



The RCCUP Reader

Newsletter of the Renfrew County Community Upgrading Program

Issue #44

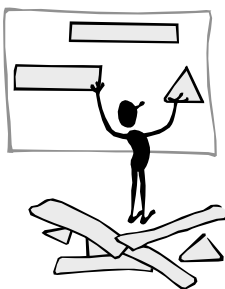
December 2005

Strategic Planning

In November, Jim Slavin of The Delfi Group led the Board and staff of Literacy Plus in an extensive exercise in visioning and long-term planning for Literacy Plus's next five years.

Building on the homework we were asked to do ahead of time, Session One was devoted to creating a joint vision of what we'd like to achieve by 2010. We also compiled lists of Literacy Plus's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In Session Two, we reviewed the values that inform our conduct and activities, and revised the Mission Statement.

Together we listed the Critical Success Factors that will allow us to move towards achieving our vision.



From these sessions, three priorities emerged: a program review, improvement and expansion of our promotion and marketing, and making connections with employers and businesses. Two committees were formed to carry out the first two activities; staff will proceed with the third.

The process was quite demanding, both in terms of thought and of time, but it gave us the chance to think more deeply about what we do and how we do it, as well as where we're headed. We have lots to do in the next five years.

Open House

Literacy Plus is holding an open house on Wednesday, December 14, from 11:00 to 3:00. The open house combines the computer classes' annual Christmas potluck lunch with an invitation to other students, tutors, staff, Board members and people in the community: Come out to Literacy Plus to see what we are doing and celebrate the holiday season.

On display will be work from the one-to-one program, the computer classes, and Workready Online. We'll have some of the resources we will use in the new hospitality/tourism course starting in February. You'll also get to see samples of the Christmas decorations made in Maxine's workshops. Joyce Gutzeit has donated several door prizes, and Inie McQuirter is donating a Christmas table centre to be raffled that day—only 99¢ a ticket. Please join us to share in the festivities.

Christmas Holidays

The office will close after the Open House, December 14. Phone and e-mail messages will be picked up until December 20. We will reopen Tuesday, January 3. Have a safe and happy holiday!



I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.
- Charles Dickens

Hire Value: Skills for Hospitality & Tourism

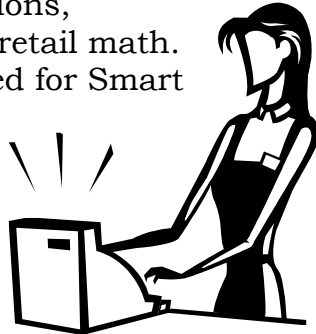
Tourism is increasingly important to the Eganville business community. Many businesses depend on finding staff with specific skills to serve the hospitality and tourism industry. Several business owners in Eganville have given strong support to Literacy Plus's plans for Hire Value, a 5-week, 90-hour course to train people for work in Hospitality and Tourism businesses. "This training is very much needed," says George Pezoulas, owner of Frisco's restaurant.

Students will develop a set of skills including communications, customer service, and retail math. They will also be trained for Smart Serve and WHMIS certification. Visits to businesses in the community and interviews with local employers will make sure that the skills from the classroom are those that are needed in the workplace.

The course is designed for people who want to prepare for a job in the hospitality or tourist business and also for people who are already working and want to upgrade their skills. It will prepare graduates for the coming tourist season.

The Hire Value course will begin on Monday, February 20, and run from 9:00 to 4:00, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, until March 22. The class will have room for a maximum of 10 people. For more information or to register, please contact the office.

Literacy Plus looks forward to working more closely with business people in the local community to provide training with immediate practical application to jobs.



Winter Classes

- Computer classes will start again the week of January 9.
- In Killaloe, volunteer Tony Pearson will teach a new literacy and computer class starting January 19. It will accommodate two to four people.
- Workready Online will take a break for Christmas and start again the week of January 9.
- The new Hire Value course will start Monday, February 20, and run through Wednesday, March 22. The course will run Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9:00 to 4:00.
- Maxine will lead more craft workshops in the winter, dates and activities TBA.

Tech Team Changes

Shawn Schroeder, teacher of our Wednesday morning computer class at Employment Networks in Renfrew, has moved to Houston, Texas, to take on a job in the high-tech/computer industry. We're sorry to lose him but wish him the best of luck with this great opportunity. Inie McQuirter took over the Renfrew class at the beginning of November.

Wednesday Workshops

The two Wednesday workshops on making Christmas ornaments were so popular, teacher Maxine Golden was persuaded to run two more. Students made two kinds of tree ornaments, a "pinecone" of folded foil paper and a twirly spiral "shell," and a bearded Santa wall decoration. People were so enthusiastic about these classes that Maxine has agreed to run more workshops after Christmas. Watch for details in January.



