

Live & Learn

Winter 2008

The Newsletter of the PEI Literacy Alliance

Fun at Family Literacy Day



Erin Casey and her son Marius van Leeuwen had a great time celebrating family literacy on January 26th. Children and parents filled the Confederation Centre Art Gallery for crafts, games, reading, puppets, and dancing and singing with Mike Pendergast, the Music Man. Erin coordinated this event for the PEI Literacy Alliance.

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Live & Learn

The Newsletter of the PEI Literacy Alliance

Published by the PEI Literacy Alliance.

Edited, written and designed by Catherine O'Bryan, Norman Finlayson and Jinny Greaves.

We would like to hear from you if you have:

- learners' stories
- creative writing by learners
- articles or news about teaching adults
- upcoming events
- new resources for adult education

Please send your material to:

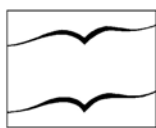
Live & Learn
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**PEI
Literacy
Alliance**

This publication is made possible by funding from the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy.

From the Chair

I wonder if we have ever had so many opportunities for advancing literacy and learning.



Angela Larter
Alliance Chair

Workplace Education and Essential Skills have found a place in the spotlight with funding, program and project announcements.

Combining employment and learning activities is not a new idea, but it certainly is a great fit and a welcome opportunity.

Literacy and learning have always been a priority at our PEI libraries and it seems now that the number and types of activities across the province are at an all-time high. Community Schools are in full-swing across PEI. Island communities are hosting more language programs for newcomers than ever before, not to mention all the distance and E-learning possibilities.

On the more formal side of learning, the number of full-time, part-time, and mature students is very high at our post-secondary learning institutions. This is not the case in other provinces. Recent surveys show that PEI students are happy with their institutions, finding employment after graduation in very high numbers, and plan to keep learning.

Whether you are drawn to life-long learning because of your own interest, children or grandchildren, or because of the writers' strike in Hollywood, there are so many kinds of literacy and learning opportunities in PEI. Luckily, we can sample many and don't have to choose a favourite!

Angela Larter

Project News

“They gave me just enough information to scare me.”

----a participant in our health literacy focus group

Jinny Greaves has produced a research report which puts a spotlight on the issue of health literacy. Health professionals may think they are helping their clients, but do these clients understand what they are being told?

The PEI Literacy Alliance conducted a health information needs assessment of people enrolled in adult education classes. We estimated their literacy skills at level 2.



Jinny Greaves
Alliance Researcher

Using focus groups, we asked participants where they get health information. We got many responses. Doctors and pharmacists were named most frequently, followed by the Internet. Although most people had good experiences getting health information from pharmacists, this was not always the case with doctors.

Participants said many doctors need to improve the way they communicate health information. They need to use plain language, be supportive, and spend more time with patients. One participant told Jinny, “I asked the doctor to explain it again, he did, but I still didn’t understand and then he was out the door.”

This project was the first step in a larger plan. We will conduct a needs assessment of people working in the health field. We want to find out what will enable them to communicate more effectively with their clients, especially those with low-literacy skills. The Alliance will then be equipped to make clear recommendations to policy-makers to improve health literacy for Islanders.

This research was funded by the Adult Knowledge Learning Centre, the Literacy Initiatives Secretariat and the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy.

To read the full report visit www.pei.literacy.ca.

Awards



Alliance board member Kathleen Eaton accepts the diversity award from PEI Premier Robert Ghiz and Diversity Consultant Thilak Tennekone.

PEI Government Photo / Brian L. Simpson

On December 10, the PEI Human Rights Commission and the PEI Public Service Commission presented the Annual Premier's Award for Diversity Leadership. The award is for government employees who have demonstrated leadership in diversity by creating a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive workplace. Provincial Librarian Kathleen Eaton has been an active partner in "ESL at the Library" which helps newcomers to PEI with their English. The program includes:

- A Language Lab - Computers with ESL software for learners to use
- Conversation Circles
- ESL Tutor Training Sessions
- A space for one-on-one tutoring
- The service of matching learners with volunteer tutors

There is a tutor training program beginning in April. If you are interested, call Erica at the PEI Association for Newcomers, 628-6009.

Grants for Organizations

In November the Literacy Alliance awarded special project and operational grants with funds that we raised at the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy. We distributed over \$10,000 to a variety of groups to help advance literacy in PEI.

Here are the activities of winning projects:

Worldreaders: Creating a Global Community of Young Readers

Create an on-line space for upper elementary students from different parts of the world to share their reading.

Contact person: Ray Doiron, Faculty of Education, UPEI, 566-0694.

A Resource Centre Library

Establish a resource centre for volunteer tutors and their students.

Contact person: Monique Arsenault, Evangeline School Council Tutoring Club, 854-2491.

Literacy and Essential Skills Initiative

Acquire resources for preliminary project development, identification and assessment of student participants and essential work skills.

Contact person: Tamara Hubley-Little, Bluefield High School, 675-7480.

