

2022 Literacy Champion– Eileen White

Maureen Duffy, Program Manager, Adult Education & Transitions at Holland College presented the Literacy Champion Award to Eileen. Here is what she had to say about Eileen.

It is my great privilege and pleasure to introduce this year's Literacy Champion Award, a truly deserving recipient- Eileen White. Eileen was born and raised in a large family in Souris, where she attended school. After graduating from high school, a neighbour had asked a then 18-year-old Eileen if she would tutor her grade 5 son. For the first time in his 5 years of school, with Eileen's help, this student finally experienced success and his confidence soared. Eileen was so inspired by his progress and growth and word of her talent and skill quickly spread throughout the community. She was then approached by several families in the surrounding areas, asking for her help in tutoring their students. This was the true beginning of Eileen's passion for teaching and helping others reach their potential. Their successes were her reward.

Eileen continued to work hard throughout her life, raising a family and continuing her own education. She experienced firsthand the doors that education opened. She became part of the Holland College Adult Education team many years ago and over the years has helped hundreds of learners achieve their goals. The impact that Eileen has had on so many lives is immeasurable. Her quiet, approachable demeanor and reassuring nature have led to hundreds of people going on to get their GEDs over the years. Eileen relates well to learners, and she instinctively knows when that student is ready to write their GED- she knows too when to give a gentle nudge and when to offer encouraging support. She quietly goes above and beyond, never looking for any accolades or acknowledgement, truly wanting only to help that next person experience that aha moment or taking that first step of getting started towards their literacy or learning goal. She meets students where they are in their learning- never judgmental, always calm and encouraging. Eileen understands and empathizes with those who have high stakes situations- they need their GED to get or keep their job. Oftentimes these are students who had a poor experience in their school life and are filled with apprehension and self-doubt. Eileen quiets all that noise and does whatever is necessary to ease their fears and instill confidence. There is no problem that is unsolvable, and Eileen can frequently be heard in the hallway saying, "No problem, we will figure it out." She truly has a gift for getting the best out of everyone, because she consistently gives them her best and her work is straight from her heart. There are countless individuals who could come up on this stage this evening and say that Eileen has given them a gift and changed their lives.

One staff member made the comment recently that having the experience and pleasure of working with Eileen makes us all better. We, as an Adult Education team, are fortunate to have her in our corner, as is the Island community. Eileen truly exemplifies a Champion of Literacy, and we are thrilled for her to receive this recognition.