

# Opening Doors



# Achieving Goals

Stories of Inspiration from the  
Adult Literacy Program

December 2016

Adult literacy learning changes lives and we are always pleased to share some inspiring stories about our learners' achievements. Learners come from different walks of life and each of the stories is told in the person's own words, with only minor editing from us.

Every adult learner has a unique story to share. Many of our learners try to balance the responsibilities of a job, further education, a family, or even all three or more! As you will discover when you read these stories, if you want something badly enough, nothing can stand in your way.

Adult learners describe their success in terms of improved reading, writing, and math, and an overall greater interest in reading. These improved literacy skills have boosted their confidence, and opened doors to further learning and career opportunities.

Behind every learner success story there are those who make it possible: the dedicated tutors. Our learners credit their tutors with helping them to gain life-enhancing personal, practical, and relationship skills, as well as becoming more positive in their attitudes and behaviours towards life and learning.

In the following pages, learners share first-hand accounts of their transformative learning experiences. They share how their tutor's dedication, encouragement and support has helped transform their lives. In the same tone tutors acknowledge the learner's hard work. Please join us in celebrating our learners' perseverance and success.

—**Adult Program Team**

## My goals for this year are almost achieved

My name is Sung. I am from South Korea and I have lived in Canada for three years. When I first arrived in Canada, I felt I was very dumb because I didn't understand any English. So I looked for a way to learn English. I asked my friends, "Where do you learn English?" One said "Family Literacy Centre." I waited for my tutor. Finally, I met her. Her name is Laura. She is very friendly and patient.

I started in 2015 July. My tutor is very helpful. Now I feel a little bit confident. Now I can have some conversation with Canadian people. Also I can use more

public services because I can ask and answer questions in English. Traveling is a little bit easier, and when I watch a movie, I enjoy it. I enjoy working with my tutor.

This quote from the power of positivity. "2016 is my selfish year, my time is invested on improving myself. I want to become a better person, physically and mentally", was my 2016 year's resolution. This year has been about me and me only. And now my goals for this year are almost achieved. My tutor is helping me prepare for my Canadian citizenship exam. I will continue practicing, learning improving my English skills.

Thank you Centre for Family Literacy for opening doors of opportunity for me.

—**Sung Ok**

## Doors have been opened

I just want to share my good news with you that I just passed International English Language Tests (IELTS). This is a great milestone for me because it opens doors for me to work or study not only in Canada but also in any other English-speaking country.

I am now doing a lab technician program at NAIT full-time. I am doing courses at the 30 levels in several sciences and math. I am also volunteering at a hospital.

Thank you both for offering me a lot of help. Special thanks to my tutor Patrycja. You are the best tutor I have ever met. Thanks for your great patience, caring heart and your devotion, without you I couldn't get a good score like this. Appreciate what you did!

—**Lena**

## Big progress

I have been studying with Mary for almost three years. I have made a big progress. I still remember on the first day I met with Mary, I even could not read fluently. I only could say some simple words. I read children's books. Three years later, I can understand most people. I already go to NAIT. I studied "business law" last term. On the first day, my teacher told us the book was difficult with a lot of law terms. The students felt it was difficult although their first language is English. I had the same feeling last term. Fortunately, Mary

helped me a lot. We researched huge amount of information. I sometimes studied till 2 o'clock AM. During the same time, I had to take care of two children because my husband worked in another city. Finally, I got A for the last quiz and final mark was B+. I really appreciate Mary's help.

—*Liping*

## Reading is the key

I came to the Centre for Family Literacy in 2008 because I needed to improve my literacy skills so that I could read for my daughter when she brings me something to read. When my daughter was born, it was a great push because I wanted better for her. I wanted her to have a better life than I had. I needed to be able to provide for her. Not being able to read and write prevented me from getting my journeyman ticket and as such I could not work to provide for my daughter.

