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# The RCCUP Reader

Newsletter of the Renfrew County Community Upgrading Program

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Issue #45

March 2006

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## National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week, April 23 to 29, 2006, pays special tribute to the Canadian volunteers across the country who give of themselves to better their communities and the lives of others.

From January 1 to December 31, 2005, 50 volunteers donated 2,770 hours to Literacy Plus. They tutored adults across Renfrew County, served on Literacy Plus's Board of Directors and committees, and helped with many jobs in the office. We couldn't do what we do without them.

The staff of Literacy Plus asks students and the community to join us in recognizing the tutors, Board members and other volunteers who share their valuable time and skills to make Literacy Plus the great program that it is. Thank you, volunteers!

*Once upon Eternity,  
Above the clouds so high,  
There were some chosen Angels  
Who had no wings to fly.  
Their hands were made for helping,  
Their hearts were tender too,  
Their smiles were warm and happy  
And glowed as halos do!  
So God sent down these Angels,  
Because they were such dears,  
To spend their gentle love on earth—  
We call them VOLUNTEERS!!*

*(Thanks to Ethel Ryan for this poem)*

## Census Day

Tuesday, May 16, is Census Day. Approximately 31 million people in Canada in 12.7 million households and all agricultural operations will count themselves in by completing and returning their census questionnaires on-line or by mail.

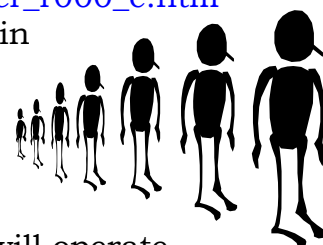
Why do we have a census? The census is not just a population count. The data is used for many purposes. For example, government departments need to know the age trends of the population to plan for pensions, health care, housing, employment programs and child tax credits. Town planners use census information on households and families to estimate needs for housing, hospitals and day-care centres.

Statistics Canada conducts the census. A kit for adult learners, including handbooks and a teacher's guide, is available to download at their website:

[www22.statcan.ca/ccr\\_r000\\_e.htm](http://www22.statcan.ca/ccr_r000_e.htm)

Click "For Teachers" in the list on the left.

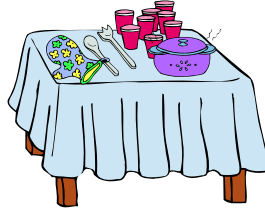
Literacy Plus will also have the kit at the office.



A Census Help Line will operate starting May 1, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Phone 1-877-594-2006. Make sure you count yourself in!

## Annual General Meeting

Literacy Plus will hold its Annual General Meeting and potluck supper on Wednesday, **June 7<sup>th</sup>**, at St. James Church in Eganville. Please note that the date has been changed from June 14<sup>th</sup>. The Board and staff welcome students, tutors, other volunteers, and interested members of the community. The evening starts with a potluck supper at 5:45 p.m. Come a bit early to socialize.



Our guest speaker this year is Rev. Catherine Bromell, United Church minister in Beachburg and Forester's Falls. Rev. Bromell will describe her experiences in learning to read. She describes herself as "definitely a late bloomer" in terms of reading skills—during her school years teachers couldn't figure out what to do with someone who could not grasp phonics. Rev. Bromell recalls that some teachers were helpful but the school system was not. She struggled throughout school and eventually graduated from the 4-year grade 12 program just, she says, so they could get rid of her.

Rev. Bromell says that she compensated for her lack of literacy through humour and good oral language skills. She eventually learned to read and says that her proudest moment came when she earned 80% in a course at Queen's University.

The AGM is also the time we elect Board members to replace those whose terms are ending. For more information about becoming a Board member, please call the office or visit our website at

[www.literacyplus-renfrewcounty.ca/volunt/board.htm](http://www.literacyplus-renfrewcounty.ca/volunt/board.htm)

We look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

## Revised Mission Statement

The revised mission of Literacy Plus is:

*Literacy Plus provides literacy and skills upgrading to adults, based on their individual needs, through a variety of learning opportunities. We promote literacy awareness and the value of lifelong learning.*

## Membership Campaign

Literacy Plus would like to increase its membership. Members are an important link with the community, spreading the word about literacy and our services.

Literacy Plus has two categories of membership. Students, volunteers, and staff are **members at large**. Other people and organizations who support the mission and purpose of Literacy Plus become **associate members** simply by filling out a membership form. There is no fee although donations are welcome. Membership forms are available from the office.



## Calendar

- April 3 - computer classes start
- Workready starts
- April 22 - Board meeting
- April 23-29 - National Volunteer Week
- April 28 - craft workshop: Doorstops
- May 13 - used book sale at Sunset Nursery
- May 12 - perennial plant exchange
- May TBA - scrapbooking workshop
- June 7 - Annual General Meeting
- July 4 – 25 - Literary Tuesdays
- Sept. 5 - Golf Tournament

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

## Literary Tuesdays 2006

Tickets are now available for the 2006 series of Literary Tuesdays in July. This year for the first time we offer a season ticket: \$50 for all four authors. Single evenings are \$15.