Preview: Literary Tuesdays 2006

Authors already booked for Literary Tuesdays in July 2006 are Frances Itani, Erika Ritter, and local writer Jenifer McVaugh. The fourth author is yet to be confirmed. Frances Itani's 2003 novel *Deafening*, set at the time of the First World War, was widely praised. CBC host Erika Ritter's most recent book is *The Great Big Book of Guys*. Jenifer McVaugh's second novel, *Paradise*, is an entertaining story about aging flower children returning to celebrate New Year's Eve at the communal farm they once called home. You can get started now on a good winter's reading!

Golden Oak Books

The Golden Oak Book Club encourages adult learners to read for pleasure. Any of our students can join, on their own or with the support of their tutor. Even if you don't want to join the club, their book lists can help you find a good book to read. This year's choices are:

- *The Rescue of Nanoose* by Mary Borrowman & Chloe O'Loughlin
- *Fires* by Tanya Lloyd Kyi
- *The Heaven Shop* by Deborah Ellis
- *The Maybe House* by Lynne Kositsy
- *Maria Chapdelaine*, based on the novel by Louis Hemon

For more information about the Book Club, visit the Golden Oak website at www.accessOLA.com/goldenoak

Painting Raffle

Maxine Golden has donated another lovely framed painting to raffle for Literacy Plus. The painting is on display at the office. Tickets are only 99¢ each. The draw will be held in May. Thanks to Maxine for her generosity with her talents.

Family Literacy Day

Friday, January 27, 2006, is Family Literacy Day, created in 1999 by ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation. This national day promotes the importance of reading and learning together as a family. Family literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills to accomplish day-to-day tasks and activities such as writing a note to a child's teacher, sharing a bedtime story, making a shopping list or using a recipe. Here are a few good reasons for reading with your young children.

- Reading and telling stories to a child of 18 months are powerful stimuli for brain development in the early years.
- Children aged 2 to 3 who are read to daily do better in kindergarten at age 4 or 5 than youngsters who are read to only a few times a week or less.
- Having a parent or other caring person to read aloud with helps children learn listening skills, vocabulary, and language skills, as well as develop imagination and creativity.
- The time a parent spends reading aloud with his or her children will result in a higher level of attachment, a sense of security, and knowledge by children that their parent feels they are worthwhile people with whom to spend time.



A local Family Literacy Planning Committee is working on events for Renfrew County. Watch for notices of these in January.

Literacy Plus gratefully acknowledges its funder, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Learning and the Brain

NHL hockey coach Jacques Demers recently said “ If I could not write and read, it was because I had so much of a problem with anxiety because of the things going on in the family.... I'd go to school and I couldn't learn anything.” Many people who come to literacy programs for help have similar backgrounds.

At a workshop sponsored by Community Literacy of Ontario in October, University of Toronto professor Garfield Gini-Newman described how the brain learns. Here are several points from that 3-hour workshop that help us understand Jacques Demers' story:



- When learning something new, the brain develops new connections among the nerves. These connections are called neural pathways. When we try new things, we keep our brains growing; we develop new neural pathways. For example, volunteers who are new to literacy tutoring are keeping their own brains growing while they are supporting their learners.
- The cerebellum is a part of the brain that is connected with both movement and thinking. That explains why movement triggers thinking. Studies show that young children cannot learn without moving and even adults learn better through movement. This understanding fits our experience. Many people have long realized that they need to use a new skill, not just hear about it or watch it performed. Tired parents might feel better, however, if they knew that expecting children to "sit still and learn" is not how learning happens. Their active children are learning.

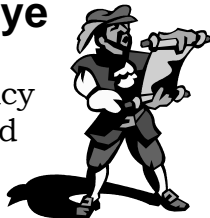
- Music lovers will be interested to hear that Adagio Baroque music moves at the same pace as the brain. Playing it in the background encourages reflective thinking. Playing that music can become a routine that automatically prompts thinking.
- Routines create a sense of safety, a comfort level that allows the brain to absorb something new. Effective learning environments have a number of routines in place.
- Stress blocks learning by flooding the brain with hormones that stimulate the fight or flight reflex. The brain is preparing a person to run or to fight. That was Jacques Demers' experience as a child.
- To learn, the brain must connect new information with existing knowledge. This connection could be described as a hook to prevent the new information from slipping away. The more ways we have of hanging on to a memory, the more easily it will be remembered.
- Women are better at multi-tasking than men. (Women have been saying that for a long time.) However, asking a student to multi-task—for example, to listen to directions while at the same time doing a writing task—makes learning more difficult.



Essential brain research confirms that “Emotion is the gatekeeper to learning. Intelligence is a function of experience. The brain stores most effectively what is meaningful from the learner's perspective.” Applying this knowledge helps us to create a positive learning environment for our students.

Hear ye, Hear ye, Hear ye

Tutors and Students of Literacy Plus have had a very busy and successful fall!!