Bookworms

Operate a 12 week reading program for parents and children.

Contact person: Darcy Brown, Main Street Family Resource Centre, 687-3928.

Literacy Improvement Plan

Purchase a number of text sets to start guided reading in grades four, five and six.

Contact person: Lynn Hufnagel, Englewood School, 658-7850.

Operational Funding

Purchase needed materials and support special outings.

Contact person: Tina White, Centre Petite Souris, 687-7178.

Increased French Novel Collection

Purchase French novels for classroom library.

Contact person: Pamela MacMillan, Spring Park Elementary School, 368-6400.

Literacy Resources at the Secondary School

Purchase appropriate reading materials at independent and instructional levels of high interest/low level readability.

Contact person: Sandra Skeffington, Colonel Gray Senior High School, 368-6860.

Operational Funding

Support the travel costs of volunteer tutors.

Contact person: Mary Burke, PEI Volunteers for Literacy, 368-4695.

For information about an individual project, please call the person on the list.

December Bursary Winners

Joanne Joy is a hard-working and dedicated learner. Her instructor Allie Keedwell says she is showing her two children the importance of learning. Congratulations Joanne!



Daniel Bernard impressed his instructor Jane MacMillan with his desire to upgrade his education. He has a strong work ethic and is trying hard to get his GED. Congratulations Daniel!



Donna Jean Lamont has made outstanding progress since she began her upgrading according to her instructor Allie Keedwell. She is keen, always eager to learn and accepting of all she encounters. Congratulations Donna Jean!



Cheryl Anne Trainor is a high energy and spirited student. Karla MacDonald her instructor is confident that she would be an asset in whatever health care profession she chooses. Congratulations Cheryl Anne!



Monsurat Hassan also won a PEI Literacy Alliance bursary. Her story is on the next page.

\$500 Bursaries for Adults

The next bursary deadline is February 29, 2008.

For information and an application form, please visit our web site at www.pei.literacy.ca or call us at 902-368-3620.

Introducing a Winner - Monsurat Hassan's Story

Monsurat Hassan has had a hard life, but she manages to stay strong and positive. She is full of passion and her smile and laugh are contagious.

Monsurat was only 14 when war broke out in Sierra Leone, her home country. The war was one of the most savage imaginable where soldiers and civilians were treated with the same brutality. Her family fled to Nigeria where she lived in a refugee camp for 5 years. Here she met her husband, gave birth to her their first child Safila and trained and worked as a hairdresser.



In March 2003, Monsurat was eight-months pregnant and on her way to Canada with her husband and daughter. They were about to start a new life in Prince Edward Island. She knew nothing about this place or its people. Her daughter Musu was born a month later as a Canadian citizen.

Since arriving in Charlottetown, Monsurat has had to go back to school and retrain to be a hairdresser. “Being a hairdresser in Africa is very different than being a hairdresser in Canada. Here the terminology is different, the licensing is different, and most importantly the hair itself is different.”

She wants to stay in Charlottetown, even though she says that most black people that come to PEI eventually leave. “They leave because there are no jobs here and because they are treated differently.” Monsurat has experienced both of these hardships. She has also had to deal with her husband leaving her and her children. She has no family here, is currently unemployed and is dealing with stress. However, she is very thankful to be where she is. She is trying to get her two sisters and brother to Canada. They still live in Sierra Leone.

Because of the war, Monsurat left school after completing grade 8. She is now enrolled in the GED program at Holland College. She hopes having her GED diploma will help her find the work that she desperately needs. Her dream is to own her own hair salon and she knows that if she stays determined she will reach her dream.

The Back Page

Bouquets



Congratulations to the Provincial Government for their new workplace learning campaign for employees who want to read better, get their GED, or generally increase their learning skill level. Staff from Workplace Learning PEI will work with interested employees to help them find the learning program that is best for them. Funding will be provided by the provincial government to cover the costs of the program and the time for employees to participate.

Congratulations to the Confederation Centre Library for their innovative program “**Stories on the Bus**”. Library staff read to children on the bus once a month. Call the library at 368-4642 for dates and bus numbers. Preschoolers ride for free.

Thank you to everyone who supported our January 29th Family Literacy Day celebration:

- **Ocean 100 Radio** for their generous sponsorship
- **PEI Provincial Library Service** and **Confederation Centre Art Gallery**, our partners in the project
- All the **volunteers** who read stories and made the day a success

Announcement

Atlantic Summer Institute — August 19-22, 2008

This year, the PEI Literacy Alliance will be a partner in the **Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities** at UPEI. Mark these dates in your calendar - if you haven't been to the Institute before, now is the time to get involved!

It will provide you with an opportunity to develop skills, learn and share knowledge and work with others on programs, policies and services.

This year's theme is “**Reading Between the Lines: Health, Safety and Literacy.**” Please pass this along to anyone you know who might like to join us this year.

For inquiries please contact asi@thequaich.pe.ca or (902) 894-3399