of high school. I knew then that I needed to do something about my education. I realized that my lack of education was my fault too. I should have stayed in school, regardless of my anxiety. My son made me want to do better.

In September of 2009 I enrolled in a Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council program. I had no faith in myself. I did not even know the basics in math but I had a lot of encouragement from my teacher. When I became down on myself, my teacher would show me my past work and say, "Look how far you have come!" That same year I wrote the GED and got two of the five subjects.

That summer we moved back to the city (Dartmouth). I ended up working at Tim Horton's. My GED was always at the back of my mind. I wrote again in 2011 in Dartmouth and got four out of five; now all I needed was math. I tried going back to night school, but it didn't work out. After four years of living in the city, I decided to go back to Cape Breton.

I enrolled back in the Port Hawkesbury Literacy Program in October 2013. I was determined I was going to get my GED and I also enrolled at the NSCC. Going back was like riding a bike. My teacher's only rule was you can't say "I Can't". After long study sessions in class, I wrote my math test for the third time in November 2013. During my wait for my results, I received a letter from the NSCC stating I was accepted

pending my test results, so you could imagine the relief I had when I received my results and it was a pass.

I've learned from experience that even though you can blame as many people as you want, including yourself, in the end you are the only one that can do something to make it better. Education is only a part of it. We need life experiences too, to realize how important education is, not only to yourself but also for yourself. I will continue to have learning experiences, because knowledge is my power, and there is never an end to it. Knowledge grows with you.

Back to Learning

William Fahey – Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

I am from New Waterford Cape Breton and I'm still learning!

In September, 2013 I made the decision to go back to school. It wasn't an easy decision after being out of school for 48 years, but I made my mind up that I was going to go back and here I am.

It was the right decision for me. I am glad I came back. I am learning more than I ever thought I could. I am enjoying my time with my classmates and I look forward to each new day of learning.

This school year I was lucky enough to be able to attend a learners' conference in Truro, NS. This was truly one of the best experiences of my life. At this conference I learned some methods for understanding math easier. I learned that there are many other adults out there just like me trying to improve their literacy skills and that I am not alone in my journey. I learned how to socialize with other people from all over NS with many different backgrounds.

This year I attended workshops and obtained certificates. I took First Aid & CPR and I took a Food Safety course.

I am learning to use a computer. My school days consist of math and reading novels, and writing papers and searching information on different subjects using the internet.

I am able to do all of this at my own pace because my teacher does not pressure me to hurry up. This school is quite different than my schools were 48 years ago. Back then I spent more time in the principal's office than I did in the classroom.

My self confidence and self esteem are improving every day as I realize more that I can do it and I am successful at new tasks. I love learning new skills. I hope to continue my learning in the fall of 2014 by coming back to the ALACBC.

I Am Still Learning

Melanie Bent – Pictou County Continuous Learning Association

I am a thirty-five year old female and I have graduated with honors from High school. I went to Community College twice and realize that I didn't understand why I took those course's I had no interest in.

It's been over ten years since I have been in a classroom setting where you learn.

Math and English, it was hard at first because I didn't think I would be able to do it. But when I saw I was not by myself I was ok. I strongly feel that we all learn something new every day whether it's from a classroom, a book, a teacher or just everyday life.

Everyone learns differently. Some people can read an assignment and know what to do right away. Then there are some that have to be shown how to do the same assignment. Plus there are people with learning disabilities.

You ask how learning makes a difference in my life. For one thing it makes me feel good to answer questions right. I can help my sixteen and fifteen year old nephews with their homework.

I can take that course I have been wanting to take and someday hopefully open my own restaurant, like I have been dreaming of since I was a kid.

The more I learn the more positive I become and have a better outlook on my life knowing that I am still learning more and more every day. You will never stop learning in life because every day is a new beginning.

My Learning Experience

Mary Hutchison - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

My road to learning began 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 very different things. With courage and will power I made up my mind and went back. Getting things ready, talking to my family members who by the way some said I wouldn't be able to do it and was basically wasting my time, while others said to go for it and go for it I did.

Here it is 7 years later and I'm still learning. It hasn't always been easy. Some days it is a struggle just to make it to class. Sometimes illness has caused me to take time off. But when I am at school I am reminded how right the decision for me to go back actually was. This year I continue to learn to use the computer and my skills with computers have become quite good. When I first started using the computer it was like hearing a different language. Now I am able to help the other learners with their computer questions; this is not something I ever thought I would be able to do. I hope to get a laptop of my own someday. Each week I read between 2 and 3 novels and usually write a book report for my instructor on each of them. Last year fractions finally made sense and I am looking forward to doing them again this year because I remember how. Reading, Writing, Math, and Computer have all become easier for me than at the beginning.

Because of my own learning, I find helping my grandson with his school work a lot easier. I often tell the young ones in my class how important it is to get a good education and how much harder it can be to return to school when you are my age. I look forward to each day of learning and I am excited about my future.

How Learning Has Made a Difference in My Life

Keith Finn - Halifax Community Learning Network

Learning has made a big difference in my life. It has built up my self-confidence so much in every aspect of my life. Practicing my reading has improved my vocabulary and it helps me to express myself better.

I have met a lot of new people at my martial arts class and socializing at my tutoring class. Learning martial arts has improved my focus while I'm reading, at my work, and at my tutoring class. At my tutoring class I work on math, reading, grammar, and social studies. By working on these skills it gets me closer to my goal of getting my GED. It is great to have a place like the library to go where tutors volunteer their time to help us learn. I learn something new at every class.

You're Not Alone

Darlene Strong - Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Network

From the cradle to the grave we can be lifelong learners. Learning is no respecter of persons. Regardless of what side of the track we reside on, what our pedigree is or our status in life, known or little recognized, this matters little. We each have a unique learning style which may reflect our color or culture to which we should embrace. As a former literacy instructor of many years one of the greatest accomplishments was to impart the gift of reading and learning to students. Learning starts at a mothers/fathers or caregivers knee. Age is not a factor as we journey through life despite adversities, setbacks and disappointments, learning is a given.