Back in Jamaica, I did not finish school. I started working at an early age because my mom was a poor single mom and she could not afford school fees for the three of us.

Reading has always been difficult for me and I wish I had put more energy into learning when I was younger. "Reading is the key but I didn't know that till now."

I had some learning challenges and was often made to feel stupid. My friends continuously mocked and called me names. In later years, I was diagnosed with dyslexia and ADD.

I want to become a fluent reader because if I learn to read I will be able to help someone else. I would like to be a motivational speaker to encourage kids who are struggling in school like I did and still do.

It has always been my dream to be able to read without fumbling. I know I am smart. I may not be able to read fluently but my comprehension is good and that is what has helped me build by practical skills.

I want to move forward and not be left behind. Being uneducated, I was always behind. I had a dream to own my own business and to become a motivational speaker, but to do that I need to be able to read and write. I have always wanted to write my story to inspire someone to push forward and overcome their fear.

—*Shawn*

## Biggest gift of kindness

Dear Tutor,

Sometimes in life, it has a way of throwing obstacles and challenges in your path. God put you in my path as a blessing, with kindness towards me. The kindness that you have shown to people like me, to take the time out of your life, to share the love of education to others, it is the biggest gift of kindness that I can think of. You have helped me in the last 6 months and I hope that you can see the difference that you have made in my education and how much of a difference it's made in me.

Congratulations on your twentieth anniversary with the Literacy Centre.  
Thank you.

—*Learner*

## Now I have a good job

My goal is that I get a job in Canada, so I can enjoy life with my family in Canada. My tutor is very helpful in my life. Sometimes she gives advice to me and we talk a lot. I would like to thank her. Now I have a good job. It is very good.

—*Hyo Jeong*

## My life is getting better

Hi. This is Nooriya. I want to talk about myself. When I started my class I didn't know very much English. Now I can read Macmillan level 1 (starter) books by myself, and I can write some sentences.

At my work, first I didn't know anything. But after improving my reading and writing skills, I was asked to be a shift supervisor and I accepted the challenge. I can now read and write faster.

My home life is also getting better. I can now read Robert Munsch books to my children.

I like my tutor because she always tries to explain to me as many times until I understand. She's patient and she is very kind.

—*Nooriya*

## Why I went to learn

My 97-year-old Grandma told me, it does not matter how old you are, we still learn. My grandma died in 2008. My mom had to look for a school that would take me in because I was having learning problems. After a car hit me in 1981, I lost some of my learning abilities. I had trouble talking clearly. While I read well, I had trouble with spelling.

I just like to learn. My mom told me she is proud of me. My mom died in 2014. My dad told me when I took him out for breakfast. He asked me how I'm doing in my learning. I told him I am getting better.

Without the Centre for Family Literacy I would not be who I am now – I'm a good reader, and I speak clearer. I have been coming here for 16 years now.

Thank you very much Centre for Family Literacy.

—*Denise*

## You changed my life

My name is Abeba. I came to CFL in 2014. I completed my grade 12 in Ethiopia. When I came to Canada, I could not get a good job because my reading and writing skills were very poor. I could not spell. I was rejected for all job opportunities in a group home. I wanted to improve my reading and writing so I could go back to school because I was tired of doing hard labor jobs.

After working with my tutor Laura for some time I was able to write and I passed my entrance exam on my fifth and final try. I enrolled in a Healthcare Aide course at McEwan and I completed it last year.

Before Laura helped me, I could not pass the exam, but after working with her for a few months I tried the exams with Excel College and I passed. I now have a better job. I work during the day and I go to school at night. I got married last year and I am very happy.

—*Abeba*

## Drive my own car soon

Dear Centre for Family Literacy,  
Thank you for giving me the driving license book. It really helped me. I passed my driving license test. I'm learning now how to drive and I hope by September, I will drive my own car. Thank you again.

—*Raechal*

## Tutor: Best teacher, friend and advisor

My goals are working with my tutor to improve my English skills in order to enter a program in a college.