We have 31 students working with 24 volunteer tutors. We also have some new tutors who are just beginning to work with students for the first time. Let us welcome:

- Colin Batty, Dacre
- Nancy Illman, Arnprior
- Tony Pearson, Killaloe
- John Allerton, Calabogie
- Margo Aubert, Renfrew

We are always looking for more volunteer tutors. Literacy Plus needs tutors in the Renfrew area especially. We have a number of people eagerly waiting for a tutor. If you can help us find more tutors, please call Sue or Diane.

This past fall Literacy Plus launched its first on-line learning project, **Workready**.



We have 10 students actively participating in this program. In **Workready**, students work from home, at their own pace and at their own time. Students are learning how to think critically, to manage personal stress and time, to set goals, and to improve self-confidence. They are also improving their reading, writing, computer and Internet skills. When asked what they like about the course, students wrote:

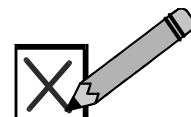
- “Workready seems ideal for me as I can go at my own speed and it’s free and you are most patient and so are those in the office.”
- “I have gained more knowledge in computers, typing skills and web pages since being introduced to Workready. It

also gives a person a chance to know themselves better.”

- “I have signed up for Workready to improve my skills so I can get my grade 12 diploma.”
- “I signed up for Workready because I wanted to learn the computer and better myself.”
- “I need computer skills to find employment and I believe this is the course to help me.”

We hope to start another **Workready** class in April. Call Sue to sign up and join in the fun!

Are You Ready to Vote?



The federal election is set for January 23. If you have never voted before, you might want some information about how to vote. Your tutor can help you prepare to vote, but will not tell you who to vote for. If your name is on the Voters' List, you are eligible to vote. If you are on the list, you will receive a Notice of Election in the mail at least two weeks before the election. It will tell you when and where to go to vote. If you are not on the list, you can phone Elections Canada. When you go to vote, you must take identification such as a driver's license with you.

When you vote, you will receive a ballot with the names of all the candidates on it. The names will be in alphabetical order. To vote you mark an X beside the name of the person you have chosen.

Information about this election will be widely available. Literacy Plus has a few resources, including a Voter's Kit, that you may want to borrow. You can also get information about voting by phoning Elections Canada at 1-800-463-6868, or visiting their website at www.elections.ca

Christmas Around the World

During this fall session, the computer classes in Eganville worked on a joint project to create a booklet called *Christmas Around the World*. Students each picked a country, sight unseen, from a brown paper bag and researched on the Internet how this country celebrates Christmas. They had to find at least one tradition, song, and recipe from each country to make their own page in the book. Pages were decorated with Clip Art and Word Art. Finally, the pages were copied and bound with a festive cover to make booklets for all of the students.



Terrie reports "Together we have explored many countries and their customs, music and food. The students worked diligently to complete this project in time for the Christmas season. It has been a wonderful experience for us all." Following are a few examples from the booklet.

A Tradition from Greece (Shirley)

On Christmas Eve, small boys, to the beating of drums and the tinkling of triangles, usually sing carols. They go from house to house and are given dried figs, almonds, walnuts, and lots of sweets or sometimes small gifts.

A Song from Russia (Mary Anne)

(English version by Cecil Cowdry)

Kolyada, Kolyada,
Walks about on Christmas Eve.
Kolyada, Kolyada,
At the window, cakes to leave.
Kolyada, Kolyada,
Come this Holy Night we pray.
Kolyada, Kolyada.



Scottish Bannock (Kathleen)

2 cups oatmeal
3/4 cup butter or margarine
1 cup flour
1/2 cup boiling water
1 teaspoon salt
Mix ingredients together in a bowl. Cut the butter with knife into the mixture until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the water to the mixture. Mix to a dough. Roll out until quite thin and then cut into rounds (about the size of a jam lid). Cook at 200 degrees Celsius for 10 minutes.

A Tradition from England (Lisa)

Christmas crackers often accompany food at Christmas dinner. Invented by a London baker in 1846, the cracker is a brightly coloured paper tube, twisted at both ends. It contains a party hat, riddle and a toy. When pulled by two people it cracks and the contents fall out.

How Smart Is Your Right Foot?

Try this—it's amazing and takes only seconds. However, you will keep trying many more times to see if you can outsmart your foot. You can't.

1. Sitting in a chair, lift your right foot off the floor and make clockwise circles.
2. Now, while doing this, draw the number "6" in the air with your right hand. Your foot will change direction.

Try as hard as you like—you can't make that foot go clockwise.

Newsletter Production

Editor:

Peggy Bridgland

Layout & Design:

Sue Rupert & Peggy Bridgland

Contributors:

Peggy Bridgland, Diane Litchfield,
Lee Torvi, Terrie Watson