We teach and learn everyday by example, speech, lifestyle and communication. What are we communicating to the next generation? How we learn and for what purpose we gain knowledge varies for each individual. With the www, information is now at our fingertips and can be used for good and the betterment of our community at large. Knowledge is power. Since childhood the quest for learning and sharing information has been a lifelong quest.

Over the past 14 years writing publications and sharing resources through visual traveling exhibits ensures relevant history, healthy living and community development is passed on to future generations.

Currently on the senior side of life, things look a bit different. Priorities change and learning takes a new curve. Keeping our minds alert and active is an ongoing feat. A team of professions are making the journey manageable.

I am currently recovering from a post concussion. Retraining to concentrate, read, word find, creative writing and communicating has been a new challenge for me these past several months. From operating a private counseling practice to requiring retraining confirms lifelong learning can be beneficial.

Thank you for this opportunity to write... It is the first of the journey home. We were created for purpose and fulfilling life's plan means running the race with patience and courage and keeping our eye on the prize.

Sisters by Choice

Rebecca Gower - Colchester Adult Learning Association

Four years ago was a beginning of a new friendship. Pamela Ross had started to work for the Town of Truro as a crossing guard. At the time, I was a crossing guard at Smith Avenue for the Willow Street School; Pam was crossing for the Princess Margaret Rose School. Soon after the new Truro Elementary was open, I was put at Abbey Avenue and Pam was put at Pleasant and Glenwood Drive. I asked Pam if I could catch a ride home with her after work. We got to know each other well, soon after that; I got a chance to move to Young St to work. Now I can't imagine being apart from her; we go everywhere together.

We go out on special occasions and go to movies. At our special occasions such as Halloween, Christmas, Easter, and the last day of school, we dress up for the kids. The kids, along with the people passing by seem to enjoy it too. We shop together for groceries, clothes, or anything you can think of, especially chocolate. She tutors me in math and public speaking as I am taking the CALA program so I can proceed to get my grade 12 at NSCC. She has always been there for me, as I will always be there for her. My sister is a botanist by trade. Pam and I spend a lot of time in the summer, looking after our gardens and I learn a lot from her. My garden has a lot of perennials that I got from her. She teaches me a lot about plants and comes to my house to help me.

We have had some good times and bad times. When personal tragedy happened to us, one phone call and we were there in a heartbeat for each other. We were there for each other the whole time, that's what families are about. We sometimes cry together and she makes me laugh. She makes me smile and she makes me crazy, but at the end of the day I wouldn't have it any other way. It shows that you don't have to have the same parents to be sisters.

Every day I am amazed at the difference learning continues to make in my life. I am so lucky to have a "sister" like Pam to continually challenge me and support me in my continuing education.

I'm Still Learning

Karen Coulter – Colchester Adult Learning Association

After 54 years of life, as I knew it while raising my babies and lending a helping hand with my grandchildren, I realized I needed to further my education. With that said, allow me to tell you a little bit about myself.

As a teenager I was placed in a special classroom for children with disabilities. It was difficult for me to retain information. I struggled every day trying to remember what I learned yesterday.

It all came to a head last year when my granddaughter, Carly, asked me to help her with her homework. After looking at her math, I discovered I was clueless as to how to do the work. The experience left me feeling utterly helpless and completely frustrated. I couldn't understand the simplest basics of my granddaughter's schoolwork. At that moment in time I decided to return to school.

Soon after that time, I called Colchester Adult learning Association (CALA) and arranged for an appointment to get tested to see what level of education I actually had. To my surprise, it really wasn't that bad. A week later I started classes at CALA for four days a week, three hours each day.

In between, I had to be absent to look after my grandson, Zander, so my son could go to work. I continued to keep on learning anywhere I could. Recently I switched to night classes so I can now babysit and also go to school.

Now that I am organized, my intention is to continue with my studies. Learning for me is a challenge and always will be. Giving up is not an option. Hopefully with time and effort it will get easier. I don't need to wonder anymore about what I would have missed. I am no longer just looking in. I am part of it all. Now I am closer to achieving my goal of getting my grade 12. Best of all the next time Carly asks if I can help with her homework I can proudly say "Yes, I can." Every day I see the difference learning makes in my life. My self-confidence level has improved and I feel that I am finally accomplishing something that I set out to do.

In conclusion, it is absolutely necessary to have an education. It opens doors that would otherwise remain closed. The world becomes a wonderful new place for us to explore.

Best Days Ahead

Todd Kenyon – Nova Scotia Community College

The anxiety I feel at night can be overwhelming. In complete silence is when my brain becomes the loudest. I often require different senses or an altered state of mine to distract myself from the sound of my own thoughts. Remaining positive is not always easy but with each passing day it feels more natural. I am afraid my past has become a circle in which there is no exit.

The confidence I have developed throughout the school year has brought on a new sense of passion and enthusiasm I forgot existed within myself. I am both shocked and pleasantly surprised at my growing abilities as a person and a student. I am optimistic that my future has taken on a new shape where things are not bound to repetition. One day I hope to be able to happily sit in silence with my own thoughts knowing that I accepted an opportunity presented to me and fully embraced that chance.

I'm Still Learning

Karen Neary - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

I didn't do well in high school. I quit school for 3 years. Then I waited for my daughter to be a year old. Then I went to the adult school. When I first started I was nervous and I didn't talk much. I was a little shy but now I talk a lot. I met new people. I'm glad I went back to school to get my life back on track. I'm going for my licenses. Down the road I'm going to look for a job. I am also a mother of a baby girl. She changed my life ever since she came into my life.

I'm Still Learning

Kayla Jacobi - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

My name is Kayla Jacobi and I'm still learning. I am 23 years old and I have been out of school since I was 16 years old. I am in the New Waterford class of the Adult Learning Association. In September I decided that I would return to school after giving it a lot of thought. I was scared and nervous. I didn't know what to expect, but decided to go for it anyway.