After two years of meeting with my tutor, I notice that my English skills such as writing, speaking, reading and pronunciation have grown.

I have a story about how I had a difficult time with a teacher at NAIT. My tutor Anne gave me good advice and taught me how to deal with this difficult thing. I followed Anne's advice to deal with this teacher. Finally, this teacher apologized to me. I appreciate Anne helping me and making a difference in my life.

I like my tutor very much. She is my best teacher, friend and advisor. She gives me good advice to help me with my learning.

—*Jian Mei*

## Change for better

I have been working with my tutor Anne for eleven months. I was reading at level 2 and my comprehension was only at level 1. But now with my tutor's help:

- I am reading better
- I can meet my doctor alone
- My listening and writing and speaking are improving
- When I meet my friend, I speak and understand better
- I understand better when I meet my children's teacher
- When I go shopping, I feel better



- When I meet my tutor, I understand better
- My listening is better

I want to become a teaching assistant for children in the early grades who speak Arabic. I want to read stories to them and explain any words they do not understand.

—**Fatmah**

## My teacher, my mom, my friend

Hello Everyone,

I'm going to share with you about my experience with my tutor Elizabeth. April 17th, 2015, I met my teacher Elizabeth first time in the Family Literacy Centre and she started tutoring me right after the arrangement. She has a passion to teach me. For instance, she sets a time to meet me, she brings the learning material for me, she initiates contacting me for next time meeting and more.

My experience with her is absolutely amazing. Who can believe this tutoring arrangement is without any fees.

When I came to Canada in 2013, I had a beginner level of English. I was not able to speak to anybody because I feared to make a conversation with other people.

My other weakness in English was listening. I have improved my English skills because of Elizabeth's enthusiastic teaching and encouragement. She always encourages me and makes me comfortable every time I meet her.

Now my fear of speaking English to others is significantly reduced. I'm even working a part time at retail store, which would never have happened if Elizabeth was not with me. She helped me to prepare for interviewing. She carefully gave me advice on what to do.

We are meeting at least once a week. She never seems to be bothered to meet me. Always welcomes me like mother. She is my teacher, my mom and my friend. I want to say to her 'I really appreciate for everything and I love you.'

Last of all, I thank the Family Literacy Centre that gave me an opportunity to meet Elizabeth and gave me a dream in Canada again in my life.

—**Dayoung**

## I can read my Bible now

My name is Ruth. I came to Canada 15 years ago from Ghana. I did not learn to read and write because I never went to school. I always wanted to learn to read so that I can read my Bible. I used to listen to my audio Bible. When I met Pam my life was never the same again. I can read now!!!! Pam is awesome. She is patient and really nice to me. When I feel I cannot do it, Pam pushes me.

She has given me confidence in myself. When someone tells me that I am stupid, Pam encourages me to do things I never dreamed of doing.

Pam introduced me to an interesting book by Charles Dickens entitled, "The Signalman and the Ghost at the Trial." We started reading it together but now I can read it on my own. I am so proud of myself and I am full of confidence. Pam has taught me that everybody can do it if they get an opportunity.

—**Ruth**

## Learning to read and write has changed my life

Learning to read and write has changed my life. I now read stories for pleasure, I read a newspaper everyday and I read advertisements when I shop.

I write academic essays at school, email to my friends, teachers and tutor. I leave notes at my work when something is broken.

Working with my tutor has helped me very much. I can now communicate easily, I feel confident in a public place and I am also confident to continue my education. Speaking English to my co-workers and friends makes me feel closer to them. My co-workers and friends feel happy when we share our opinions.

—**Jian Mei**

## Now it is easy to learn

I thought learning English was like a mountain I couldn't reach. Now it is easy to learn. I have a wonderful tutor. She helps me improve my English. I can read stories, letters from my kids school, talk confidently and write stories. I feel comfortable when I meet her.