Come at 7:30 p.m. for dessert, coffee, book browsing, and conversation. Readings start at 8:00 p.m. The line-up for this year's feast of delights is:

July 4 - Erika Ritter  
 July 11 - Maggie Wheeler  
 July 18 - Frances Itani  
 July 25 - Jenifer McVaugh



Erika Ritter (*The Great Big Book of Guys*, *The Hidden Life of Humans*) is a well-known broadcaster and humorous writer. Maggie Wheeler is a historian whose engaging mysteries *A Violent End* and *The Brother of Sleep* are set in and around the Lost Villages of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Ottawa's Frances Itani has won many awards for her stories (*Leaning*, *Leaning Over Water* is one collection) and her novel *Deafening*. Jenifer McVaugh's novels *Paradise* and *The Love of Women* focus a gently comic eye on local history, recent and past.

Three Eganville restaurants, The Granary, Magelly's and Frisco's, and Stephano's Bakery in Killaloe are generously providing the desserts. As ever, we are grateful for the use of the spacious and air-conditioned hall at St. James Church in Eganville.

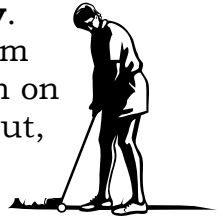
On Tuesday, July 11, children's author J. Fitzgerald McCurdy will read at 2 p.m. at the Bonnechere Union Public Library, with proceeds going to the library.

Advance tickets are available at: Serendipity on the River in Eganville, the HummDinger in Golden Lake, Coles Book

Store in Pembroke, the Arnprior Book Shop, the Renfrew Book Shop, Grandma's Pantry in Killaloe, and South of 60 in Barry's Bay.

## Golf Tournament

Mark Tuesday, September 5, on your calendar to **Swing for Literacy**. We'd really like more teams from Renfrew County this year. Lean on the golfers you know to come out, have fun, and help support literacy. The tournament will again be held at the Oaks of Cobden. Details will be available later in the spring.

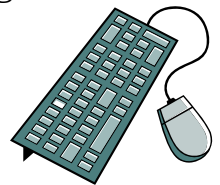


## May Fest Book Sale

Sunset Nursery in Pembroke will hold a 3-day May Fest from Friday, May 12, through Sunday, May 14. Literacy Plus will participate by promoting its programs and selling used books on Saturday, May 13. Literacy Plus has earned a good reputation for the quality of used books at its sales. We're pleased to have this opportunity for fundraising as well as promotion. If you have **good, saleable**, used books to donate, please call us.

## Technology Grant

Literacy Plus was pleased to receive a special Field Support grant for technology from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The \$7500 grant allowed us to purchase five new computers, software and a printer for the computer classroom, and update the older ones. These are now being used in the office and in the Killaloe class. Buying and maintaining computers is a big expense, hard to manage with our annual funding. We are grateful to MTCU for this extra help.



## Hire Value

Three students recently graduated from Literacy Plus's first Hire Value course. Hire Value: Skills for Hospitality and Tourism offered 90 hours of training between February 27 and March 29. The students developed skills in personal management, computer operation—word processing, Internet and e-mail—customer service, communications, and job search. They also earned WHMIS and Smart Serve certificates.



Coordinators Lee Torvi and Diane Litchfield were the course instructors. However, one of the highlights of the course was the community involvement. Literacy Plus is very grateful that so many businesses participated in this training.

- Frisco's Restaurant (George) welcomed us into the restaurant for a workshop.
- Eganville Country Store (Pat), Home Hardware (manager), Co-operators Ins. (Francis) met the class and answered questions about the qualifications they are looking for in their employees.
- Eganville's Community Development Group gave advice, encouragement and support as we developed the course.
- Rural Outreach Employment Services gave a Job Preparation workshop.

Several individuals deserve special thanks: Chris Hinsberger from Bonnechere Caves, David Kaiser of Sysco Foods, Fran Watson of Employment Networks (WHMIS), tutor Eileen Burke (Smart Serve training), and Charlotte Gebhart of Serendipity On the River all gave valuable workshops.

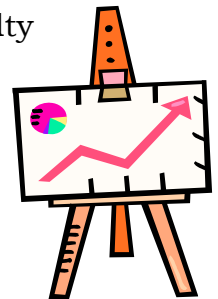
It was a busy five weeks for everyone involved. The students liked the 3-day-a-week schedule and appreciated the quality and variety of skills instruction. We wish them luck with job hunting!

## International Adult Literacy & Skills Survey

The International Adult Literacy & Skills Survey (IALSS) released by Statistics Canada in November looked at Canadians' ability to deal with everyday literacy demands. The survey defines five literacy skill levels: level 5 is the highest, while level 3 is the threshold considered necessary to succeed in today's society.

Key findings from the survey:

- 4 in 10 working-age Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need to meet the demands of modern life.
- Literacy is a serious challenge in every province and territory. Even in the highest performing jurisdictions, 3 out of 10 adults have literacy challenges.
- Nearly 9 million adults (42%) rank below level 3. Of those, 3 million (14.6%) have difficulty with even the most basic written materials.
- 55% do not have the minimum numeracy skills necessary in today's world.
- Overall, immigrants have greater literacy challenges than the Canadian-born population, especially if their first language is not English or French.
- Canadians with lower literacy levels are more likely to be unemployed or to earn less.
- People with low literacy are more likely to report being in poor health.