My biggest reason for going back is that I want to have a good life for my son and I. Getting an education means that I will be able to achieve my goals for the future. I want to be able to support myself and my son financially and with knowledge. The things I learn I can teach to him and this will make his future better as well as mine. An example of this is that I recently took my First Aid & CPR training and decided to teach my four year old how to do CPR in case of an emergency. I felt proud to be able to teach this to him.

At the start of January I broke my hand and using what I learned at First Aid, I wrapped it myself before going to the hospital. When I got there and the doctor saw my hand he asked me who wrapped it, I told him that I did and he said I did a good job. He thought it was done by a professional.

I am learning to have more self-confidence. Instead of saying "I can't", I now give it a try and it usually turns out for the best. Back in November I gave a speech at Literacy Action week in front of a lot of people. Speaking in front of a group is not something that I have never ever done and never thought I would do. But I did it and it felt great. Now I feel more comfortable to speak in front of a group.

My reading skills are getting better every day. Reading to my son is easier now than it used to be. My teacher says that my reading has improved a lot since starting class. Getting to school some days is not easy. Some days I don't have childcare, and most days I don't have transportation.

In January I broke my hand and that has made things difficult. I still try to show up each day and do the best I can. I am excited about learning new skills and excited about the future. The possibilities of my future are endless and they seem more reachable than ever before. I have never been excited about learning until I came to this class. It is helping me in more ways than just math, reading, and writing. It is helping me to believe in myself and I am looking forward to a bright future.

Defying the Odds!

Viola Baker - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

So this is another year and I am back in school. I am still struggling with my math skills and my reading skills, but I am still taking a lot of courses in class.

Since going to school I have received my First Aid and CPR and passed. I have received my Food Handlers course and did very well. I have also taken my WHMIS course and passed. I am proud to say I have all my papers for all my courses.

When I was in my younger days I struggled a lot in school. Now that I am older I have chosen to go back to school to better myself. I am starting to do really good, I am going to do a lot more to improve myself all the way to where I need the skills to cope with in life.

I have two children and one grandson to keep me busy along the way. My daughter is twenty five and has a son which is my grandson. I love to spend time with him teaching him his colors, letters, shapes and numbers. Our favorite thing to do is read together. I have worked through a lot of struggles that I had in my past. When I went to class I was nervous, but each day it became easier for me especially when the teachers are there to help me through a lot of my way.

The reason why I was nervous was because when I went to school at Breton Education Center, I was in Special Ed. People would call me names and put me down. I was so embarrassed that I would cry. People can be so hurtful and mean. I grew stronger and stronger. They don't bother me anymore. I have a lot in life to look forward to. I have made good friends and I am on my way to becoming a successful person with my self esteem, my support group and friends who stand by my side. But the most of all is to prove to everyone if you set a goal in life do it, you will be surprised at what you can do for yourself and you might even help other people along the way.

Loving School

Theresa MacLeod - Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County

I love coming to school. I made new friends in school. I learned how to use and Ipad. It helps me with my math. I can do emails. I have my first Aid and WHMIS course. I like learning. I go to the Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County.

Learning is like a Nesting Doll

Linda Donnelly-Burns - Colchester Adult Learning Association

You start off with the smallest one and build it up to the largest one and you have made a perfect nesting doll.

For me, it was learning that took me walking back in to the Colchester Adult Learning Association program after a year's break. The benefits to me are life changing in so many ways. I started off thinking that I needed a little help with math and understanding some words that I didn't know well enough to read.

I have been able to improve more than I could ever think. I've built up my math skills and now understand more words by the use of learning tools such as an electronic dictionary and an online reading phonics program. Also, asking for help is another way to understand the sights, sounds, and meanings of words in print. At one time I would never ask for help.

Presently, I am hoping to write the GED or be accepted to level 3, but that is something I have to build up to by improving my self confidence, for it like the building of the nesting doll, one step at a time.

Eventually, I will have a High School Diploma and have some computer courses under my belt. That way, the nesting doll is like my learning. I have to continue to build it up. It's a great feeling to have a learning experience that benefits me in my everyday life and builds up my self esteem to better my relationships with others.

I understand that I have to start off with the small things in order to progress and finally have my perfect nesting doll.

I'm Still Learning

Joan Welsh - Lunenburg County Adult Learning Network

Learning is knowledge of a skill. We learn skills from day one.

When school came along I had a very hard time learning to read. That made it difficult all through my years in school.

You may not think that fear has anything to do with learning, but for me it did. I think it put a black curtain on my brain; sometimes it would lift up and I would learn something. I had trouble counting money that I would have to give back to a person. No calculators were used during my time at school. I repeated three grades and spent a year and a half in grade eleven. I was just so tired of studying and not getting very far. Still, I loved going to school and I made a lot of friends.

A week or two after leaving school I got married, and had three children. That's an altogether different learning experience. My husband and children knew I wasn't good at spelling and reading, so they would help me spell words when it was necessary. They still help to this day if I need help with words. My two boys help me with the workings of my new phone.

Back in the day, a counselor asked me what I would do in the future. My answer was, "I'll cross that bridge when I come to it." Well, now I'm crossing a bridge. It may not be a job out in the world, but it's a bridge of learning.

Stepping out to improve myself is a big step. That I'm doing it now, at age sixty- eight is very scary, but with a lot of help I will do it. I'm enjoying being in this program. My dream was to be a tourist guide for Lunenburg County. We live in a beautiful place and with this upgrading program anything is possible, even crossing the bridge.

How Education Changed My Life

Calvin Wood – Hants Learning Network Association

Education helps me to better myself and to reach my future goals. Learning makes me feel good about myself, making a big difference in my everyday life. Education will also help me find a part time job with fair wages.

