

# Learners in ACTION

Winter 2005



Learners in ACTION is a publication of the Movement for Canadian Literacy

Movement for Canadian Literacy's Learners Advisory Network

## Proud Dad Turns Family Life Around

We are pleased to feature a story written by Nick Prince, from Vancouver, BC. If you go to [www.nald.ca](http://www.nald.ca) you can listen to the story while reading along. Nick is enrolled at the **Canucks Family Education Centre in Vancouver**. He is a full-time father and works part-time. Nick just completed his Grade 12 diploma.



**Hi my name is Nick;** my boy's name is Evan he is 7 years old and my daughter Rae-Anne is 6 years old. I'm a full-time father, work part-time and I just completed my Grade 12 diploma.

This is my third year with the Canucks Family Education Centre and its Partners In Education program. The first two years I attended the program were the best time that I've ever had with my kids. To watch them grow and learn is an awesome feeling. To learn to appreciate books for myself helped me become a lot closer to my boy because he is a real bookworm. And it made me realize I needed to go back to school and finish my Grade 12 diploma. Plus a little bribery from Jean helped. She said if I found out how many credits I had left to finish high school I could meet Brian Burke, the past general manager of the Vancouver Canucks hockey team and Paul Martin, the Prime Minister of Canada. It worked! I have now completed all of the requirements for my adult high school diploma. What a relief. I was scared to try because I

thought I had a lot of difficult courses left to take, but in the end it was only one art course and a course in physical education. So bribery does sometimes work.

I didn't know how much the Partners In Education program would affect my relationship with my kids. I now realize how important it is for them to have my support both in the classroom and at home. I would never have spent that much time reading with them but the program has taught me the value of this. Jean, Lana, and the staff of Britannia and the Canucks Family Education Centre have made us into better people. This program has really turned my family's and my life around.

I used to be down and out and I was on a very destructive path. I dropped out of school the first time in Grade 8, when my parents got divorced, I moved with my Dad to Fort St. James where I spent a lot of time partying and working. Then I moved back to my Mom's and they put me into Grade 10 and 11, I got to miss Grade 9, I then dropped out again when I started to get into trouble. But once my kids came it sure changed a whole lot. I still struggle in life but I'm trying, it's hard sometimes. I've been a part

of my children's life from day one. Their Mom was there in the beginning and then she left. It was hard being a single father, but when you got great kids by your side everything seems to work out. Their Mom is a big part of their life now so everything is better.

Without this program I don't know what I would be doing now. I don't think my boy would have received the Top All-star award, his first year in school and the citizenship award in his second year or my daughter the Top All-star award in her first year if not for the Canucks

Family Education Centre. This program made me into a very proud Dad. So I would like to thank Jean, Lana, Britannia Elementary School, The Canucks for Kids Fund, the players and their partners and The Vancouver Sun's Raise A Reader program.

The Canucks Family Education Centre is an innovative partnership between Britannia Community Services Centre Society, the Canucks for Kids Fund and 28 program partners around Vancouver.

## Learners Make a Great Impression at Conference

In the fall, learners across Canada were asked to tell their stories about what people with literacy challenges experience in the health care system. Organizers of the Literacy and Health conference wanted to have a *Learning from Learners Gallery* that would show and tell the health professionals and literacy workers about what works and what is difficult for people with literacy challenges. The conference took place in October 2004 in Ottawa and the Gallery area proudly displayed the stories, poems and artwork from dozens of courageous learners.

The 350 healthcare workers and literacy workers who attended the conference learned a lot from the *Learning from Learners Gallery* and from the 14 learners who spoke and participated at the conference. They now have a better understanding about how hard it can be to get good health care when you have literacy problems. They have promised to take action on many of the recommendations made by learners. You can see the powerful stories and messages from adult literacy learners at: <http://www.cpha.ca/literacyandhealth/learnersgallery.html>

## The Story Behind the Story

We send big thanks and congratulations to everyone who sent their stories to the *Learning from Learners Gallery*. In BC, Caroline Canute, decided to do her part to educate the health care workers at the conference even though it caused some painful memories. Here is her story with some comments from her teacher, Kate Nonesuch at Malasapina University-College Reading and Writing Centre, in Duncan, BC.



“ I want to tell you a story about the effect your *Learning from Learners* activities had on a student at the Reading and Writing Centre.

One day, at our weekly writing marathon, I told students about your request for personal stories about medical issues and literacy that would be posted at your conference and on your website. I suggested that as the topic for the day's writing although students always have the option of rejecting my suggested topic. This topic brought up many difficult memories for most students, but they set to work with a will.

A woman named Caroline started to cry as she wrote her first few words. She said she would like to stop working on it and do it for homework. The next day she brought her story in, and when she started to read it to me, she began to cry and was unable to go on, so I read it to her. I asked if she had ever talked to her doctor about how the experience felt to her. She said no with an expression on her face that told me it would be impossible for her to think of approaching her doctor about it. I asked some questions to get the story clearer; she made some revisions and typed it up. The next day I proofread it with her, and she was able to read it out loud, although still with tears in her voice. We sent it off to the conference that week.