Although the findings do show areas of improvement, overall the proportion of adults with low literacy skills remains the same as in 1994. Researchers will continue to analyse the data and demographics from the survey. You can access IALSS reports on-line at [www.statscanada.ca](http://www.statscanada.ca) or [www.nald.ca](http://www.nald.ca)

## Spring Classes

**Computer classes** will start up again the week of April 3 and run for 10 weeks. Classes run in Eganville mornings and afternoons on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as Thursday evenings, and Wednesday mornings in Renfrew.

**Fee-for-Service.** Inie will teach an 8-week Fee-for-Service class in Basic Computer Skills on Monday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in Eganville. The cost is \$110. These classes are open to the public.

**Workready On-line.** The second round of Workready is set to start the week of April 3. It will last for 10 weeks, with a new lesson each week. The content of the course is the skills that we need for work, studying, and in our personal lives, including managing stress, managing time, setting goals, and communicating effectively.



While working on these, students improve their ability to use the Internet to get information and learn how to evaluate it critically. Students get feedback from Diane by e-mail, and have the chance to “talk” with each other on-line.

This course is also open to students in our computer classes and those working with tutors. You can work on it independently, or with the support of your tutor or instructor. You need to have access to a computer and an e-mail address. (Literacy Plus computers are available on days classes don't meet.) You'll spend two to three hours a week, at your own time.

Comments from students in the first series were very positive.

- Workready seems ideal for me as I can go at my own speed.
- I am taking this course because the computer is new for me. I think it is a fantastic opportunity to learn new

skills that are necessary, whether you work for someone else or manage a home business.

- I have signed up for Workready to improve my skills so I can get my grade 12 diploma.
- I have learned that change takes time, a lot of thought and preparation. Then an action plan. Then maintaining it until your goal is reached. I have always been afraid of failure, but I now realize that learning from our mistakes helps us grow personally.

## Creative Workshops

**Flower Arrangement.** Six students signed up for Inie McQuirter's 3-hour workshop on flower arrangement, held Monday, February 13. Students brought pre-purchased materials: satin and real flowers, flower tape, moss, wire and extra greenery for fillers, and a container and glue gun, etc.



They started with a lesson on how to arrange flowers to height, with the focal point at the top and coming down. The arrangements went from vases with carnations and teddy bears to table centerpieces that would make any florist envious. All left with a new appreciation of how hard this can be but, with a knowledgeable instructor and six willing students, any thing can be done. Thank you, Inez.

**Easter Wreaths.** Eight people enjoyed a two-part workshop on how to make Easter wreaths, February 24 and March 3. Participants used hangers and white bags to construct the wreaths, then decorated them with bows, eggs and little rabbits they made themselves. Everybody had fun and we thank Maxine Golden again for giving of her time and talent.



## Cyber Class



Computer instructor Terrie Watson has developed a Web Log or “blog” site as a component of her computer classes ([www.eganvillecyberclass.blogspot.com](http://www.eganvillecyberclass.blogspot.com)). The blog is intended to help students overcome fears about the computer and teach them new skills they can use to navigate the Internet and send and receive information by e-mail.

Students get a brief history of the Internet; find out how to “clean up” their computers by defragging and using anti-spyware; learn how Internet Cookies work, what plug-ins are, and what a blog is, and much more.

And what is a blog, you wonder? Like a website, it is a site with an address (URL) started by an individual as a way to publish information or other data on-line. But unlike websites, where information is usually static, blogs are dynamic, with new, dated entries posted frequently—often in the first person, like a journal.

Terrie’s blog now has six lessons with information and exercises that lead students through a range of on-line activities. These involve locating and visiting websites, finding and assessing information, writing answers to questions and e-mailing them to Terrie, and posting comments.

Terrie invites tutors and students in the one-to-one program and other classes to visit the site. If they want to participate, she welcomes their comments. The comment section is open to anyone who reads the blog.



## March

*A blue day, a blue jay and a good beginning.  
One crow, melting snow—spring's winning!*

- Elizabeth Coatsworth

## Upcoming Events:

- Friday, April 28: **Making doorstops**, with Maxine Golden. Bring a 2-litre pop bottle.
- Joyce Gutzeit is organizing a **perennial plant exchange** for May 12. If you have plants to exchange or would like to start your own perennial garden, please call the office for details.
- Tutor Linda Pecarskie will lead a **Scrapbooking** workshop in May; date to be confirmed.

## Raffle

Don’t forget to buy tickets for Maxine’s watercolour painting. The draw will be held at the AGM on June 7.

## Useful Websites

Firstfind.info at [www.firstfind.info/](http://www.firstfind.info/) provides easy access to clear language sources of information on many topics.

MedlinePlus at [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html) provides information in clear, easy-to-read language on many common health conditions, diagnostic tests, and surgical procedures.



*"Volunteers are not paid—not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless."*

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