One of the things I am learning about in school is communication. I use communication every day. When I run into people I know, we sometimes stop and talk on the street. I can also use video chat on Skype to talk to difference folks across the province or around the world by phone or Internet. These are all examples of how I use communication in my life.

Another thing I learn about in school is Math. I use math when I do online banking. Math helps me to know what my total income is, what bills I have to pay, and how much money I have left over. With these skills I can do these things for myself.

I also like to learn about technology. When I was growing up we did not have computers, so I need to learn how to use them. Technology is important to me because I can use computers to research things that interest me. I also use the Internet for email, and to listen to my favorite music. Technology also helps me with my school work.

Education helps me to be a better person. I am learning new skills in communication, math, and technology. I use all the things I learn in my life to help my community and to better myself.

How Learning Leads to a Wonderful Life

John Cromwell – Halifax Community Learning Network

Learning gives me a sense of hope in life. It provides me with a belief in myself. I am better at coping with difficulties in life. I cope better with others because I understand myself and the way others behave. Learning has given me a greater sense of self-esteem so I am less reactive to others' behavior. I am more clear thinking. I have a greater sense of independence and am able to make better choices for myself and others.

For almost 25 years I struggled with mental illness and addictions to alcohol and drugs. My addictions hurt myself and others, especially my family. At my lowest point I was homeless and didn't care what happened to me. The turning point for me was to see others in my family follow me down these paths of addiction. To find myself I had to leave my family to get stronger and make changes to my life. I needed to help myself before I could help them.

I overcame my addictions but it was difficult. Once I overcame these addictions I found people willing to help me set down a new path. This new path gave me a belief in myself; it led me to care for myself and others who I cared for. As I have grown stronger and more capable this new path has become easier. Now I have more self control and a clearer, more sensible view of the present. I have learned to be more open with others and to make better choices. I hope my new path will be an inspiration to others, especially my family. I hope they find the strength from my example to choose a less destructive path and overcome their addictions.

My Story

Belinda Shortall – Bedford Sackville Learning Network

Hi. I'd like to explain why I decided to enroll in an adult learning program. I will explain where I was before entering, where I am now and where I plan to be in the future.

Before entering adult learning my life had been full of so many ups and downs. At a young age I started living in group homes. I was very shy and quiet, so I didn't make friends very easily. I was pretty much a loner. I tried high school, but was unable to continue due to anxiety and lack of confidence. I got married at the age of twenty, which only lasted one year. I was left as a single mom for a lot of years. Then I met someone and we had a child after being together for six years. Three years ago we got married, but it's been such a rocky relationship, that with the help of a good friend decided enough was enough, that I needed to do something positive for myself and my one child still living at home. I decided to start with continuing my education.

Since I started with the adult learning program things haven't always been easy, but I haven't and don't plan on giving up on myself. There are times I wanted to, but I stop and look at everything I have overcome and accomplished. I had to get on a bus after more than twenty five years, meet new people, learn to juggle school work with housework and learn to ask for help when I need it. I'm able to see how proud my daughters are of me, as well my friends and instructors.

I plan on furthering my education from here. I want to find a field where I can look after and help people. I love helping others and feel this is something I would excel at. This will give me a chance to make the future better for myself and my daughter. Then I won't be dependent on anyone but myself and I won't hear, if only you had your education you wouldn't be where you are today. Instead I'll be able to stand on my own two feet, and know that I did this myself.

In closing, I would just like to say that because of the adult learning program, I have become more confident in myself and I feel I can now achieve anything I want to.

Why I am Still Learning

Manavi Atiwoto - Halifax Public Libraries

My name is Manavi. I want to go to college to study to be a continuing care assistant. Currently, I am taking classes to improve my English because I want to get a better future, a better career for my family.

I have four children – two girls and two boys. My oldest son wants to be a graphic designer; my oldest daughter wants to be a fashion designer. My younger son wants to be a pilot – so he can fly me to Africa to visit my family. My youngest daughter, only three years old, hasn't decided what she wants to be yet. I want my children to learn, to study and to get an education. I want them to have the opportunity to go to school and to get good jobs.

I stopped going to school when I was 13 when my family had to leave Togo because of the war. I spent 14 years working and living in a refugee camp in Ghana. My family moved to Canada as refugees on September 27, 2007. After fourteen years, I got to go back to school. I took English as a Second Language class for one year and then a Work Start program at ISIS for six months.

I worked at Victoria Hall nursing home as a food service attendant for one year before I went on maternity leave. Now that my daughter is a little older, I am getting back to learning. I have an English tutor through the English Language Learning program and a math tutor through the Adult Literacy program at the Halifax Public Libraries. This year, I have taken Workplace Health and Safety courses, first aid and other certificates. Now, I am studying to get my GED.

I want to have a career. My dream is to be a nurse. One day, I want to help poor people in Africa. My first step was learning English. Now I am trying to get my GED and then I want to go to NSCC.

I want to set an example for my children to show them that I am a hardworking person. I want them to be proud of me. That is why I am still learning.

How Learning Makes a Difference in my Life

Rachel Teah – Cunard Learning Centre

Learning has been an important tool in human lives since the existence of mankind. It changes human lives in many different ways. For example, it makes people educated, improves their behavior, and opens their eyes. In addition, it makes people able to get good jobs to enable them to meet the basic needs of their lives. Below is the explanation of how learning makes a difference in my life.