I'm thankful for the laptop from the Center. It is very helpful for both me and my children. We can now communicate directly with the school website as well as other sites.

We also share our different cultural beliefs. Now I hope to study about Canada and become a Canadian citizen. I'm lucky to have my tutor (my friend) Diane.

—*Wissal*

## Reaching my dream

My name is Tanya and I first came to the Centre in 2009. I came because I had a dream. My dream was to go to school and become a receptionist.

I've had many people tutor me in the past to help me reach my dream, and I would like to thank them. I would also like to thank the staff for their dedication and hard work and support.

Two years ago, I heard about the Office Assistant Program at MacEwan University. I knew that I would need help with my studies so I went to meet with someone that may be able to help me. They directed me to a place called Campus Connections where I met my advisor, Olga. She set me up for the interview I had to attend. Since there were only 3 spots available, I had to show them I was ready to attend school. I did, and from that time on Olga met with me once a week right up till school started in September. She was there from my first day and she met me every day after class. She also helped me get a job at the McEwan Resident. I completed 3 courses a term, and finished the program in 2 years.

I learnt a lot more about computers that I thought I knew. I learned how to type up memos, letters, and brochures. I learned a lot to help me succeed in the workplace. I would do it again if I had to but I am happy I am done!

—*Tanya*

## Now I have become someone

I had a hard life. I struggled a long the way. I made decisions to change who I was. It was hard for me. But now I have become someone. I am very comfortable with myself now. I am better in reading instructions at work, reading direction driving on the road. I can read the medicine label, I can write a note for my kids and I can fill out application forms.

I decided to write my memoir. Reading about memoirs and how to write one was not easy. I am still writing. Hopefully I will publish it and make it into a movie to inspire people who are in my shoes.

—*Learner*

## Tutoring a very positive experience

Working as tutor with Wissal is a very positive experience. She is dedicated to learning and has become more confident and skilled in her English. She is also very comfortable bringing to class any topics she wants to cover from learning math concepts so she can help her children with their homework, or field trips to a grocery store to learn how to read food labels or just to discuss a world event or a new word she wants to clarify.

We enjoy discussing our different cultures and learning from each other. We have become good friends.

As I reflect on working as a tutor with Wissal, I realize there are many who contribute to her success. Monica, Edith and the team at the Centre for Family Literacy with tutor training, ongoing workshops for both tutors and learners and providing their continuous support and encouragement. They also continue to find new ways to enrich the learners' lives. The laptop they provided to Wissal is very beneficial to her whole family and has expanded her learning resources. Also, Wissal's husband supports her learning, driving her to class on his day off working and caring for their children while she attends class.

It truly does take a village.

—*Diane (Tutor)*

## He never gives up

Shawn received two awards in his Norquest program and pre-algebra class.: one for being one of the highest achievers and the other for being the most cooperative and patient student. His skills in helping others in the classroom were exemplary and outstanding. He never gives up and he is going to try a little business adventure this summer with the Cari West festival selling Jamaican food.

—**Sonia (Tutor)**

## Used to hate reading

Sharon received the 2016 Lois Hole Memorial Adult Learner Award. She used to hate reading. Now she loves it. Her enthusiasm has positively impacted her daughter who has also received a school award in reading. She has also been reading to others and sharing her enthusiasm for reading. She no longer feels the apprehension and dread she used to feel when she had to fill out forms for her daughter and at the doctor's.

Sharon would like to further her education and work with special needs children.

—**Elaine (Tutor)**

## Further learning opportunities

Before we began tutoring 6 months ago, Yenenesh had previously applied to Norquest for further learning, but was not accepted because her reading, writing, and speaking skills were not where they needed to be. Last month, Yenenesh reapplied. Her skills had increased significantly. She was happy to report to me that because of the improvement, she had been accepted to classes for the fall! She is very excited to have the opportunity to learn more.

Personally, it has been so fulfilling watching her improvements and her confidence increase.