A couple of weeks later we were getting ready to make a presentation about our Centre for a visitor from England. Students were asked to prepare a talk about some aspect of the Centre's program, and Caroline said she would like to use her health story as her topic. When the day arrived to make the presentations, she spoke about how important it had been to her to be able to tell her story to other doctors, so that they could learn from her experience and might treat patients differently in the future. Finally, she read her story out loud, proudly and without tears.

I was amazed at so much healing in so short a time. Thank you for offering a place for people to express themselves. I'm sure it made a difference to many learners. ”

This is Caroline's story that appeared at the conference:

### My Parents

I was upset at Dr. S. for giving my late dad too many morphine. I wish he asked us first if anyone wanted to speak to him. The same thing happened with my mom. Why couldn't they give us a chance to speak with our parents? Dr. P. could of asked if any family want to speak with their parent. My late dad struggled with cancer. My late mom had pneumonia.

By Caroline Canute

This is the story Caroline wrote a few weeks later. She wrote this while she was getting ready to give a talk about things we do at the Centre for a visitor from England.

### Medical Story

I, Caroline will be talking about the medical conference. We sent our stories to the conference. The nurses and doctors wanted to hear stories from people who have trouble reading. I was happy to let the doctors know my honest feelings about my late parents. I wish we had time to speak with our parents before they were given morphine and ask my late parents if they had anything important to say to their children. My late dad understood English but my late mom never understood English. I'm so happy to let my feelings out and the doctor will understand me. By Caroline Canute



Caroline Canute working at the centre.

# Learner Resources

## Learning Online

AlphaRoute is an online learning environment for adults who want to improve their reading, writing, math and computer skills to achieve their goals.

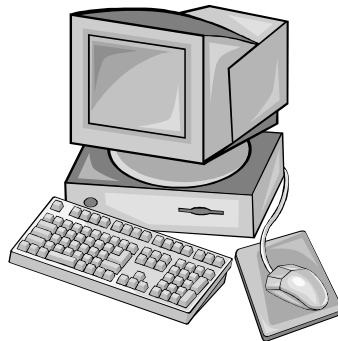


Approximately 3,500 adult learners, primarily in Ontario, but also in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan, are now using AlphaRoute. It offers:

- Interactive learning activities
- Learning management tools
- Easy-to-use communication tools
- Special content and culturally relevant activities.

So far learners have been very positive about this anytime-anywhere online learning.

They said that using this system made them able to find information and read more easily. It also helped them have a better understanding of what they were reading and encouraged them to continue learning.



Find out more about how you or your learning program can use the AlphaRoute system. Contact: Nancy Friday at the AlphaPlus Centre at tel: 416-322-1012 (ext. 305) or email: [nfriday@alphaplus.ca](mailto:nfriday@alphaplus.ca) or visit: <http://alpharoute.alphaplus.ca>.

## Let the Experts Do the Talking

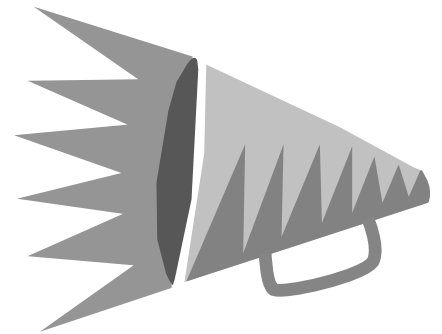
When literacy organizations plan a media strategy or campaign, they have the best experts available to talk about the issues—the learners. Adults with literacy challenges can be the most effective spokespersons for literacy. They can speak with realism and passion to the media about their own experiences with reading and writing difficulties. This powerful and memorable information is just what a reporter wants!

Many learners who do speak out, feel that it has not only benefited literacy, it has benefited them as well. A new manual provides information and ideas about how to involve learners in media outreach and speaker programs. *Let the Experts Do the Talking* is available from the Ontario Literacy Coalition at tel: 416-963-5787 or at: [www.on.literacy.ca/research/experts/cover.htm](http://www.on.literacy.ca/research/experts/cover.htm).

## Help Others Speak Out for Literacy

Add your name to the petition to remind the Government of

Canada to act on their promises to improve literacy services in this country Canada. And help to get other learners, friends and family members to sign it. Download it from the MCL website at: [www.literacy.ca](http://www.literacy.ca) or contact the MCL office at tel: 613-563-2464, and we can mail you a printed copy.



Send us your stories, ideas and experiences. We'd like to publish them in future issues. Contact Fiona Murray at tel: 613-563-2464 or email: [Fiona@literacy.ca](mailto:Fiona@literacy.ca).