I believe that learning will bring changes to my life and make me reach my goal. My goal is to become educated at a level that will suit my future career in Continued Care Assistance. I know that reaching my goal will take some time, and I have to be patient and study hard. Here in Canada, there are many jobs that require at least a high school diploma and I am not quite there yet. When I first immigrated to Canada, my English skills were assessed in August, 2006 at ISIS and I was placed in CLB2. I first started the EAL program at the Quinpool Education Centre, but wanted to further my education at the Cunard Learning Centre. They assessed my English and math skills but I was unsuccessful as there was no EAL program to join at the Cunard Learning Centre at that time. I was terrified by the result and the CLB2 would not allow me to enter college or get a good job. So, I went back to continue CLB2. I applied effort by studying hard and finished CLB6 in April, 2008. I have the mind to continue my education even as far as the college level. Back in Liberia, I started school and completed Grade 3 but was not able to go further because of the war situation and poverty. I was not fully supported in school because of those circumstances. After I had my first son, I attempted to go back to school but I could not continue because I had to take care of my child and I had no money to pay for tuition. However, I feel great that I now have the opportunity to attend school in the Cunard Learning Centre. I am more than grateful that this opportunity has reached me. I would be heartbroken to give-up the learning I have already gained, and it is important to have the assistance when I don't understand something or have questions.

To conclude, I have faced problems earlier with going to school and I now have the opportunity to go back. I will apply effort by reading my notes, practicing my math, listening to lectures, and taking notes. I know that I have the strength to go further with my learning in order to reach the goal I have set for myself. Therefore, this learning is increasing my knowledge and bringing changes in my life.

What Learning Means to Me

Colin Henderson - Cunard Learning Centre

Adult learning has changed my life. If it wasn't for this program I would be in jail or still on the streets collecting bottles. I have learned how to spell and read better. The only book in my life I read before this program was Charlotte's Web and Harry Potter now I am reading books like Those of the Forest and others. Those of the Forest was my favorite book so far.

Adult learning has taught me to use my mind and to have a mind of my own to think of what the world has to offer. I take one day at a time one thing at a time. I thought I didn't need math but you do from fractions to measurement and to add and to subtract. I would like to thank Cunard for helping me in the last two years.

The reason I think school is so important is because in today's society you have to have a good education just to get a part time job. On September 14th, 2012 I applied to the Adult Learning Program. On April 1, 2013 I started level one. On October 25th I completed level one and on October 28, 2013 I started level two. I would like to start off by telling my story about the Adult Learners program. I was working at the time at Feed Nova Scotia. I was on a break I was looking out at the Halifax Harbour and a seagull was eating the bread that I was putting in the green bin. I was feeling so good the endorphins in my brain were telling me I should quit this volunteer job and go back to school. So at the time I was at a group home with good support staff that helped me to get back into school. I would like to say I learned a lot in the last year. At the time I was working at Feed Nova Scotia I was living in Sackville. I did a test at FLECs and didn't pass and then I went to Bedford Sackville learning center, and they said I had the level of a grade three student.

The Adult Learner's Program has taught me a lot on day to day living. The program made me use my mind to think more clearly. I have met good friends and good teachers.

I also work in the Stone Hearth bakery. My favorite class in school was Human Relations and now History of First Nations and English. I read the book 'Those of the Forest' three times.

The saying is 'If you don't use it, you lose it' and I just want to say thanks to the teachers at Cunard Learning Centre.

How Learning Makes a Difference in My Life

Jennifer Rhodes - Hants Learning Network Association

I think learning is like a puzzle. Each piece of the puzzle is something new you've learned that you take with you. Every time you learn something, you are putting the puzzle together. I have many pieces in my puzzle already.

English and Math are two important parts of this puzzle. We use English to read recipes. We use Math to measure the ingredients for our recipes. I use English to read to the children while volunteering at the Windsor Nursery School every Tuesday. I use Math at home to budget money. Budgeting money helps me save for trips, phone cards, and pay-per-view movies.

Learning is a journey. My journey started in Level 1 at the Hants Learning Network Association in 2006 with a teacher name Peter O' Brian. On May 29, 2010 Peter biked to school and had a heart attack. He died on the side of the driveway. I miss him very much. He was a great teacher; he would tell lots of jokes, help us with our work, and was there when we needed to talk to someone. Peter inspired me to stay in school. Now I have moved on to Level 2. I am learning lot of things that help me put my puzzle together.

When we learn it is one step at a time. The first step is trying. Sometimes it's hard to try when you're nervous. You need to step out of your comfort zone. Once you do that you can accomplish your goals. When you reach your goals it makes you proud.

My Stepping Stones from Beginning to End...

Brittany Roberts – Western HRM Community Learning Network

Age 5 she started school...

Age 7 she wanted to be a ballerina...

Age 9 she wanted to be a veterinarian...

Age 12 she wanted to be pretty...

Age 14 she felt like a failure...

Age 16 she quit school...

Age 18 she wanted to be dead...

Buuutt.....

At age 19 she became pregnant...

At age 20 she held her new born baby boy...

At age 23 she went back to school...

At age 24 she struggled with everything in life...

At age 25 she was just about ready to write her G.E.D....

When I turn 26 I want to wipe my tears away and say I did it...

When I'm 27 I want to start a career...

When I'm 28 I want to whisper I do...

When I'm 30 I want to finally say I made it!!!!

At this point in my life my education is extremely important to me and for a person to get a good career in their life they need their education. I don't want to be a mommy that has to admit to their child they don't have an education; I need to set a good example for my son...

I'm Still Learning

Rabah Abu Abdallah – Cunard Learning Centre

Learning makes a huge difference in a person's life; most teenagers don't realize that knowledge is the key to success. Studying not only helps a person to be successful but it also opens the mind to the different cultures all around the world.

As a youngster I started school in Syria where I was a difficult child because I didn't enjoy studying. I always wanted to go out with my friends and play, but thanks to my parents they helped me get through school until grade 11. I later on, at age 19, got married and had 5 children Yousef, Mohammed, Ali, Ahmad, and my youngest daughter Rahaf was born in Canada. When my 4 boys grew older and finished high school and got into university I started having a little more time to focus on myself and get back on track and into school. I then applied to the Cunard Learning Centre. I got tested and accepted into the school. A few weeks passed by which then I realized that I enjoyed learning Mathematics, Geography, History, and Biology. I also then realized that having the right teachers that are willing to sit there and help explain something over and over until the student understands it fully is also a bonus and that is what we have here at the Cunard Learning Centre.