—**Lauren (Tutor)**

## More engaged in her community

Wing Lan's improvement in English Literacy has enabled her to become a more engaged participant in her community and at work. She can more easily converse with coworkers which has led to the development of friendships at work. She is more confident speaking with customers, making work less of a stress and challenge for her.

She feels more confident to take on her surroundings as she has an increased belief in her ability to converse in English when necessary. She shows continued motivation to be a fluent English speaker and is committed to her learning.

—**Carly (Tutor)**

## Her confidence has been boosted

While working with Tiffany over the last 5 months, I have seen her confidence grow and she has become much more comfortable working with arithmetic concepts. When we started together, Tiffany was working towards becoming a carpenter and was interested in getting into the Women Building Futures program to help her achieve this. In February, Tiffany passed the Women Building Futures math exam and was accepted into the program starting in May.

Tiffany says that she is now more comfortable with multiplication tables, which has helped with all other areas of math. She is now comfortable in finding the perimeters, reading a tap measure and reducing fractions. Tiffany's confidence in herself has been boosted following her improved math skills. "I feel more confident in my math. When I started I had little confidence in myself," she said.

Whatever she decides to do in her future, I know that she has learned a lot and built confidence in her ability to learn, which will be valuable down any path in life.

—**April (Tutor)**

## Now we meet as friends

When Rani began at the Centre for Family Literacy, she had difficulty with word recognition and comprehension skills. Less than three years later, Rani is a full-time student at NAIT. We no longer need to meet for tutoring. Now we meet once a month as “friends” to discuss life.

—*Cynthia (Tutor)*

## From tutor to friend

The relationship that I have with my learner has evolved into a friendship, since she has achieved her goal of graduating as an LPN. We meet about once every two months, for a visit of an hour or two. Among other things, we discuss some of the new goals she has set for herself, one of them being to graduate as an RN.

—*Christine (Tutor)*

## Dreams Turned into Reality: Taslima’s Story

For most of us, the skills of reading, writing, and language comprehension are taken for granted. We hardly stop to imagine what life would be like without these basic skills. But barely ten years ago, such was the reality for Taslima when she first arrived in Canada from her native Bangladesh. She couldn’t read, write, or comprehend the English language.

So limited were her literacy skills that she could neither assist her elementary-grade children with their school work, nor visit a doctor in the event of illness. To overcome this, her husband desperately turned to the Centre for Family Literacy. If nothing else, Taslima hoped to, with the Centre’s assistance, gain enough literacy skills to help her children with their school work, be able to visit a doctor independently, and to pass her Citizenship test.

At the Centre for Family Literacy, Taslima found in Georgianna a committed, patient, and skillful tutor. On her part, Georgianna found in Taslima a tenacious

and determined literacy learner. In a matter of time, Taslima’s language and literacy was good enough to land her in her first job at Costco, and not long after that she applied for and got an even more desirable job at Superstore.

With her newly acquired literacy skills, Taslima’s dreams translated into reality. She passed her Citizenship test on her second attempt, and when she turned her attention to acquiring her own home from Habitat for Humanity’s affordable housing program, her tutor was at hand to help her with the lengthy application process.

Taslima does not conceal her excitement about owning a home. “I could not have done this without the help of my tutor. When I got the key to the house, Georgianna was with me. She walked this long journey with us.”

She also talks about how much better life is because of her newly acquired literacy skills. “I now enjoy talking to other people. I am not shy anymore because I had to make a lot of speeches when I got my house. I addressed guests including the local MLA, city councillor and home builder. I can now explain my problems to the doctor. I can handle everything related to school such as writing to my son’s teacher and organizing field trips. I also handle my own banking.”

In order to qualify for the Habitat for Humanity housing program, Taslima and her husband were required to put in 500 hours of volunteer work. They are now more than half way through the required sweat equity hours.

“I am proud of the Centre for Family Literacy because it has made me who I am today!” says Taslima.

—*Edith*





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