Going back to school enabled me to help my daughter with her studies because I understand the material much more than I did, which again we go back to the knowledge is power because going back to learn is helping help my daughter to understand her homework better. This is why I truly do believe that in youth we learn but with age we understand. What I mean by this is that as youngsters sometimes we complain about having to study, also about going to school but when you get to be older with kids you come to understand why putting in the effort when you're younger and strive to learn will help you succeed. Then you can pass the knowledge and experience down to your children and push them to be more successful than you ever were.

The Journey

April Patey – Western HRM Community Learning Network

The journey I am on, in my opinion, has been an educational one and I see the positive growth it has made in my life.

This was not always the case. I lacked confidence when it came to learning. I thought of myself as a failure and that feeling made me feel worthless. I felt that I was not as smart as my peers. I remember one incident where we had to do a project and none of my peers wanted to work with me. At that time it was confirmed; they thought about me the same as I felt about myself.

I began missing school. Soon after that I quit. I became pregnant; facing my peers this way was too much so I decided that I would never go back to school again. Two years later I became pregnant with my second child. The lack of experience and knowledge showed itself leaving me hopeless.

Life became more and more overwhelming. The dreaded day came when my children were taken out of my care. The old feelings of not being good enough came rushing back, my future of being a mother was gone.

At the time, I would have done anything to stop feeling the overwhelming sadness. The day came where I felt I found the cure... drugs. Drugs numb the feelings of not being good enough. I was not aware that that feeling goes away and reality kicks in. That's when the real craziness starts. I ended up doing drugs more often, which costs money and a lot of it. That's how crime came into my life with the consequences of jail! But that is where I was re-introduced to learning. Again I became frustrated.

The teacher thought that I might have some learning disabilities. She suggested that I should see a doctor. I took her advice and was diagnosed with ADHD and FASD. I was put on meds. My thinking totally changed. I was confident and started seeing my life in a different way.

For the first time I was excited about learning. I went for reading at a Grade 5 Level to having my GED in Reading, Science and Social Studies, all in one year. I am happy to say I am enjoying school and love learning. I am on my way to a future I did not see, but one for which I always hoped.

Adam's Educational Struggle

Adam Zinck – Western HRM Community Learning Network

My educational story started in 1985. I wasn't the smartest student and my physical attributes weren't so large either. I guess that is how my social status was created. Unfortunately, I didn't start out with many friends nor did I have many throughout the years.

By the time I graduated to Grade 1, I had missed so much time from school because of my mother's illness. She almost died from the doctors messing up her gallbladder operation. I can remember wishing on my birthday for her to be home, but it didn't happen. She was in so much pain; I couldn't hug her without her screaming. In tears, pleaded to be put back into Grade Primary. My teachers and Father agreed. Back I went.

By the time I was in Grade 8 or 9, we moved to Fairview where I attended Duc Danville Elementary. That is when the bullying started. I have taken martial arts since I was 5 but I was scared to use it. My Father told me to throw a rock, use sticks, and do whatever was necessary. Especially, since I started to get picked on by the neighboring Junior High School students. There were two in particular. One day I came home for lunch and something "popped" into my head. Before I went back, I grabbed my brother's gun. I put it in my pants and off I went nervously. On the way, like clockwork, they noticed me. They started to run for me and I heard nothing but the beat of my heart... I drew... As they saw the gun they stopped and went the other direction. It worked, finally they left me alone. However they told their Principal, who told my teacher who searched my school bag and called the police.

The gun was seized and they showed up at my door after school. After they had a talk to my parents I thought I was going to get the beating of my life, but I didn't. I guess a stern talking to was sufficient, considering the circumstances.

A year later we moved to Timberlea. I was 12 and by this time I started to think that this could be my chance to change my status. Maybe be someone else, someone who is popular and funny. That didn't happen. So I just started to fight back with everything I had. They finally started to get the message and left me alone. It did however put me in with a different group. I started to do drugs, hanging around the wrong crowd and was finally expelled from grade 10 at Halifax West High School in 1996.

Thanks to my uncle I got into drywall which really got me nowhere. I worked hard, got clean and decided I needed my education at any cost. I've been attending GED preparation classes and a computer course every week. Also I recently received a certificate for a reach ability program called One Step Closer. It's been a year and I'm about half way through it. I don't know what I want to be yet but this is definitely a good start and I know I'm on the right track for once in my life.

I'm Still Learning

Matthew Hebert – Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

I'm still learning, everyday is a new experience. A few months ago I could not say that I was learning anything, or I didn't realize it if I was. So I decided to make a change, and very hesitantly decided to return to school, I was very nervous, anxious, and a little scared, but when I walked through the doors I was surprised that it was more than just schooling. It was reinforcing confidence and essential skills I've lost along the way.

The first day I walked into my class I was quiet, and nervous, but it wasn't long until I adjusted to this new environment. I didn't realize how much I had forgotten through the years. But, with the help of a good environment, and a good teacher it didn't take me that long to get into the swing of things. Now that I'm no longer an adolescent, everything that has been shown to me has been comprehended a lot easier and it's being retained.

Learning makes a difference in my life every day; more has been learned in the last few months than I can remember learning the entire time I was in school growing up. Not only is it the essential skills Reading, Writing, Math, that we are learning each day. Also, cooking with healthy things that make it a lot easier on my nights to cook. We also have Economics, which is helping me understand how to create a budget and maintain it, also about loans, taxes, and all the other things I never paid any attention to.

So, how learning makes a difference in my life? A few short months ago I would not have been able to elaborate on this subject, not only was I not truly learning anything of value, I was just going day by day. But today I'm enjoying learning something new each day, so for me, I'm glad I took the first step into the CAN-U program. And I am happy to be able to show my children the importance of learning and enjoying it.

How Learning is Making a Difference in My Life

Kyle Francis - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Learning is a work in progress which may or may not have its ups and downs, smiles or frowns. Nonetheless just being able to learn an experience a new task could also be difficult in itself. Something positive that will come in hand in the later days of life, knowing that a diploma can close old doors, as well as open new doors to a better future is all the right reasons to pursuit an education.

From having a grade twelve education, more life opportunities may take place. Whether through job experiences, being able to go to college or even university perhaps. Due to the fact that any type of job nowadays requires a grade twelve, or at least some college experience. It can be difficult at times, and it may persuade you from reaching towards your goals in life, but being able to turn those stumbling blocks into stepping stones will better my life for further success.

Education is slowly but surely changing my life more than one way, just because going back to school for upgrading is another experience in itself. Let alone having to go to NSCC for the adult learning program will help me further my accomplishments. It will better help me achieve on what I want to do in life including my academic background.

My improvement for schooling is a journey. A path set on the right direction, towards the career building skills I will need in life to help advance me in my course to a positive perspective. Compared to the way I use to be without an education.

Although learning is a task, it is my responsibility to earn what I get out of life. It was intimidating at first, but once you commit towards a diploma success is just around the corner in the near future.

A Story about Libraries

Kenneth McDow - Halifax Community Learning Network

The first libraries were only for rich or powerful people. Eventually there were public libraries and all people could go to the library and look at books and learn more. The people could learn history, math and writing and lots more in books and teach their families more about the world.

In the 1920's, Andrew Carnegie built 125 public libraries in Canada. He gave money for buildings and the community had to provide the money for the books and furniture. People still go to the library today and learn more from books and on computers.

Early in my life I did not know how to read and write very well. Now I can read and write very well because I've been coming to my classes in the library. Now I can read books and newspapers and I can fill out applications and do my groceries and pay bills and do my banking. I've also learned more about history and geography and math at the library. My life is better since I can read anything I want! There are lots of people who can't read or write very well. They should go to a library program so they can learn more and help themselves to live a better life.

How Learning has Helped Me

Megan Chapman - Cumberland Adult Network for Upgrading

Learning makes a big difference in my life. With learning I now realize there are more job opportunities, my communication skills have increased, morals have become clearer and my self confidence has increased tremendously.

When I first considered applying for the Can-u Adult Learning Program, I was scared I would fail the test and not be eligible to join. It wasn't until November 2013 that I finally had the nerve to go in and see Catherine. Ever since that day my word choices have increased tremendously and I make better sense with my bigger vocabulary. Being here makes me realize my life goals will not just be handed to me; I will have to achieve them on my own.

Back when I dropped out of high school, I didn't have a care in the world. I was still young and living with my mother. There were no bills to be paid by me. At the time I didn't care that it would affect my future plans of becoming a nurse, or even attending college.

I have realized my morals have changed; I'm now more prudent, I finally realize my past actions can be brought up while applying for job, or even college. I now also have a better understanding for the value of a dollar whereas before I didn't care how much I spent. Compare that to nowadays when I have to pay my own bills, buy my own food and pay for my own transportation.

Learning has made me consider all the options available for me. I feel comfortable asking questions, working with groups and being a part of a team. Going back to school was a good choice for me!

I'm Still Learning

Fatima Lopez Diaz - Barrington Community Learning Centre

The only time when you stop learning is when you are dead; the only person who doesn't make mistakes is the one who doesn't do anything. I'll never stop learning until I die; I learn every single day of my life, from the simplest things to the most complicated.

I am a Mexican girl living in Canada learning the English language. Right now I have an important assignment, to learn the language of English and get ahead without anyone's help. This has become very important for me because at the beginning I didn't want or accept this challenge. I'm very into Mexican culture and I hated English language and not used to American's lifestyles, so I didn't want to stay here and then some acquaintances told me that I can't even learn English, that I couldn't do it, that made me feel as if I am silly, so I started to thinking and considering the idea. I know that it will be very hard but I believe in myself, I know I can. So I said, "Yes, why not learn?" So that is why I am here to learn and make this next step in my life.

As time goes on I'm learning about the people that they are not as bad as I thought; actually, most of them are adorable. I've also learned I don't like the food here at all, but not everything is bad. I love Eric's peach pie, Jennifer's pizza and Evelyn's fluff. I discovered that Dana likes to dance like me and Anna likes Enrique Iglesias like me. I also feel more free how I look or how I dress here than in Mexico so I learned that is ok to be natural and be yourself.

I learn the best being in the company of people, listening to them, following them. I have a lot to learn about the people that surround me.

I owe a lot to my teachers to the learning centre. I came here not knowing anything of the language. Even in the airport I had a list my mother made of important Basic English phrases for me to use.

I've been here less than two months. I didn't know how to speak with people, how to pronounce words, how to read. Now I'm proud to say that I can speak English and I'm still learning.

The reasons for learning English are many and varied. My job opportunities will be multiply as I master the language. English is the universal language so I have access to more information and no limitation for universities and training centers. Today, learning languages helps to have more open doors in the world.

Learning makes me feel so good inside, its self improvement. It feels so good can do things that I wouldn't think I would be able to do. And what makes me more excited and happy is to see my parents' faces when they see I can!

How I Continue to Learn to Adapt at 50

Lorna Bartlett – Colchester Adult Learning Association

We all want to believe in something and to step up to any literal challenge that may come our way.

Literacy Nova Scotia represents an excellent platform in which to begin to share our participation of a candid spirit to adapt within the limitations of careering in the global economy of 2014. The time has come for me, to live a full emotional life and to accomplish reasonable goals.

Over the last few years, I've learned keeping a daily personal journal can help to organize everything necessary which motivates me to contribute, communicate and engage with others.

Today, the most positive influence and energy in my life comes from the confident people in my daily interactions. In my work life, at 50 years of age, I received a lay-off from my employer. The ways I've learned to lose myself in sacrifices, for instance, I've learned to observe what the community offered besides how to adapt in times like these. As well as, I'm continuing to learn how to find intelligent opportunities and equal pay. "This I will stand and this I will not," speaking as a woman.

The questions I've learned to ask as a result alert me to the dire facts and the kind of future I see, also, to suffer no further un-do hard ship. As a team player, however, my story is an on-going search for stability, in which to perform and pour the rest of my life.

Meanwhile, the time has come for another deeper evaluation to enable new strengths, accomplish everything with integrity to count the cost and the benefits in which to send my life in a new direction of learning to become the right person. Equally important, tests and trusts will, for this reason, be enough pressure to produce the positive results I will adapt. Therefore, as a single parent with a high paying job in the future determines whether or not, in fact, I would be able to save, invest, spend or donate any of my earnings. Along with making practical decisions, as a finely tuned machine, I realize "happy and selfish," do not do well in the same sentence. Therefore, I am hopeful I'll learn how in the process of training and obtaining right credentials.

I will not stop learning in relation to myself, society or future employment to advance in a meaningful career. As I explore all possibilities by establishing right choices to embrace, to leave, to return to, to confront, and to fight for. However, set new goals to read, study, pray, plan my lifestyle. All in all I'm thrilled to enter an essay. Meanwhile, a process of practical writing can change my life besides help me refocus. Above all, I enjoyed the fun of competing for an IPAD. The internet service is an excellent leeway, for me, at 50 years of age. Therefore, I'm still learning in 2014 to be much the wiser and to broaden my customer service skills, and communication skills. Truly, in this new global economy it is a mine field, this is for sure.

What Does Coming Back to School Mean to Me?

Bogaczewicz Ania – Options Work Activity Program

Is one ever too smart for one's good? Do you think it is too late, anytime to upgrade an education? Are there any stops against improvement of future? In truth, I feel as physically and mentally rich person because I may sharpen the skills for success in life. For example, it is a shame to waste time. Every time one goes beyond, sets limits, I feel better. It is important to use one's potential until the door to all world's wonders opens. Next, everyone has the right to feel proud of the achievements, also to be self-confident, and to feel needed. Please, think how great it is to have all your dreams come true-one by one. Therefore, it is never too late to get an education, the more the merrier, since what will be learned stays with you in life, it is too, always yours, well deserved and surely.

I'm Still Learning

Melita Carvery - Halifax Community Learning Network

It is a joy to me that I am able to learn and the older I get the more positive I am. I think the reason why that is that I feel blessed by God for giving me the strength to keep going with my everyday activities despite struggles in my life. I think the reason why I want to do this is that it is important for my grandson to grow up and be a strong and respectful young man and become somebody with a good career and education. I want to be a good role model for him.

I want to accomplish something before I leave this world. I didn't have the education I thought I would have but that doesn't stop me from doing what I always wanted to do, to one day get my GED. It will be a struggle for me but it doesn't matter how long. I'm not going to give up no matter how long it takes.

I will always want to learn. I like fixing stuff and would like to be able to fix computers and electronic stuff some day. I used to watch my dad fix things around the house and I learned a lot from him by watching him. Education is so important today but back then it didn't matter. People like my dad and grandmother had skills around the house but didn't have a lot of education. My dad had grade 9 but my grandmother couldn't read or write but she was a very strong woman. She had a lot of grandchildren and family was very important to her. She kept everyone together and every Sunday we had a family day. We had lots of fun and lots of good food.

I was a very negative person growing up after my grandmother passed away and I used to be scared to try different things. Things are different now. I read the Bible and go to church and it makes me a stronger person. I try to live each day to the fullest and keep on keeping on. I also want to write children's books some day and paint. God has put us here to help each other with different situations and I would like to be able to do that by reading and keep on learning. I have enjoyed reading history especially black history and I want to learn more about my family tree so I can tell my younger relatives where they came from so they know who they are. I am so glad to have this adult learning program. I don't know what I would be doing if it wasn't available to the community. I pray that it keeps going because it helps a lot of people succeed to improve their life.

I'm Still Learning

Percy Oliver - Halifax Community Learning Network

When I was in an accident, I had to start my life over again, so I started at Literacy for Adult, for reading and some math. When I do this, I can see the difference, with the help I am getting from Don, Travis and Atal. I am happy that the people have patience with me. I am picking up my reading, I can see it, but I have a long way to go.

I know that if I do not do it, it just will not get done and that will not be right. So I will keep on doing what I am doing, I will get there. All the places where I go to learn how to do this, if something happen that if the funding runs out, I know that in my life I have to keep going with it. Learning is important because I feel good about myself, and I have to know what I am doing with it. I am learning because it will help me with my goal of getting a trucking license and I could help other people out like how my friend is helping me out doing this. This is why learning is so important to me, and this is why I work hard at learning every week.

Can't Stop Learning

Christina States - Barrington Community Learning Centre

You can't stop learning! If you stop learning, you won't know anything, and if you don't know anything then you'll just feel like crap.

There's always time to learn about everything to know if it is true or not. Instead of huffing and puffing you can ask someone for the information or look it up in the dictionary or on the computer.

I want to have it all in my head. I wanted to know what's difference is between New Mexico, Mexico and Mexico City. I didn't understand why there are three of them. I got help to find the difference. I learned that New Mexico has mountains and there are mountains in the country of Mexico but that Mexico City is part of the big country of Mexico and is green, lots of grass and is a big city.

One of the things I am learning about is Math. I am doing career planning, I want to learn about the different things about making a square, measuring and using inches and centimeters so I can become a carpenter. I want to build.

Also, I love to write so I can get things off my chest. I want to let people know that my story is important, as well as everyone else's. I write because when I get upset I don't talk at all. I write about my feelings so other people will understand what I am going through. It's hard for me to explain sometimes with my words so writing helps.

What I am learning about me is that I am a so-so learner. I have troubles with stuff and sometimes I give up and other times I keep trying. If I know it's going to help me, I don't give up. Sometimes I ignore the fact that I have to learn but when I do that, it keeps coming at me until I decide I have to do something about it.

I am still learning.